

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Early College High School at Midland College  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3600 North Garfield Allison Fine Arts Building  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Midland State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79705-6329

County Midland County

Telephone (432) 685-4641 Fax (432) 685-4669

Web site/URL https://www.midlandisd.net/Domain/2484 E-mail veronica.ramirez@midlandisd.net

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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Angelica Ramsey E-mail angelica.ramsey@midlandisd.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Midland Independent School District Tel. (432) 240-1000

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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Bryan Murry  
(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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 27 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 7 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 39 TOTAL

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

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

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021 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	37	60	97
10	38	56	94
11	52	38	90
12 or higher	29	44	73
<b>Total Students</b>	156	198	354

\*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):
- 0.3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 4.5 % Asian
  - 10.5 % Black or African American
  - 67.5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 15.5 % White
  - 1.7 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 4%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	354
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %

6 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 33 %

Total number students who qualify: 116

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 5 %  
18 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 with an IEP or 504 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>3</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>2</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: 8
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.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	0
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	96%	99%	96%	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 2021.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	79
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	86%
Enrolled in a community college	7%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	1%
Found employment	5%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
Other	0%

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

Yes  No

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

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

At the Early College High School at Midland College, students will graduate with an associate's degree and a high school diploma. They will be prepared for a bachelor's degree program while demonstrating commitment to self and community. It is through a culture that focuses on honesty, kindness, responsibility, integrity, desire, and respect that students become leaders and develop the skills that lead to success for today and preparation for tomorrow.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

Midland ISD prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, age, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law in all its programs and activities.

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

Early College High School uses a weighted lottery for acceptance of students. This is a random selection process that provides additional weight or increased chances to individual students who are identified as first generation college students, at risk students, low socio-economic students, underrepresented populations at the secondary level.

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Midland sits midway between Dallas and El Paso in an isolated region of Texas noted primarily for contributions to the oil and gas industry. In 2020, estimated industry revenue exceeded 110 billion dollars and the Greater Permian Basin accounted for nearly 40 percent of that revenue. With population increases of 41.82 % over the last 10 years, 138,254 people now call Midland home. While Midland contributes significantly to the national economy, rapid population growth creates unique needs in every sector of our community, in particular education.

Not everyone shares the benefits of a robust local economy and recruiting skilled professionals represents a challenge. By developing homegrown talent, Early College High School at Midland College (ECHS at MC) addresses both issues. The percentage of adults in the United States, age 25 and over, who hold bachelor's degrees jumped to 36% in 2019, however only 27.4% of adults age 25 and over in Midland hold bachelor's degrees. ECHS at MC makes a college education reality for more students in our community, in particular for those students who may not have considered it a possibility,

Targeted intervention and comprehensive services at ECHS at MC successfully address its mission as defined by the Texas Education Agency. ECHS at MC gives scholars historically underrepresented in college courses, including first generation college goers, scholars of low socioeconomic status, African American scholars, and Hispanic scholars, opportunity to realize advanced educational goals and, by extension, opportunity to contribute significantly to their community. It is a win/win.

ECHS at MC addresses each scholar's academic, emotional, physical, social, and cultural needs. Rigorous curriculum, presented through a Common Instructional Framework, ensures development of knowledge and skills required of high school graduates in Texas, as well as college and career readiness skills, and discipline specific standards defined by the College Board for Advanced Placement courses. The framework details specific outcomes and initiates planned strategies to support success. Utilizing instructional rounds as a component of staff development, teachers work collaboratively to improve teaching and learning.

Scholars enroll with differing levels of academic skill, background knowledge, and study habits. Individual needs are addressed during the school day, through planned intervention in reading, math, social studies, and Texas Success Initiative Assessment two, (TSIA2), a unique preparatory course designed to ensure students pass state mandated college readiness tests. Scholars enrolled in college courses utilize the extensive array of support provided by Midland College, including the Language Hub, Math Lab, library, professor study sessions, and professor office hours. The program closes gaps that exist and develops critical study habits and strategies. ECHS at MC recognizes success as motivating and structures intervention to support each student's success.

A four-year program, ECHS at MC offers an integrated and rigorous curriculum of high school and dual credit courses. Students graduate with a high school diploma and up to two years of college credit or an associate degree in arts or science. Ninth grade scholars take up to seven high school classes and one college course, taught by a college professor. Tenth grade scholars take up to seven high school classes and three to four college courses. Eleventh grade scholars take three high school classes and eight college courses. Twelfth grade scholars take two to three high school classes and eight to ten college courses.

