

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

Official School Name Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1700 E Camp Wisdom Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Dallas State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 75241-3733

County DALLAS

Telephone (972) 925-1400 Fax (972) 925-1401

Web site/URL https://www.dallasisd.org/gilliam E-mail gsmith@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 Mr. 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	40	59	99
10	46	62	108
11	43	49	92
12 or higher	28	66	94
Total Students	157	236	393

*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
 - 0.5 % Asian
 - 47.1 % Black or African American
 - 49.5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 0.3 % White
 - 2.6 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 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	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	373
(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: 23 %
91 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 72 %

Total number students who qualify: 281

8. Students receiving special education services: 1 %
3 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>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>1</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: 9
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.	20
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.	1
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.

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	98%	93%	98%	97%	97%
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	69
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	80%
Enrolled in a community college	10%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	10%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
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. 2014

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

The mission of Gilliam Collegiate Academy is to ensure "College Access and Success for All."

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.

Based on survey responses from the families of our scholars, Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy opened the 2020-2021 school year adopting a hybrid model schedule in accordance with the Dallas ISD’s policy. Families/Parents had the choice of having their student learn from home via a virtual platform or to physically return to campus for face to face instruction. Some chose a combination of the two. To best adhere to safety standards, scholars were brought back by grade level and then assigned to small pods. This allowed for reduced class size, making possible social distancing and for contact tracing if a student or staff member became infected with COVID-19. The hybrid model brought freshman and junior level scholars on-campus (OC) on Mondays and Tuesdays, while sophomore and senior level scholars would attend on-campus Wednesdays and Thursdays, with Fridays dedicated for providing extra support and resources to scholars. As the school year progressed, based on student data and conferences with parents, more scholars returned to full time (5 days a week) on-campus instruction.

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

Gilliam Collegiate Academy values a diverse community of scholars who contribute to the successful learning community. Each year, the school recruits and enrolls scholars historically underrepresented in post-secondary education. Prospective scholars complete an application and are selected using a weighted lottery. This lottery provides additional weight to scholars who are identified as at-risk, first generation, receive free or reduced lunch, have good attendance and motivation to succeed.

PART III - SUMMARY

Early College High School (ECHS) campuses combine high school and college courses during grades 9-12 and are designed to prepare at-risk first-generation college scholars for academic success in college and the global marketplace through attainment of a simultaneous high school diploma and associate degree. Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy (GCA) is one of four ECHS campuses among thirty-eight high schools in the Dallas Independent School District (DISD). Because the paired community college was too small to accommodate an ECHS, DISD committed \$21.5 million on a visionary stand-alone ECHS architecturally designed and constructed to mirror a college campus. GCA was Texas's flagship (and only) stand-alone ECHS for several years until other Texas districts adopted the model. Located within southern Dallas, student demographics reflect the community: 47% African American and 50% Hispanic. However, while stand-alone, GCA still serves an at-risk 100% minority population with three-fourths of the students economically disadvantaged and most first-generation college students.

Building relationships with the community, parents, and business partners is the driving force and mission of GCA. The partnership with Dallas College Cedar Valley Campus (CVC) is essential to the ECHS vision. More than 60% of seniors graduate with their associate degree and high school diploma. In partnership with the University of North Texas Dallas (UNT Dallas), seniors graduating with associate degrees receive free tuition, which 10% of the Class of 2020 gratefully accepted.

The school's unparalleled success in closing the achievement gap evolves from the positive environment that supports college readiness. Accomplishment of the mission statement--"College Access and Success for All"--is supported by all constituents. Families' educational support for their student-scholars cultivates positive learning habits and activates scholars' academic achievement. Teachers accelerate while remediating, supporting scholars to attain sixty transferable college credit hours or an associate degree.

