

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Trinidad "Trini" Garza Early College High School At Mountain View
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4849 W. Illinois Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Dallas State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 75211-6503

County TEXAS

Telephone (214) 860-3680 Fax (214) 932-7301

Web site/URL https://www.dallasisd.org/garza E-mail macherndez@dallasisd.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. Michael Hinojosa E-mail hinojosam@dallasisd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Dallas Independent School District Tel. (972) 925-3700

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 Justin Henry
(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, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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 current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
 - 147 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 35 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 38 High schools
 - 10 K-12 schools

230 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

- 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

- Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

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	55	58	113
10	55	69	124
11	49	65	114
12 or higher	43	56	99
Total Students	202	248	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):
- 0.4 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.6 % Asian
 - 4.6 % Black or African American
 - 92 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 0.4 % White
 - 2 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 3%

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	11
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	434
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 56 %
253 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 88 %

Total number students who qualify: 395

8. Students receiving special education services: 1 %
5 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>1</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>2</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: 5
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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 19:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
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 2020.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	108
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	90%
Enrolled in a community college	6%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	1%
Found employment	1%
Joined the military or other public service	2%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2015

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

Trini Garza ECHS empowers students and transforms communities through a rigorous education and provides underserved students the opportunity to earn an associate degree while completing high school.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Trini Garza Early College High School has been operating a hybrid model during the 2020-2021 academic school year. Students attend classes virtually with options to come in person on a modified schedule. Monday and Tuesdays are reserved for 9th and 12th grade in-person instruction. Wednesday and Thursday are reserved for 10th and 11th grade in-person instruction. Fridays are used to provide in-person interventions for students in need of additional assistance while remaining grade levels stay remote. Garza ECHS also offers the option for students to attend in-person instruction daily regardless of grade level or hybrid recommendation.

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

Trinidad Garza Early College High School is a public school of choice (non-magnet). The application process is performance-blind and openly accessible to the community. Students apply for entry, are interviewed, and accepted based on a weighted lottery that favors students who are identified as first-generation college goers, socially economically disadvantaged, and/or an underserved subpopulation.

PART III - SUMMARY

Trinidad ‘Trini’ Garza Early College High School (ECHS), a Dallas Independent School District public school of choice, is housed on the campus of Mountain View College (MVC). Through a collaborative effort with the partner community college, Garza ECHS students are offered an opportunity to attend both high school and on-site college classes with the goal of graduating with a high school diploma and an associate’s degree (60 college credits). The school motto, “College-ready, Career-ready, and Life-ready”, expresses the commitment to lifelong learning that has led to a track record of outstanding student achievement worthy of community, district, state and national awards.

Garza ECHS is in the Oak Cliff neighborhood, a southwest area of Dallas, Texas. Demographically, the students are 87% economically disadvantaged as identified by socioeconomic status data. The school serves a zip code where less than 10% of the population have attained a college degree based on recent U.S. Census data. In fact, the majority of students who attend Garza ECHS are first generation college goers. The longstanding partnership and collaboration with the Dallas College Mountain View Campus (MVC) has an important impact on the overall success of Garza ECHS. Aside from the rigorous college level curriculum, the relationship between the two institutions is integral to student success. Exposure to the MVC campus and college courses provides students collegiate experiences that will benefit them beyond high school graduation.

Garza ECHS shares the mission of MVC which is to “empower people and transform communities”. The faculty and staff at Garza ECHS believe in empowering students and transforming the community as a “Garza Family”. Garza ECHS supports and gives voice to an incredibly resilient generation of students who are navigating one of the most unprecedented times in history. A distinguishing factor of Garza ECHS is co-creating with all stakeholders a safe anti-racist school where students and staff can express themselves freely. Consequently, students continually educate the Garza family on how to better serve them equitably. As a result of this culture of inclusiveness, Garza ECHS met the sociocultural demands of students by adding African American and Mexican American studies courses to the school curriculum. Garza ECHS values and respects students’ home culture, racial backgrounds, lived experiences, and constructive feedback. Garza ECHS continues the historic tradition of community service and social justice exemplified by Trini Garza, the legendary namesake and first Latino board member of Dallas ISD.