Scholars choose among fifty college courses and have the option to participate in Midland College University Partnerships. Partnerships offer multiple pathways to completing four-year degrees. Sul Ross State University offers several four-year degrees on the MC Campus. The University of North Texas Health Sciences Center offers a fast-track to medical school. Texas A&M, Texas Tech and the University of the Texas Permian Basin offer pathways to engineering degrees. ECHS at MC scholars have been accepted to medical school one year subsequent to high school graduation.

Prior to the pandemic ECHS at MC implemented restorative practices, strategies to encourage mutual respect among students and faculty and to initiate positive changes supporting a healthy school community. During the pandemic teachers utilized restorative practices in interactive online platforms. Currently,

restorative circles are used in classrooms and advisory programs.

Scholars have access to extracurricular programs at the high school level and through Midland College, including clubs and organizations allowing participation in health and wellness activities, robotic competitions, intramural sports, and UIL competition. Students engage in community service, working with schools, libraries, and organizations such as Keep Midland Beautiful and Meals on Wheels. Honor societies, including National Honor Society at the high school level and Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society at the college level are open to scholars. Historically, ECHS at MC scholars represent the highest percentage of honor graduates at Midland College.

Home to bright and motivated scholars, a faculty that puts kids first, and a community that supports our program, ECHS at MC helps all scholars Rise Above, Go Beyond and Conquer All.

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

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

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

Through collaborative efforts of faculty, family and community, Early College High School at Midland College positions itself to enhance the quality of curriculum and to ensure the effectiveness of assessment and instruction. Outcomes demonstrate accelerated achievement for all students.

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) lead faculty in determining learning goals in each discipline for each scholar. Professional Learning Communities at ECHS at MC regularly and systematically evaluate and align existing curricula to the TEKS, as well as to college readiness standards. Using knowledge of state standards, current research, effective instructional strategies, and, most importantly, benchmark data collected for each scholar, Professional Learning Communities revise and refine curriculum and select best implementation practices and complementary resource materials.

With the goal of developing scholars who are both competent and engaged, faculty selects instructional practices that encourage each scholar to investigate the world beyond their immediate environment, to recognize different perspectives, to communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences, and to act as appropriate. In every classroom, the day's learning objectives lesson are prominently posted along with the associated TEKS or learning targets. Students regularly show mastery of the TEKS through an end of class demonstration of learning. These demonstrations of learning move beyond basic skills and challenge scholars to show understanding of complex content reflective of college readiness standards.

The Common Instructional Framework guides selection of best instructional practices, practices most appropriate for use in assisting scholars in achieving and reaching targeted academic standards. Faculty acquire and develop proficiency with effective strategies for delivering the TEKS in each content area, including direct instruction enhanced by technology support. Faculty regularly engage in a program of ongoing and substantive staff development to ensure maximum student engagement and mastery of the TEKS. Students benefit from a robust, rigorous, and relevant curriculum promoting deeper understanding of big ideas, essential questions, and enduring understandings.

#### **1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Reading proficiency represents a foundational prerequisite for college readiness and success. ECHS at MC provides targeted reading support for identified scholars in two unique courses, Reading End of Course and Texas Success Initiative A2 a computerized adaptive test, serves to improve instruction by providing specific information about real time skill development. The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSI) provide summative information to benchmark progress of individual students and the school.

Reading faculty uses a variety of strategies to differentiate instruction and eliminate gaps. Reading curriculum aligns with English I and II curriculum to ensure lessons supplement not supplant what happens in each course. Reading End of Course data provides strategies that transfer to any discipline and data indicate reading classes positively affect scholar success.

English Language Arts curriculum aligns with TEKS and addresses the goal of College Board Advanced Placement English and Composition courses, to enable scholars to read complex texts with understanding and to write prose of sufficient richness and complexity to communicate effectively with mature readers. Curriculum also aligns with MISD's College, Career and Military Readiness standards and prerequisite skills for Midland College English courses.

Faculty uses a variety of online resources, some available at no cost and some purchased, to complement

faculty developed lessons computerized adaptive testing identifies strengths and needs, and resources are selected as appropriate. The school issues each scholar a personal device, maximizing use of selected platforms for diagnostic and instructional purposes.

In professional learning communities (PLC), faculty analyzes and disaggregates formative and summative data from common assessment tools, some norm-referenced, and some components of instructional platforms. In targeted tutorial sessions, using Response to Intervention, faculty addresses individual scholar needs. Formative assessments, including low-stakes quizzes and practice without penalty, drive instructional choices and build scholar confidence.