GCA's educators focus on strengths and needs to grow all student-scholars academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally. Academically, educators evaluate needs through formative and summative assessments. Staff take pride in creating a positive climate for scholars while deliberately implementing socia-emotional learning (SEL) that develops students beyond academics. Teachers pursue professional development and collaboratively employ instructional techniques which foster the collegiate environment. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) develop teacher-leaders, allowing them to develop and lead professional development.

GCA excels in prioritizing norms and routines for classroom discourse, critical thinking, and writing to learn. Two programs implemented school-wide are the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and an academic advisory period, both of which address SEL, problem solving, and real-world future planning. All faculty and staff attended AVID professional development as a campus-wide initiative. Teachers embed checks for understanding throughout the lesson cycle, providing necessary readjustment, clarification, and feedback to correct scholars' misconceptions.

Before Spring Break 2020, teachers prepared for virtual learning, pre-empting the shelter-at-home announcement. However, scholars' challenging home resources such as Wi-Fi necessitated GCA working with the DISD technology department to facilitate distribution of internet hot spots.

Prior to the fall 2020 return, the administration executed a strategic plan, uniquely orienting scholars for success. Preventative, proactive, and precautionary measurements created a safe, socially-distanced campus. Students were clustered based on academics and social experiences. These grade-level "pods" rotate on the same schedule for reduced exposure and potential contact tracing. More importantly, the pods develop student-scholars as individuals who care for the academic and social needs of their group, and as smaller groups contributing to the larger community. Students invest in the welfare of peers with whom they spend their day while remaining connected with peers across pods, strengthening the school's relationships and culture.

The strategic plan also addressed technology needs during August staff development. Administration

empowered faculty to collaborate vertically within core subjects and horizontally across grade levels, determining the hybrid synchronous classroom meeting and collaboration platforms, learning management systems, and applications best suited to their curriculum and student population. Teachers trained in multiple district-approved technology suites to find student-centered interactive solutions for content delivery, assessments, checks for understanding, engagement, and socio-emotional support that worked effectively for remote and on-campus learners. Teachers were sensitive to the need to streamline not only their own but also students' cognitive load. While previous National Blue Ribbon Schools applications have discouraged mention of particular brand names, during COVID, a myriad of technology platforms has been instrumental in helping teachers and students at GCA do what they have always done best: articulate goals and achieve success. Thus, in changing circumstances, this application intentionally mentions representative brand names because the individuation of technology for student and faculty success is part of GCA's current National Blue Ribbon Schools story.

In 2014, GCA was honored with the National Blue Ribbon Schools Award. This accomplishment--and the academic success that earned the honor--has aided in promoting and marketing the campus. Pursuing ongoing excellence, GCA has transformed student recruitment, added programming to support academics and social-emotional learning, increased parental and community involvement, provided new depth of staff leadership training, recruited new faculty with advanced degrees, and secured the accessibility and availability of technology for remote and on-campus students' success.

The implementation of "College Access and Success for All" has enabled GCA to continue to exceed. Since the 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools award, GCA earned the highest state accountability rating and received distinctions in English, math, "Postsecondary Readiness and Comparative Academic Growth," and "Comparative Closing the Gaps."

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

The English Department equips learners with critical reading and writing skills, enabling student success in college-level coursework. English teachers reinforce student recognition that reading and writing skills are necessary to all career paths.

Teachers apply Advanced Placement (AP) standards and assessment blueprints to provide lessons demonstrated through curriculum maps and weekly lesson plans aligned to Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). All 11th graders take dual credit College English 1301 and 1302 taught on-campus by a GCA faculty member with a Ph.D. Proactively ensuring that scholars are learning, English teachers deliver rigorous, student-centered, hybrid instruction face-to-face and online via Zoom. Google Classroom, OneNote and PowerSchool are the primary LMSs (Learning Management Systems) for distribution of materials and instructions. Interactive Nearpod, Pear Deck, and Flip Grid activities embedded in Zoom and Google Classroom lessons embolden student participation and provide accessible artifacts of learning mastery.