The Garza family employs many tailored teaching methods that promote socio-cultural lessons using critical pedagogy. Teachers encourage students to learn beyond the traditional classroom’s four walls allowing students to reveal their stories and take part in democratic civil actions on a real-world level through community service projects. For example, in November of 2019, several students raised their voices during a Texas Board of Education public hearing on ethnic studies. As a result, their activism led to African American Studies courses getting approved statewide for the first time in state history. Furthermore, in September of 2020, ethnic studies students published a book detailing their lived experiences regarding racism, culture, and COVID-19. Civic activism allows students to become organic intellectuals who take ownership over their learning process with the support of their teachers and administrators. This organic approach to building classroom community separates Garza family educators from those who utilize traditional unilateral decision-making practices in urban school settings.

During these unprecedented times of COVID 19, Garza ECHS adapted in order to continue offering high quality instruction by transitioning to a hybrid model. The Garza staff rallied together to make sure every student had meals, laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots, and reliable internet connectivity within the first month of remote instruction. Teachers utilize many online platforms and resources to engage students safely. Many assignments turned into social media-esque conversations to promote student engagement. By adapting to a hybrid schedule, Garza ECHS was able to safely serve students who chose to return in person.

The 2015 National Blue-Ribbon Award validated the genuine commitment and hard work of the Garza ECHS students, teachers, parents, and community partners. The NBRA motivated the school to continue using student-centered approaches to meet the socio-cultural needs of the school community. Furthermore, the award exposed the school to other early colleges across the nation. As a result, in 2016 Garza ECHS was

designated a Texas Education Agency Demonstration Site and awarded a \$30,000 grant to support early college high programs across the state. Garza ECHS continued to exceed expectations and attained all seven state distinctions from the state of Texas four years in a row. These distinctions include: Academic Achievement in English Language Arts/Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Top 25% Student Progress, Top 25% in Closing Performance Gaps and Post-Secondary Readiness. Garza ECHS was the only early college high school in the nation to receive the National Title 1 Distinguished School Award in 2017.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

All subjects at Garza ECHS focus on the student learning goals, performance objectives, and strategies during weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Lessons and assessments are aligned to the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) standards. Garza PLC teams review, analyze, and evaluate formal, summative, and teacher made assessments, student work samples, and high order questioning techniques to identify students' academic needs on a weekly basis. Assessments include district common assessments, ACP, SAT, ACT, and released STAAR tests. Dual credit credentialed professors participate in PLC teams to align the state standards with the higher education board objectives. Departments collaborate vertically to identify student expectations (SEs), strengths, weaknesses, misconceptions, and trends of specific students and student groups. The Campus Instructional Leadership Team (CILT) team uses a variety of book studies, and research-based practices to engage in instructional leadership meetings. In addition, Garza ECHS's instructional delivery in all subject areas embed the six Common Instructional Framework: collaborative group work, literacy groups, scaffolding, writing to learn, questioning, and classroom talk.

Math

The Mathematics department utilizes a double-teach model to help students gain and retain the mastery of the subject matter. Math Applications courses reinforce skills taught in the Algebra I curriculum and in the same spirit, Math Models courses mirror the Geometry curriculum. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Math department has pivoted to use more technological vessels.. All course material is taught through Zoom lectures and the Desmos application. Desmos gives students the ability to access TEKS approved curriculum in an interactive and engaging forum. Desmos provides the tools needed to complete the course in the form of calculators and math tutoring. Zoom is used to perform formative assessments and summative assessments which spiral in concepts students need to master. ECHS mathematics curriculum goes beyond the state's mandatory content skills and integrates the process skills at every level needed for enduring comprehension and college-career preparation. Furthermore, the fast track program allows Garza ECHS students to take Advanced Placement Calculus AB, BC, AP Statistics, college algebra and trigonometry before graduating high school.

Social Studies

Students are offered AP Human Geography, AP World History, and dual credit U.S. History at Garza ECHS. Mexican American and African American Studies are newly added electives in the Social Studies curriculum. The social studies team has provided a rigorous and culturally relevant curriculum in both high school and college classes. The team has established a positive classroom climate conducive to learning about histories from different cultures. The team also implements creative techniques such as social media projects, interactive software like Pear Deck and Nearpod, and current social event activities as means to enhance students' engagement.