Faculty implements Common Instructional Framework (CIF) practices, aligned vertically to support students of varying abilities. Strategies including collaborative learning, critical and constructive feedback, peer-to-peer learning, and scaffolding, questioning, and classroom talk support differentiation and increase scholar engagement. All scholars keep journals housing guided notes, academic vocabulary, grammar corrections, timed writing, graphic organizers, sentence stems and paragraph stems.

All scholars take MISD's Enhanced Academic Services courses in English I and English II. Faculty embraces a growth mindset, encouraging scholars to work through incremental challenges while meeting advanced goals. Pacing relates directly to the needs of scholars and evolves in consideration of learning styles and demonstrations of mastery. Self-selected reading encourages engagement by leveraging personal interests. Learning activities require critical thinking in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Scholars demonstrate mastery using differentiated products, including podcasts, autobiographies, commercials, newscasts, debates, poetry for symposiums, and writing competition submissions. Lessons and assignments pair classic literature written from diverse perspectives, genres with real-world connections, outside sources, and modern texts.

A block schedule better supports scholars in college English classes by mirroring the Midland College schedule. Longer classes and grading periods, as well as daily advisory periods, provide time to meet complex instructional goals, address remediation, and allow for sustained silent reading.

### **1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Math faculty addresses learning standards established by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and utilizes a common planning tool, Year at a Glance from an online curriculum management system, to guide scope and sequence decisions in math courses. Faculty makes flexible choices about the logical progression of instruction, regularly adjusting pacing to meet individual scholar needs.

Scholars take MISD's Enhanced Academic Services (EAS) courses in Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Precalculus. EAS courses provide students opportunity to develop higher level thinking skills through immersion in rigorous content, at an accelerated pace, and using performance assessments at the synthesis and evaluative levels. Support classes prepare scholars who find math more challenging to pass both the State End of Course Exam (EOC) and the Texas Success Initiative A2 Test (TSIA2). Additional support allows all scholars to meet the standards of EAS courses.

Math faculty utilizes Common Formative Assessment (CFA) strategies, including collaborative groups and scaffolding, questioning, and classroom talk. CFA strategies encourage sense making in math through multiple representations at increasing levels of complexity. Other common instructional approaches include math journals to house guided notes, foldables, vocabulary, and theorems.

Selected online programs provide scholars options for supplemental practice, especially useful in eliminating learning gaps evidenced as a consequence of the COVID pandemic. Other online programs allow scholars access to instructional videos that provide step-by-step problem-solving examples and support successful independent practice. The school issues each scholar a chrome book, providing unlimited access to independent practice.

Scholars enrolled in Algebra II and Precalculus receive support related to concurrent College Algebra at Midland College. The Precalculus curriculum uses TEKS aligned with the College Algebra course. First semester Precalculus supports students in a one-semester college Algebra course. Second semester of Precalculus includes trigonometry and its applications and supports students taking Precalculus and Trigonometry at Midland College.

Faculty acknowledges a growth mindset as a common instructional philosophy and commits to reteaching skills not yet mastered. Flexible grouping provides for enrichment activities or reteach sessions for scholars as needed. Concrete, Semi-Concrete, and Abstract (CSA) Assessments determine each scholar's ability to construct mathematical knowledge along a continuum of complexity. Scholars complete CSA assessments following all enrichment and reteach activities.

Faculty employs a centralized management system for test data, an online tool allowing for storage, retrieval, and analysis. Data related to individual progress drives instructional decisions, suggesting flexible grouping, tutorials, and retesting as needed. Continuous progress represents the goal for all scholars. Data is regularly reviewed by professional learning communities and both short term objectives and long-term goals adjusted as necessary to alignment of curriculum and efficiency of instruction.

Block scheduling provides for three eighty-minute face-to-face math classes each week. Faculty posts class notes, class videos, and links to assignments on the interactive online platform shared with Midland College. Because notes, videos, and assignments are posted on a daily basis, scholars absent for any reason stay connected to class and are less likely to fall behind. Scholars submit all assignment and projects electronically, good practice contributing to success in future college classes.

#### **1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

ECHS at MC provides Enhanced Academic Services (EAS) courses in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics I, and AP Physics I. Courses develop higher level thinking through immersion in rigorous content, at an accelerated pace, and using performance assessments requiring synthesis and evaluation. Courses align to Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), College, Career, and Military Readiness standards, MC course prerequisites, and AP College Board goals. Scholars ask questions and define problems, develop and use models, plan and carry out investigations, analyze and interpret data, construct explanations and design solutions, engage in arguments using evidence, and use mathematics and computational thinking. Scholars may challenge courses offered by Midland College.