Daily assessments using Demonstrations of Learning (DOLs) include quick writes and open response questions. Quarterly, scholars are assessed with a district TEKS common assessment. Other formative and summative assessments are given throughout the year to check for grade level mastery. Assessment data is analyzed to boost scholars' strengths and eliminate weaknesses. Live and remote interventions boosting student growth include one-to-one tutoring, small group tutoring, and extra practice using Ed Ready, Flocabulary and other online platforms.

The Mathematics Department equips learners with critical thinking skills necessary for success in college-level mathematics and demonstrates to learners the vast real-world applications of mathematics. Mathematics teachers align lessons to the TEKS or AP standards using curriculum maps and weekly lesson planning. Following the school's hybrid model of synchronous remote and face-to-face learning, math teachers simultaneously provide rigorous instruction for on-campus and virtual learners using Google Classroom or PowerSchool Learning as their LMS platforms. Math teachers utilize Meets, Zoom, and Teams to give scholars a breadth of technology familiarity. To increase student engagement, teachers supplement instruction with multiple online resources including PearDeck, Nearpod, ALEKS, Khan Academy, Padlet, and Edpuzzle.

Students are assessed through DOLs, teacher- or district-created exams, and multiple formative and summative assessments. Utilizing data, teachers tier student-scholars for personalized interventions and extra support. Face-to-face and remote interventions include small group or peer-to-peer instruction, tutoring, one-to-one instruction, and extra visual representations. Scholars can enroll on-campus in AP Calculus AB and BC, and off-campus in dual-credit College Algebra.

The Science Department transitioned to online assessments and homework prior to March 2020, easing the transition to online learning. Formative and summative assessments are administered online through Microsoft Forms, All-in-Learning, and PowerSchool. These platforms allow for the disaggregation of student data to drive instruction while molding personalized learning experiences through identification of learning deficiencies.

After March 2020, all course work also migrated to a digital format including classwork and laboratory investigations. Classes are held via Zoom and Microsoft Teams which allows for whole group and breakout-room instruction. Within breakout rooms, instructors can group student-scholars by traditional tiering methods, or for intervention purposes. Utilizing the hybrid structure, labs are performed by in-class scholars leading remote learners. Whole group instruction is largely delivered through Nearpod which allows for real time tracking of student engagement, checks for understanding, and artifacts for assessment. Students maintain digital notebooks for classwork, notes, and homework. Department professional development has largely focused on fluency in online instruction platforms and improving student performance and engagement across the platforms.

The Social Studies Department teaches scholars to understand the past, engage in the present, and impact the future of an ever-changing global society through mastery of the five branches of social studies. Within the hybrid method of face-to-face and distance-learning instruction, teachers deliver rigorous high-level lessons. Derived from ongoing assessments, aggressive monitoring, and recommendations, teachers implement differentiated instructions for all learners: tier 1-3, English Language Learners (ELL), gifted and talented (GT), and students with disabilities (SWD) while providing appropriate interventions. Teachers curriculum-map the TEKS to align learning standards, address academic gaps, and correct misalignments for expectations in Pre-AP Geography and World History, and dual-credit College U.S. History taught on-campus by a GCA teacher. Teachers employ the Inquiry Arc to backward design relevant, supportive, and developmentally appropriate scaffolded lessons. In lieu of prior museum field trips, scholars experience a remote field trip through project-based learning.

Social Studies teachers use various platforms to track data, inform scholars and compartmentalize information and resources, making it easier for student-scholars to navigate online learning. Meeting spaces and LMSs such as Zoom, Teams, Google Classroom, and PowerSchool Learning empower teachers with real-time student interaction inside and outside the classroom. Digital platforms with thousands of student-centered, inquiry-based social studies activities correlate to state standards. Interactive presentation tools such as Nearpod, Cahoots, EdPuzzle, Flipgrid, and Pear deck promote data-driven instruction which engage students in individual and social learning activities, provide self-reflective detailed feedback for student-scholars, and enable formative and summative assessments. Students substantiate their daily degree of mastery with a DOL, allowing teachers to evaluate necessary content scaffolding or individual interventions.