Science

Garza ECHS offers Pre-Advanced Placement Biology, Chemistry, Physics, AP Environmental Science, AP Biology, and other field-based science electives such as Environmental Systems and Aquatic Science. The science department adapted the delivery of instruction to meet the academic demands during the pandemic. For example, an outdoor classroom concept became the basis for laboratory work to keep students socially distanced during the learning process. With the support of multiple grants, students worked in areas of Earth Day-X, biotechnology, ecosystem assessment projects, and aquaponics in collaboration with the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) school chapter. Even with the Covid-19 restrictions, many students elected to come in person for a differentiated hybrid science course which incorporated field study opportunities for project and inquiry-based learning.

Dual credit science students in biology and chemistry are fully online at MVC this year due to COVID-19. Garza ECHS offers both face to face and virtual enrichment opportunities, tutoring options, and a field-

based ecology lab for the students in science classes. Chemistry students get hands-on lab experiences closely aligned with the online lecture curriculum of the college and TEKS. Connecting with students virtually is a challenge met through multiple layers of technology. These communication platforms include Skype, Google Voice and GroupMe. Each course is also set up with its own learning management software to distribute lessons, submit assignments, take assessments and participate in scheduled video class meetings.

English/Language Arts/Reading

Garza ECHS English and Language Arts uses general, cross-disciplinary literacy expectations in the form of the TEKS. One method employed in classrooms is the use of culturally relevant texts that engage students in the reading process and help students comprehend complex literary nuances using their own cultural experiences and backgrounds. Culturally relevant literature is paired with texts from the literary canon to help students understand literary analysis skills that can often be difficult to grasp. This strategy bridges the gaps that might exist simply as a result of cultural indifference or irrelevance. Utilizing cultural relevance within each lesson improves comprehension and mastery of skills, while motivating students to take ownership for their learning through familiarity. Additionally, Garza ELA develops and utilizes schoolwide writing strategies to increase writing proficiency, by consistently employing critical pedagogical approaches to maximize student engagement.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

The Trini Garza ECHS curriculum and course of study embeds and aligns college readiness standards within all areas of the students' academic experience. Garza EHCS is an Early College High School which requires students to begin taking dual credit courses in 9th grade. Dual enrollment classes and Advanced Placement Courses are part of the program. Dual enrollment courses follow the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board guidelines, while Advanced Placement (AP) courses follow the College Board's Advanced Placement Standards. Teachers use a district-developed curriculum that is based on Texas education guidelines. Through concise curriculum alignment, Garza ECHS students have the opportunity to graduate with a high school diploma and an associate degree within four years. All students can earn an associate of science degree or an associate of arts degree and up to 60 college credits towards a baccalaureate degree.

In addition to dual credit courses, Garza ECHS students also complete 200 hours of community service during their 9th-12th grade years. These community service experiences offer students the opportunity to explore potential career paths and invaluable internship experiences. Garza ECHS partners with community businesses run by African American and Latin@ leaders to give students the opportunity to participate and observe a variety of approaches on how they can give back to the community once they graduate.

Garza ECHS promotes student voice and activism among the students. Garza has partnered with the National Latino Education Research and Policy Project (NLERAP) to promote ethnic studies and recruit secondary teachers of color. Garza ECHS has an active Black Leadership Alliance and League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) led by committed teachers. Through these student groups, students actively participate in projects impacting their community. The students participate in voter registration drives, community outreach, and volunteerism at elementary schools. Students choose areas they are passionate about and raise awareness around their specific community issue.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Garza ECHS students are offered a variety of electives from both the high school and MVC to meet the academic and social emotional needs of the students. All the visual arts courses such as drama, music, and art are taught by MVC professors during the students' freshmen year. With collaboration between Garza ECHS teachers and MVC faculty, students have the autonomy to develop clubs, organizations,

performances, and events related to the visual arts. Currently, students have formed clubs in the areas of art, dance (step team), photography, and poetry teams. The formation of the first Trini Garza Mariachi Los Leones de Garza and MVC has been an integral part of the campus culture. Students perform anti-racist poetry jams on a regular basis at the Daverse Lounge in the city's art district. Due to COVID-19, most of the visual art courses from the college are taught virtually. However, Garza ECHS students still meet with their clubs remotely and engage in many community service projects through an online platform.