With one-to-one online access, faculty utilizes a common platform shared with Midland College to posts notes and learning logs, and to accept assignments. Scholars benefit from clear expectations, high standards, and continuous support. A qualified remote facilitator aids students working online, and available practice programs develop literacy skills. Faculty implements Common Instructional Framework (CIF) practices, aligned vertically to support scholars of varying abilities. Collaborative learning, critical and constructive feedback, peer-to-peer learning, and scaffolding, questioning, and classroom talk support differentiation and engagement. Block scheduling, including longer classes and grading periods, supports scholars in college classes.

Faculty builds multi-sensory lessons, using infographics, images, manipulatives, demonstrations, practice sets and labs to promote understanding. Scholars complete project-based activities encouraging meaningful learning in five domains, science knowledge, science processes, creativity, attitude, application and connection. Scholars develop critical thinking skills by speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

In professional learning communities, faculty analyzes formative and summative data. Formative assessments, low-stakes quizzes and practice without penalty, drive instruction and build scholar confidence. Summative assessments require application versus recall and encourage complex thinking. Summative data identifies scholars needing intervention through tutorials. PLC's identify vocabulary, common misconceptions, and activities appropriate to exemplar lessons and commit to a process of continuous improvement.

### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

ECHS at MC offers three social studies courses, AP Human Geography, AP World History, and Free Enterprise Economics. Social studies curriculum aligns horizontally with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and MISD's College, Career, and Military Readiness standards. Consistent with standards promoted by the College Board, Advanced Placement Courses promote a scholar's ability to intelligently evaluate the human experience and their role as contributing citizens.

Scholars acquire more than knowledge of historical facts and current events; they improve critical thinking and literacy skills. Faculty relates learning to roles as United States citizens and members of the world community. To promote scholar success on the US History End of Course (EOC) Assessment, scholars take a support course the year of test administration.

Faculty utilizes the Common Instructional Framework as a guide for creating an engaging learning environment. Faculty employs common instructional strategies, including collaborative group work, writing to learn, and scaffolding, questioning, and classroom talk. Faculty adopts other instructional strategies, including independent learning, portfolio development, journaling, learning logs, and role-playing.

Faculty utilizes formative and summative assessments aligned with learning standards. Faculty administers formative assessments to check for understanding prior to instruction. Data gathered informs organization and pacing and allows for individualization. Faculty uses varied summative assessments, including quizzes, tests, and demonstrations to evaluate each scholar's knowledge and understanding. The department's professional learning community analyzes data from summative assessments and, as a team, develops ideas for improvement.

ECHS at MC and MC share a common online communication platform. Faculty posts assignments and agendas on this platform, and updates information with daily announcements. Consistent use allows scholars participating virtually to continue to work, as well as reinforces standards and expectations. Because the school issues each scholar a personal device, faculty utilizes links to varied online resources to enrich the learning experience, encourage engagement between and among scholars, and provide reinforcement to a level of mastery.

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

ECHS at MC scholars take Path-College/Career (PATH) courses each year. Aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), PATH courses prepare Texas high school students for challenges faced after graduation. PATH courses develop habits and skills expected in college study or the workforce, including personal, interpersonal, and cognitive skills essential to productivity in both environments. By encouraging intellectual curiosity, and conscientious, dependable, and persistent behavior, curriculum fosters deeper levels of thinking and reasoning in the disciplines.

Freshman scholars attend a Summer Bridge program introducing the early college program and including team building and preparation for the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) exam. Passing the TSI represents a prerequisite for dual credit courses at MC, and a scholar's scores trigger support services as needed. Weekly progress checks initiated by PATH faculty encourages progress. If a scholar needs additional support, parents, teachers, and the student coordinate an individualized plan.

Scholars compose and develop emails, letters, resumes, essays, and presentations using appropriate professional standards. They complete applications, including Apply Texas, a common application for admission to Texas public universities; the Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); and the Texas Application for Student Financial Aid (TASFA). Scholars take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), prerequisite for military enlistment. Scholars take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), contributing to scholarship opportunities and college admissions. Scholars are required to visit university campuses, and to attend preparatory sessions for tests and on-site college fairs and forums.