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

As a collegiate academy and school-wide AVID campus, the campus climate focuses on college- and career-readiness, and concurrently acquiring an associate degree and a high school diploma. Curriculum is consistently supported through CIF (Common Instructional Framework), required AVID elective classes, and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Differentiated instructional support is aligned with specific assessments, positive interventions, and technology-enriched instructions to prepare student-scholars for college and career.

The CIF, the core foundational model of the ECHS, supports scholars through collaborative group work, writing to learn, scaffolding, questioning, classroom talk, and literacy groups. These learning strategies support teachers' curriculum, ensuring college- and career-readiness. Teachers engage scholars in lower-stakes writing and higher-level discourse, promoting students' social-emotional learning, role-playing, reinforcing academic vocabulary, and investigation and analysis of thinking.

Student-scholars take eight semesters of college- and career-readiness electives steeped in AVID's rich resources. Synced with CIF, AVID helps them navigate more rigorous coursework through mastery of collaborative student tutorials and investigative Socratic Dialogue. AVID trains scholars in organization and personal responsibility as they maintain diligent e-agendas balancing work-life demands and e-binders with focused note-taking and organized study paths. Across campus, teachers utilize the WICOR (Writing / Inquiry / Collaboration / Organization / Critical Reading and Reasoning) strategies to invest student-scholars with academic and life skills. AVID's College Readiness comes to fruition as Seniors actively create resumes for college or careers, accomplish college applications and essays, negotiate scholarships, financial aid, or career interviews.

Whether in high school or college dual-credit classes, scholars engage in activities that reinforce the Texas Core Objectives competencies. Teachers consistently align lessons with the curriculum and framework, so student-scholars can gauge and assess their thought processes and experiences. Teachers in each content make lessons relevant by utilizing a multitude of platforms to support scholars in their online learning.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

GCA scholars cycle through all elective courses as a graduation requirement: one year each of physical education (PE) and fine arts, two years of foreign language (Spanish), four years of AVID, and dual-credit college Computer Science (COSC) and Music Appreciation (MUSI) to satisfy their associate degree. Some student-scholars also take college-level health, PE, or Spanish. All courses meet three+ hours per week.

While educating scholars about the history of sports, the PE program focuses on holistic wellness and teaches foundational physical and mental health: diet, exercise, life skills, sports, and recreational activities. Students practice life skills and knowledge in TEKS areas such as engagement, discipline, adaptability, resourcefulness, independence, and camaraderie. In hybrid learning, online and on-campus scholars meet the same standards. Via Zoom, technology applications provide sport history information, health data, visuals of proper fundamental skills and body techniques, and--through a gaming atmosphere--facilitate scholars' demonstration of learned skills, providing an artifact of mastery.

Art courses consist of Art I and Art AP 2D Design. Art I introduces art history and philosophy, media materials, principles of design, and art as a language. In the art process, student-scholars integrate basic science and math skills and explore the impact of the whole person on the art outcome. In AP 2D Design, scholars can earn college credit while learning the basic principles of design, rhythm, balance, and composition of form and style. Students complete sketches, photos, and video projects inspired from personal interests. The teacher provides critical feedback on modified projects in which homebound scholars explore art using common materials adapted to produce high-quality artwork. Student work is uploaded to the AVID e-binder, and periodically displayed throughout the school and in rotating exhibitions in the school art gallery.

Strengthening the Fine Arts TEKS, all students take dual-credit Music Appreciation (MUSI) in which they study the cultural and historical influences of the music of Western Civilization with a special emphasis on the classical Baroque period to contemporary. Students explore basic elements of music composition including rhythm, tempo, key and time signatures, and ear training.