During 9th and 10 grade, the Physical Education (PE) program at Garza ECHS employs a holistic approach to help students become physically and health literate. The TEKS aligned PE elective promotes lifelong physical activity and healthier eating habits by exposing students to organized exercise stations, a variety of sport workshops, health expert presentations, and self-awareness activities. Meditation rooms were stationed throughout the school to offer a safe environment for any school community member to decompress. These mindfulness techniques are still offered virtually to meet the social emotional needs of students and staff during the pandemic.

Garza ECHS students must complete college Spanish 1411 and 1412 between their junior and senior year to fulfill the language requirement for the high school and college graduation. Students take these Spanish dual credit courses with a Garza ECHS credentialed instructor who collaborates with the MVC Spanish department to meet the college's rigorous objectives. Over 95 percent have been successful in completing these two foundational language courses. To challenge both native and non-native Spanish speakers, Garza offers Advanced Placement Spanish. An incredible feat before the pandemic was a 100 % passing rate of the AP Spanish college board exam two years in a row. Consequently, many Garza ECHS graduates receive the Seal of Biliteracy, an award given by the state of Texas to students achieving mastery of two or more languages.

Garza ECHS offers AP Computer Science and COSC 1301 (Intro to Computing) to promote computer literacy during their 11th grade year. Students develop proficiency in the areas of computer systems hardware, operating systems, and microcomputer application software. In addition, students learn how to engage in multiple online platforms to communicate during the pandemic.. These computer science courses may be used to fulfill a foreign language credit for high school graduation only in the state of Texas. Other TEKS-aligned electives include entrepreneurship, business information management, and sports entertainment marketing . During 11th and 12th grade, students take Texas government, sociology, economics, Texas and Federal government dual credit courses with MVC faculty.

3. Academic Supports:

Under the Texas Early College High School Blueprint, schools shall recruit and support subpopulations that are historically underrepresented in college. Therefore, Garza ECHS utilizes a variety of academic supports to ensure the students have the necessary interventions and resources to succeed in both high school and college courses. Every incoming freshman participates in a comprehensive summer bridge program to assess students' academic needs and to acclimate them to the college culture. During summer bridge, students are prepared to take the Reading/Writing Texas Success Initiative (TSI) exam. The passing rating for the TSI after intentional interventions and TSI Boot Camps is over 70 percent for freshmen. The students utilize the Writing and Language Lab, which provides free consultations on all aspects of the writing process, the Instructional Support Lab, which provides tutoring, peer tutoring and small group workshops. Furthermore, ACE Advisory is built into schedules to provide students access to campus resources and to complete academic progress monitoring sessions with teachers.

Garza ECHS meets the needs of Talented and Gifted students by offering over 10 Advanced Placement college board courses and rigorous college classes such as trigonometry, biology and chemistry for science majors. Moreover, all students are enrolled in Pre-AP English their freshman and sophomore years. High performing students join the National Honor Society and MVC Phi Theta Kappa International Honor groups. These multiple learning opportunities support students

who are academically above average and seek to challenge themselves.

The English Language Learners represent Garza ECHS's largest subpopulation. All teachers have been Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) trained and are implementing English Language Proficiency (ELPS) strategies to support ELL students from this professional development. Garza ECHS teachers embed all four components of the ELPS: Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. To support the ELL students, each class incorporates the four domains of the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS): Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. As a result, all ELL students have been successful in meeting or exceeding in all state exams with support from ESL trained teachers. Additional support and targeted interventions are continuously made for struggling ELL students based on weekly PLC data meetings. ELL students' academic success and college completion rates are above average of the national norm.

Garza ECHS has a low number of special education students. The students are provided personalized extra support as defined by Individual Education Plans. At risk students benefit from tiered instruction, active monitoring, and one on one tutoring. Student assessment data dictates areas for reteach, tutoring, interventions and targeted instruction for struggling students. .