ECHS at MC scholars complete a high school diploma and simultaneously complete an Associate of Arts or Science degree from MC. Degree plans includes 60 hours of coursework, 42 hours of general education requirements and 18 hours contributing to a scholar's desired major. Scholars complete 140 hours of required community service, developing appreciation for giving back to the community and strengthening communication and networking skills.

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

1. Arts – Visual and/or Performing

ECHS at MC does not offer visual and/or performing arts courses as part of the high school program. Once scholars have satisfied requirements for high school graduation, and if courses are compatible with their degree plan and schedule, scholars may enroll in Midland College visual and/or performing arts courses.

2. Physical Education/Health/Nutrition

ECHS at MC ninth grade scholars participate in physical education classes every other day throughout the school year to satisfy high school graduation requirements. The physical education curriculum aligns with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and includes objectives related to movement, physical activity, health, and social development. Faculty encourages scholars to set individual goals for improving physical fitness and health. During each class, faculty provides time for scholars to engage in strength building activities to improve upper body strength, abdominal strength, flexibility, and cardiovascular endurance. Team and lifetime recreational sports are utilized to teach and practice physical fitness standards.

3. Foreign Language

ECHS at MC scholars take Spanish to satisfy high school graduations requirements for languages other than English. Courses align to Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Spanish I and Spanish II. Spanish scholars gain basic proficiency with the Spanish language and intercultural competencies needed to communicate effectively with other Spanish speakers.

Spanish scholars demonstrate language proficiency in four domains, listening, reading, speaking and writing. Scholars negotiate and interpret meaning and develop an understanding of the Spanish language at an introductory level. Once scholars have completed Spanish I and II, they may enroll in advanced level Spanish courses available at Midland College, including Intermediate Spanish I and Intermediate Spanish II.

4. Technology/Library/Media

ECHS at MC subscribes to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for technology. Technology TEKS emphasize the need for creativity and innovation; communication and collaboration; research and information fluency; critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making; digital citizenship; and technology operations and concepts. Descriptions provided for each content area indicate careful planning to incorporate the use of technology across all curriculums. Applications selected for use in each course develop scholar's engagement with the TEKS

ECHS at MC benefits from the availability of one-to-one devices (chrome books) issued to all scholars. Use of a common platform with Midland College for communication among and between students and faculty supports coordination and articulation of the instructional program. The platform provides a secure place for scholars to submit assignments, participate in discussions, and review grades.

5. Other Curriculum Programs

Path-College/Career Prep (PATH) courses were described in an earlier section but are worthy of additional comment in this section. ECHS at MC students take at PATH course each year, and this course becomes a central clearing house for all things college related. Considered in this perspective, the PATH course and PATH teachers contribute directly to development of each scholar's career/life skills. PATH courses develop habits and skills expected in college study or the workforce, including personal, interpersonal, and cognitive skills essential to productivity in both environments. They represent a driving force in ECHS at MC success.

### **3. Academic Supports**

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

ECHS at MC follows the Texas Early College High School Blueprint and enrollment decisions are not based on state assessment scores, a student's grade point average, or other identifying markers of achievement. ECHS at MC seeks out scholars from subpopulations of at-risk students historically underrepresented in college courses, including first generation college goers, students of low socioeconomic status, English learners, and students with disabilities. Faculty accepts, by definition, that many ECHS at MC scholars will arrive with below grade level skills. Faculty plans for scholar success from the day one.

During Summer Bridge, a three-day orientation for ninth-grade scholars, faculty administers the Texas Success Initiative Assessment 2 (TSIA2) test for the first time. For scholars who fail to pass any section of the TSIA2, faculty prepares individualized learning plans to include targeted and intensive support in special supplemental courses. TSIA2 courses include reading, writing and math, and a scholar may be enrolled up to 80 minutes a day, five days per week. TSIA2 courses supplement, not supplant, general courses. A scholar enrolled in TSIA2 reading and writing will also be enrolled in English. Faculty works collaboratively to ensure objectives align between courses and to give all students opportunity for success.

Faculty uses instructional strategies suggested in the Common Instructional Framework (CIF), including collaborative group work, writing to learn, and scaffolding, questioning, and classroom talk. Uniquely appropriate for learners of varying abilities, strategies encourage engagement in whole-group and small group guided instruction, making it possible for all students to access complex content while gaining new skills and language competencies.

Weekly grade checks identify scholars making less than seventy-five in any course, and faculty assigns mandatory after school tutorials. Scholars may be assigned after school tutorials in a different subject each nine weeks. Faculty for each course conducts all tutorials, providing extra time for individual assistance.