As a school-wide AVID campus, all student-scholars spend four years in the TEKS-aligned AVID program which develops scholars' college- and career-readiness, preparing them for post-secondary opportunities. AVID electives equip scholars with an academic toolbox including WICOR strategies. Additionally, student-scholars receive social-emotional learning in collaboration, team building, and problem-solving lessons and activities delivered through multiple interactive technology platforms and software applications.

Foreign language (Spanish I and II) helps prepare student-scholars for a global economy. In Spanish I, foundational skills increase communication fluency as student-scholars read, write, and speak in Spanish. Spanish II boosts scholars' sophistication in communication. Student-scholars engage across multiple technology platforms, completing interactive Spanish-language projects to build their dream house, design complete seasonal wardrobes, and create environmentally-friendly products using recycled materials.

Aligned with the Technology TEKS, students' dual-credit Computer Science (COSC) introduces basic operating systems, hardware and software, and familiarizes them with basic career-preparatory knowledge of the internet, word processing, spreadsheets, databases, and presentation graphics. Students study historical context, societal impact, and become effective technology users for educational, business, and personal applications.

3. Academic Supports:

Daily instruction follows Common Instructional Framework (CIF). Each school year and during weekly PLC meetings, faculty participates in training and practice of CIF strategies. Content is delivered through good first instruction, modeling, whole-group and small-group guided instruction, and independent practice. Instruction is differentiated to directly address the varying needs of learners. Daily assessments through DOLs are used for student grouping, instructional response, and interventions.

Teachers actively monitor, assess, and review student participation, progress, class data, and learning needs. Consistent instructional adjustments improve student outcomes and ensure student engagement. Identifying students needing support, teachers engage them in tutoring: peer-led, teacher-led, and technology-based. While the AP curriculum and CIF framework cater to varying students' needs, talented and gifted (TAG) students (33% in 2020-21) receive accelerated instruction and choice assignments to ensure they are engaged in appropriately rigorous assessments. TAG students take advanced math classes, additional college classes, and are trained as AVID peer tutors. Students performing below grade level receive weekly content tutoring offered during advisory, after school, and in-class small group instruction. Specialized support is provided for initiatives such as TSI, SAT, AP, or STAAR exam preparation via EdReady, BLITZ Week, and Saturday school. Students with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations and modifications to content, delivery, and products. While there is no formal English Language Learners (ELL) program, teachers plan for and deliver instruction for ELL students (23% in 2020-21), accounting for the Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening domains of the English Language Proficiency Standards.

Scholars' achievement is essential to GCA's effectiveness. Faculty and administration embed appropriate support to help student-scholars succeed academically. One of the most important aspects is the mutually strong teacher-to-student relationships which activate student achievement and teacher effectiveness. GCA teachers recognize that scholars require support beyond the traditional academic model. While setting appropriate personal boundaries, teachers may offer virtual support after-hours, weekends, over breaks and holidays, making themselves available through alert notice software or remote "office hours" consultations. Showered with good communication, positive attitudes, and a safe learning environment, scholars flourish.

GCA focuses on building strong grade-level peer relationships. A current innovation is grade-level "pods" which rotate on the same schedule to foster peer support within small groups. GCA also reinforces cross-level peer relationships. Through a summer bridge program facilitated by rising sophomore -through-senior scholars, incoming 9th-graders are introduced to their high school and college curriculums, and they establish relationships with experienced peer leaders. They enroll during summer in an academic enrichment program (EdReady) with a personalized study path which addresses gaps for English and college math, for TSI exams, and provides skill sets for the PSAT, SAT, and ACT.