During COVID-19, Garza ECHS adapted academic support strategies to meet the needs of all students virtually. Teachers utilize multiple online platforms to promote student engagement. Discussion boards provide a safe place for students to exchange ideas. Shareable online documents enable students to participate in small groups. Thus, promoting student interactions and collaboration virtually. Garza ECHS teachers have combined conventional instructional methods with newer, more collaborative audio and video media. Bursts of conversations, group work, video and audio recordings can be observed in the classroom setting, whether virtual or in person.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

When Dallas ISD shifted to 100% virtual learning in March 2020, the campus pivoted with crucial adjustments to ensure that the students were receiving the same engaging and rigorous instruction. Garza ECHS distributed wireless hotspots and Chromebooks so students could access virtual classrooms. In addition, Garza ECHS teachers maintained consistent and timely communication with students. If students were not participating in online learning, the staff made every effort to communicate with parents and students online or over the phone. When those efforts were unsuccessful, home visits were conducted, making sure COVID-19 safety protocols were followed. Through these efforts, Garza ECHS promoted academic growth through aggressive progress monitoring and technological support.

Garza ECHS is also committed to providing the highest quality of college readiness to students. A College and Career Readiness course (CCRS) is embedded into every senior schedule which is taught in conjunction with a Garza ECHS teacher and a Higher Education Advisor provided to students through a partnership with Education Is Freedom, a nationally recognized non-profit organization. In the CCRS course, students are guided through researching college options, working on applications, writing admissions essays, completing FAFSA/TASFA applications, completing scholarship applications, exploring workforce training and certification programs, as well as supporting SAT/ACT/TSIA/ASVAB preparation.

During remote instruction, these strong CCRS student support systems were sustained. Online workshops focusing on college applications, application essays, and scholarship opportunities were held for students and parents to engage in together. Virtual college visits and information sessions with college advisors provided students with counsel to determine which colleges or universities fit with their goals. The transition to virtual learning created a need for vital social emotional supports for the students. The students enrolled in African American studies and Mexican American studies collaborated with a publisher and wrote a book of individual stories written during the COVID-19 pandemic. The process of writing the book required guided sessions where students reflected on their stories, struggles and emotions related to being in high school during a global pandemic.

Garza ECHS also incorporated Meditation Stations for emotional and mental support to deal with everyday stressors. The Meditation Stations provided guided meditation and daily mindfulness exercises to socio-emotionally support students and staff. Additionally, students experiencing difficult situations were encouraged to visit with compassionate and empathetic teachers and staff for support. Working with students to practice mindfulness is crucial, as it provides tools for navigating through difficult circumstances while being aware of their present situation.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The Garza ECHS parent/community engagement approach strengthens the school by restructuring relationships among school and community stakeholders. Parents, teachers, administrators, churches, community leaders and Dallas College members are partners in the common goal of raising student achievement and providing a culturally safe school. This organic process empowers teachers, parents, administrators, and community members from all racial backgrounds through leadership training, community organizing, neighborhood walks, team building, and development of school policy that directly support the students' well-being. These collective forces share their common concerns organically through informal gatherings, one-on-ones, and house meetings. The stakeholders are powerful decision-makers actively engaged in transforming the Garza ECHS culture by advocating openly at parent-centered workshops, virtual house gatherings, Coffee with Principal, parent teacher student organization, and Site-Based Decision-Making meetings.

Garza ECHS continues to customize parent and community engagement activities, workshops, and events based on the needs of all stakeholders within the school community. Student and parent surveys are utilized to gauge the interest and needs of the Garza stakeholders. For example, before the pandemic, parents wanted

more information about immigration laws affecting their daily lives. As such, the school organized a full-scale parent workshop with immigration lawyers to help assist the school community members in partnership with Dallas College, Mexican American Bar Association and the LULAC nonprofit organizations. Garza ECHS is more than an educational organization; it is a family network that works together toward excellence in cultural relevance, student achievement, and growth.

Arguably, one of the most important community events Garza ECHS participates in is the annual Bi-National Health Fair organized by Amigos Sin Fronteras and the Mexican Consulate. Thousands of people from the community attend the health fair at the MVC campus. Garza ECHS students make logistical accommodations and translate for over 27 doctors from different Latin American countries who provide health services ranging from mammograms to vaccinations.

When COVID-19 surfaced, Garza ECHS improved communication with parents through consistent phone calls and home visits to check on students' well-being. Communication, flexibility, compassion, and empathy have played a vital role in supporting students and their families during these difficult times. Using the Remind text app, School Messenger, and providing personal cell phones fostered positive communication and relationships with parents during remote instruction. Providing students extended deadlines, second attempts at assessments and assignments, and showing sensitivity to the strain and stress placed on families has been instrumental in sustaining authentic relationships with all school community stakeholders, especially parents.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The concept of the 'Garza Family' represents the foundation of the school's positive climate. The school administration and teachers openly debate, discuss, and solve problems collectively at CILT meetings and PLCs to enhance student achievement and cultural awareness. The majority of professional developments are teacher developed and led because Garza teachers have earned autonomy and expertise. Teachers are co-instructional leaders who play a vital role in developing concise day-to-day procedures and have shared ownership over the organization of the school structure, especially during the pandemic.

Despite challenges from COVID-19, Garza ECHS's collective efforts and resiliency helped the students thrive academically, socio-emotionally and culturally. The school administration worked within the Dallas ISD COVID-19 policies to ensure teachers felt safe and comfortable working during the pandemic. In the early months, professional development and student instruction was conducted virtually. Staff were given Virtual Private Network (VPN) capabilities to access Dallas ISD secure online resources from any location. As the time for in person instruction was nearing, administrators opened up a completely open two-way communication policy where teachers could feel free to voice their concerns and receive information about Dallas ISD policies promptly. Opening this avenue for communication allowed the staff to be able to concentrate on the work that needed to be done while transparency and open dialogue allowed for authentic voices to be heard.

Garza ECHS staff worked to set up sanitizing stations at the entrance of every classroom and physically rearranged the school to accommodate social distancing policies established by Dallas ISD. By utilizing the hybrid schedule for in person learning, the numbers of students and staff on campus were limited by grade levels so that only two grade levels were present on any given day, thus creating a safer environment.

The entire Garza ECHS faculty participated in a Cultural Intelligence (CQ) professional development to create critical dialogue around racial equity. The CQ training is an ongoing and organic process to help sustain the anti-racist school culture. The activities reinforce the cultural awareness lessons taught and allow participants to put them into practice. As a diverse school community, Garza ECHS emphasizes the importance to recognize and set aside any preconceived thoughts or implicit biases. The cultural intelligence exercises enabled Garza ECHS to continually evolve into a safe learning institution that depends upon shared knowledge and diverse ideas that liberates both educators and students. Student agency, teacher autonomy, community engagement, racial equity, and a culture of inclusion embodies the school climate.

4. School Leadership:

Collective humility encompasses the overall leadership philosophy by cultivating an inclusive positive school culture and building authentic relationships with all stakeholders. The school administration collective and relational leadership style values the input of all school community members. Through this collaborative approach, the voices of all stakeholders are heard through a variety of informal and formal interactions focused on students' learning, social-emotional well-being, and cultural awareness. The school administration utilizes a bottom up approach to engage student input in their learning process through one-on-one meetings, surveys, and focus groups. Through this collective leadership style, the voices of students and teachers are considered pivotal to the school's success.

The administrative team consists of teacher-leaders, coordinators, assistant principal, counselor, office manager, and principal. The team meets weekly to address instructional, safety and equity issues such as academic plans, dual credit course alignment, master schedule, financial adjustments, virtual/remote learning, and COVID-19 updates. The team leader communicates crucial information from these meetings to their designated colleagues. The principal consistently collaborates with the Garza ECHS team members through one-on-one relationship building meetings. The administrative team exercises collective leadership with the teacher-leaders, students, parents, and the Dallas College partners to develop a school culture tailored to the academic and socio-cultural needs of the students.

The administrative team utilizes a democratic process for all major decisions. The leadership team has created a school climate where deficit thinking and racial inequities are openly denounced. The leadership style at Garza ECHS is an organic and relational one that respects and gives value to the stories/narratives of the students, parents, and teachers. In other words, the powers of leadership are shared with the school community and the results are exceptional.