As a collegiate academy, GCA provides academic support for college success, including the AVID required elective and weekly progress check-ins through Advisory. Student-scholars access a Google Classroom specific to their graduation year (i.e., "GCA Class of 2024" for this year's freshmen) to complete college course selections, or forms and screenshots of grades to monitor progress. By email and Remind messages, students are regularly updated on important dates, countdowns, and exam information.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Educators and administrators of the school are focused on supporting the whole child. All campus personnel contribute to building relationships and creating practices to ensure each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. These practices create a positive school climate which allows student-scholars to thrive academically and contribute to the school's success. Students are motivated by the college-like atmosphere and family culture of the school. Starting in ninth grade, students attend orientation to acclimate new scholars to GCA's expectations and goals and to prepare them for rigorous studies. Students who participate in the summer program can meet their teachers and bond with one another through team-building activities. Also, seasoned upperclass students mentor and partner with incoming students to assist in familiarity with campus culture.

Students receive continued support during the year through a college-readiness program designed to develop the skills necessary for college success. This program prepares students for the reading and writing sections of a college-entrance exam. A passing score shows the student is ready for college-level course work and they are enrolled in college classes they will take throughout their high school career.

In addition to academics, each scholar participates in a wide-ranging selection of extracurricular and co-curricular programs, like intramural activities, clubs, college fairs, college visits and a college signing day. The academic and social pressures of being an early college scholar are the critical reasons programs and events like dances (Homecoming, Valentine's, and Prom) are presented. They are an avenue for social and cultural engagement.

Diversity and student achievement are celebrated through various student-led programs, including the Hispanic Heritage Program and the Black History Program. Students display comfort in showing their talents and interests to the entire school and the community, which can be attributed to the positive environment of the school. Academic celebrations each grading period, also recognize students on the A/B Honor Roll and for college achievement. The GCA Awards program, which recognizes students in many areas, is held at the end of the year.

Recently, GCA staff received additional training in professional development in SEL and Unconscious Bias when the pandemic amplified scholars' social and emotional struggles. Educators developed a culturally responsive mindset and began to infuse innovative ways to facilitate on-campus and virtual learning. Campus administrators and faculty created and implemented positive classroom management strategies and introduced different learning platforms to engage at-home learners as well as students who eventually came to campus for classes.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Encouraging parental involvement on campus begins during the application process and continues throughout the student's academic journey. Families are encouraged to tour the campus during the application process. Conducted by student ambassadors, these tours provide parents an opportunity to see the campus, meet teachers, and ask questions before making enrollment decisions. Since COVID, virtual tours allow guardians to remotely experience the beautiful GCA campus.

While GCA includes families frequently, one of the highlights is the Family Fun Night, a chance for parents, scholars, faculty, and staff to come together to enjoy a meal, games, karaoke, dancing, and other festivities. Childcare is provided by teachers and staff to allow parents to relax and enjoy the evening. Admission is two canned goods minimum per person donated to the local community food pantry.

Quarterly Parent/Guardian "Meet the Teacher" events are essential to disseminate updates on individual scholars and provide families the insight to keep their scholars on track and successful. "Coffee with the Principal" events allow parents a conversation with top administration for updates on school activities while

providing a dedicated space for parent questions. Post-COVID, these meetings have continued remotely. Covid-triggered bi-annual award celebrations and Senior Ovation are now drive-through events to allow parents to celebrate their students' achievements.

Parental involvement supports campus success. Informed parents continue to make the campus great despite the limitations and changes forced by the pandemic. To inform parents and students about important notices and events, the school administration and faculty rely heavily on a text messaging and document attachment app.

Community partners are also critical in the thriving atmosphere of the school. One such fruitful community relationship is the Upward Bound Program through the University of North Texas at Dallas. Upward Bound develops scholars' academic, emotional, ethical, physical, and social skills for transformational impact in life, school, and leadership. Student-participants have a high academic success rate: 92% have a GPA of 2.5 or better and 66% enroll in postsecondary education. This year, Upward Bound has continued to work virtually with scholars.