The ultimate goal at Garza still remains student, parent and teacher safety during the pandemic. When COVID-19 emerged, the principal and assistant principal had to manage an empty school and make sure students, teachers, and parents had the necessary resources to be successful working remotely. Therefore, the administrative team collaborated with the Dallas ISD crisis safety group, MVC police department and Dallas College crisis team to develop a comprehensive COVID-19 safety plan. As a result, Garza ECHS has maintained low levels of COVID-19 infections with minimal interruptions to the students learning environment. As a result, in 2020, Garza ECHS was ranked number 1 in Pandemic Proof Schools by Children at Risk, a non-partisan research and advocacy organization in North Texas.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Garza ECHS reinforces and emphasizes the importance of culturally inclusive instruction and diversity within the classroom. Garza ECHS family utilizes critical pedagogy to engage students' home culture and background during instructional delivery. The teachers implement culturally diverse texts to help students with increased comprehension of difficult concepts and theories, while providing a safe environment where student voices are relevant, respected and recognized in classroom discussions. At Garza ECHS, the campus is referred to as a family because it has developed a school culture of respect, collaboration and acceptance for students, families and staff. Garza ECHS acknowledges students' family legacies related to their intergenerational consciousness by honoring students' familial history through oral histories and Dia De Los Muertos altar events. Through these projects students and staff are able to spark conversations that enact mutual feelings of perseverance, resilience, and social change. Garza ECHS works as a cohesive team toward academic excellence and personal growth for students, families, and employees. All are included within the decision-making processes – from the monthly Coffee with the Principal for parents and community members to multicultural celebrations and showcases on campus, students know their opinions and ideas are not only heard, but often implemented. Student clubs/organizations are academically and community centered. Some organizations founded by students are the Student Voter Empowerment Coalition, League of United Latin American Citizens, Black Leadership Alliance, and the Gay-Straight Alliance.

To ensure equity, cultural awareness and respect, these values are embedded into every action, interaction, reading, lesson, and of course, every decision impacting the students' schooling experience. Garza ECHS is one of the first district schools to offer ethnic studies courses – African American and Mexican American history. From these classes, fifty students emerged to speak at the State Board of Education meeting to convince board members to adopt Texas Essential Knowledge Standards for the African American history course. Campus unity and inclusion is also demonstrated every day as all stakeholders work together for a common goal - student achievement. In addition to cultural awareness and equity, leadership opportunities are provided for each of the students by allowing them to organize, plan, and implement projects and activities within the school and classroom. One project in 2020 involved partnership with the University of North Texas at Dallas and 826 National, in which students detail lived experiences and solidify their world views in a published book - Faceless: Untold Side Effects of Culture, Race and Covid-19.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One of the most important electives taken at every grade level is ACE Advisory period (also known as ACE- Academic Character Empowerment). The Garza ECHS ACE Advisory class encompasses an array of purposes utilized to support students academically, culturally and socio emotionally. Academically, in ACE class, facilitators actively monitor student progress in both college and high school courses. Additionally, ACE provides in-school tutoring, targeted interventions, and individualized academic action plans for struggling students. Culturally, ACE provides a safe space for students to express their lived experiences, building trusting relationships with the staff, and having critical conversations about racial inequities. Socio-emotionally, the ACE time period allows students to visit one of the mindfulness meditation centers on campus, conduct empathy checks, and visit with a counselor. During COVID-19, this class period was used to create virtual spaces to check in on students' well-being and allow them to speak freely about their fears and anxieties during these challenging times.

Study skills, time management, college and career exploration, Social and Emotional guidance lessons, mediation, guest speakers, and college progress monitoring are key factors focused during the ACE Advisory period. Students have a consistent teacher who uses this time to build positive rapport with them while helping monitor and/or meeting their needs. ACE Advisory teachers set up Google Classrooms to be able to organize all communications to students. All communication plans included the ACE Advisory Team because they are a vital point of contact for students. Freshman had virtual orientations with the high school counselor and college advisor to formulate emails needed to communicate with professors, review their transcripts, follow a syllabus and use a college platform needed to access and submit assignments. All 10th and 11th graders used their ACE Advisory time to meet and learn from the Education is Freedom college access partner who gave PSAT and SAT/ACT testing support and internship opportunities. The Senior Advisory teacher played a dual role and engaged them in the College Readiness and Technical Writing course that provided support with college applications, scholarship essays, and financial aid.

The completion rates of associate degrees in arts and sciences have steadily increased, even with the continuing aftermath of Covid-19 and school closures, largely because of the structure of ACE Advisory classes. Every student has an advisory period embedded into their academic schedule. The advisory period allows students to meet their individual needs with guidance and support from compassionate and empathetic Garza ECHS family members.