Developing partnerships with parents and community organizations such as Upward Bound are some of many ways GCA fulfills its mission of "College Success and Access for All" and ensures the long-term success of students. Involved parents and supportive community partners boost the flourishing educational environment for all student-scholars.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The success of students is contingent on the health and effectiveness of all campus staff. The professional culture contributes to teacher satisfaction, competence, and performance. The GCA administration routinely solicits input from teachers and staff concerning classroom and campus policies, organization, and instruction. In committees, staff meetings, and weekly PLCs, teachers and staff have a valued voice in decision-making, and input is truly invited and considered with weight. The deliberate planning of inclusive events and purposeful activities creates a respectful and professional culture for all staff. Planning periods are honored, allowing for the development of consistent, effective, and quality student instruction. Additional teams (committees) are formed to allow for staff to work and support each other regarding special interest and/or extracurricular activities as well as in the day-to-day management and administration of the school. In the various school committees, members genuinely and respectfully listen and cultivate the opinions of others in the discourse of the school. The support and collaborative attitude that teachers receive ultimately promotes decision-making from the bottom up, rather than the top down.

The administration at GCA celebrates excellence, by taking time to offer formal and informal recognition of small and big achievements. The school gives awards for teachers with outstanding student achievement on local, state, and national assessments. Teachers whose scholars exceed prior receive special recognition.

GCA has a very strong and vibrant mentorship program, which assists new teachers to the school, to acclimatize and fit in very quickly into the professional culture of the school. Teachers learn new technologies and teach peers how to use various media tools effectively for remote and hybrid environments. The appointed technology teacher serves as a peer mentor, researching and coordinating, as well as overseeing the use of technology in learning and teaching. More importantly, teachers are encouraged to attend professional development provided by DISD relevant to their specific teaching areas.

Teachers are highly regarded and respected, and their social and emotional welfare is valued. The Sunshine committee showers teachers on milestone events. For instance, on birthdays, teachers receive cards and gifts, as well as birthday wishes from all members of staff and scholars. Prior to COVID, the committee organized annual staff dinners where teachers socialized, relaxed, and interacted in informal settings. More importantly, GCA celebrates the diversity of its teachers by encouraging them to express their cultural heritage and to learn and understand the different cultures of their peers.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership team at GCA is committed to improving the educational experience and promoting the professional and personal growth of staff and student-scholars. Every action and decision of the leadership team aligns with this philosophy and the school's mission of "College Access and Success for ALL."

The Administration Team (A-Team) --the principal, assistant principal, counselor, early college coordinator and instructional coach--meets weekly. The Principal's Executive Leadership Team (PELT) includes the members of the A-Team, along with department heads and grade-level team leaders and meets bi-weekly. The campus is small; therefore, leaders must wear many hats, taking on roles traditionally assigned to other personnel.

The principal serves as the visionary, encourager and facilitator for A-Team meetings, PELT meetings, PLCs, and campus-based professional development. The principal and members of the A-Team work collaboratively, utilizing data to inform instruction and campus decisions as well as to cultivate leadership among the ranks of teachers.

The assistant principal's primary responsibilities are to evaluate and coach teachers, and work directly with the higher education partner, Cedar Valley College, to enroll scholars in dual-credit college courses and track their progress on the associate degree. The coordinator is responsible for recruitment, intake, enrollment, and training of each new cohort of 9th grade students, as well monitoring all scholars' academic progress in college courses. GCA's instructional coach manages academic instruction, high school tutoring, mentoring and African American student initiatives. She also coaches teachers and maintains campus data. The department heads and grade-level team leads serve as content experts and campus mentors, facilitating an integrated faculty response to the academic and socio-emotional needs of student-scholars.

In preparation for the opening of school in 2020-21, the principal and A-Team overhauled the master schedule, investing time and attention to strategically grouping students in grade-level "pods" with the same daily rotation of schedule. Instructional technology was purchased for all teachers to use in their classrooms and at home in the event of another shut-down. The campus team developed safety protocols, virtual learning guides, and social-emotional activities. The work of the leadership team resulted in zero COVID-19 cases for on-campus learners.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

GCA takes pride in fostering a diverse school culture and the environment through inclusion, awareness, and communication. Transparency is the key to constructing and conducting a diverse, rich campus that celebrates every student, family, and staff, regardless of their needs and background. The school consistently meets the diverse needs of the staff through weekly PLCs and monthly staff meetings in which all celebrate the accomplishments and celebration of staff individually and wholly. The entire staff attended an Unconscious Bias PD training to learn and practice behaviors that lead to a more excellent workplace and classroom belonging.

The entire campus celebrates Heritage Months, such as Hispanic Heritage, Black History Month, Women's Month, with activities and historical knowledge of individuals over the announcement. Each year, students create a sponsored student-led Hispanic Heritage and Black History program. Students bring cultural clothing, dance, poetry, music, history, videos, and skits to express their pride. After the programs, students partake in different cultural foods.

The counselor ensures students are aware of the different colleges through College Fair Days held by the campus and the district, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). During Character Counts week, staff and faculty ensure that students understand that their uniqueness and character are essential to the campus culture of success. Drug-Free Month and Career Day programs provide events, guests, and programs for students to learn and hear from people from all walks of life.

GCA has many clubs and teams that students can be a part of, such as the Social Impact Challenge team which addresses voting rights, one of their most challenging issues. This year's team competed in the "GO VOTE: An Exercise in Democracy Challenge" and won a Bronze medal for their solution. The campus is part of Big Thought which develops and delivers high-quality curriculum and programs to serve historically marginalized groups by working alongside communities. Staff completed training and created the Poetry Club that attends DaVerse Lounge programs on- and off-campus. Students meet weekly and express themselves through poetry, song, art, and dance. Scholars create a poem to perform in front of students and attendees from all over. Formation of an LGBTQ Youth charter entitled Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) on campus is already in progress. GCA is committed to addressing the needs of all students, families, and staff.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

GCA strives to help each student reach their full academic potential as well as ensure that they have well established infrastructure for social and emotional support. The school has created a personalized approach that ensures that staff meet each student's needs. One tool utilized in this task is the academic advisory period. By definition, an academic advisory provides academic/content support to scholars, but in addition, however, tiering has strategically placed student-scholars into grade-level pods related to academic and social interests while also providing academic tracing, social/emotional support, and team/school culture building practices. By adapting the standard student advisory period through these strategies into a multilayered, highly effective academic tool, GCA has improved student outcomes. This four-tiered approach maximizes the effectiveness of the academic advisory strategy.

Academically, each teacher communicates with their grade level team any areas where student-scholars are struggling while providing information regarding upcoming assessments that require additional prep work on the student's part. This allows for focused teacher-facilitated academic reinforcement and improves students' ability to stay on track and achieve optimum academic output. Additionally, a portion of the advisory period is utilized for tracking students' attendance and high school and college grades and holding them personally accountable for goal-setting and maintaining the high standards required of GCA scholars. Advisory time is ideal for teacher-mentors to establish a personal connection with scholars, ensuring that they understand that the faculty are not only committed to their academic success but also committed to their overall success in and beyond high school.

Academic achievement is how schools get recognized but having scholars that know they have a voice and caring support system and are valued--these attitudes create the culture of success. On a rotating basis throughout the year, the advisory period allows teacher-mentors to focus on the social and emotional needs of scholars. Advisory is a safe space where student-scholars feel comfortable talking about challenges they face or traumas they experience directly or indirectly through media and world events. With engaging activities and deep conversations, the faculty ensure that individual students understand how important they are to the GCA family. Advisory time is also infused with team-building practices that foster a sense of community and a unified campus culture. The goal is not simply to produce numbers on a page as indicators of success but to create holistic individuals with the grit and aptitude for success and the agility to overcome challenges, academic or otherwise.