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

ECHS at MC, by definition, encourages above grade level performance. The school's mission states, "In four years, all ECHS at MC students will graduate with an associate degree and a high school diploma; all students will graduate prepared for a bachelor's degree program while demonstrating commitment to self and community." The mission addresses all scholars, but unique opportunities emerge for scholars with demonstrated work ethic.

Core courses meet standards for Enhanced Academic Services (EAS) or College Board Advanced Placement. Once scholars pass TSIA2 and gain admission to MC, they earn concurrent college credit for AP courses. As freshman and sophomores, scholars demonstrate commitment to above grade-level performance by completing all assignments, communicating with faculty in a timely manner, and earning at least a 70 in all high school and college courses.

Junior scholars meeting standards earn Collegiate Status, allowing greater access to resources available at MC and flexibility in pursuing college goals. Scholars with Collegiate Status attend one daily advisory and report directly to college classes. Collegiate Status allows scholars time during the day to work with study groups, to use the MC math and writing labs, to set up appointments with college professors, and finish homework at the library.

Once scholars earn Collegiate Status, they must satisfy specific enhanced standards, including a 98% daily attendance check-in for high school and college courses and a minimum grade of 85 in all high school and college courses. They must submit all assignments in a timely manner, attend required advisories, and demonstrate commitment to core values for behavior.

Scholars who earn and maintain Collegiate Status may take additional college courses, putting them on a faster track to graduate both with their high school diploma and an associate degree. Scholars who maintain Collegiate Status often serve as ECHS at MC ambassadors earning recognition as campus leaders. Collegiate Status translates to motivation for above grade level performance.

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

ECHS at MC provides special education services and support to three current scholars. The school provides services and support specified in each scholar's Individual Education Plan (IEP). High school faculty and college professors participate in Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings. High school faculty and college professors regularly advocate for scholars and implement IEPs with fidelity.

Scholars at-risk, including special education students, benefit from the array of support services offered all students at ECHS at MC. Tiered instruction, active grade monitoring, mandatory tutorials, and targeted instruction, each contribute to scholar success. These support services may or may not be listed in a scholar's IEP but regularly employed to ensure active engagement and greater success for all scholars, including special education students. High school faculty and college professors commit to a close and collaborative relationship with the parents of special education students and provide progress updates every three weeks.

ECHS at MC scholars with impairments/disabilities that affect major life activities have a legal right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and are eligible for a 504 plan or a 504/dyslexia plan that applies to academic, nonacademic (recess, lunch, and assemblies), and after school activities. Fifteen current ECHS scholars have protection under 504, including one scholar with a health impairment, six scholars with dyslexia, and eight scholars with a 504 plan.

At the beginning of each school year, high school faculty and college professors receive notification and training related to implementation of all student accommodations. High School teachers and college professor monitor implementation and student progress by completing an accommodations data tracker form each nine weeks. High school faculty and college professors actively communicate with scholars about use of accommodations, encouraging them to take advantage of options and support as needed. This interaction with faculty and professors helps to build the scholar's confidence.

### **3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

Emergent Bilingual English Learners (EB/EL) are assessed and identified by the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) required by Texas Education Agency (TEA). EB/EL scholars are assessed each spring to determine English proficiency with speaking, reading, listening, and writing tasks. Currently, all EB/EL scholars' function at an Advanced or Advanced High level in each of four language domains, demonstrating good progress but needing continued support. The school incorporates researched-based strategies appropriate to the needs of EB/EL scholars in every aspect of the learning environment.

Research indicates EB/EL scholars' function best in a welcoming classroom with available support in the content areas. Small classes; specific support classes in reading, writing, and math; advisory classes and PATH classes; tutorials; and access to tools at no cost contribute to a welcoming environment at ECHS at MC. Students find caring adults readily available and willing to help.

Research indicates EB/EL scholars succeed more often when provided opportunities for interaction. Instructional strategies, including collaborative group work, writing to learn, scaffolding, questioning, and

classroom talk, generalize to every classroom in every discipline. EB/EL scholars are more likely to be engaged when they have repeated practice with familiar strategies.

A one to-one campus, EB/EL scholars have access to practice platforms with an array of capabilities. One platform especially valuable to EB/EL scholars includes read-aloud capability, another works on speaking skills. Individualization, immediate feedback, and continuous progress represent hallmarks of the practice platforms utilized. Data indicates scholars improve Lexile reading scores an average of 200 points in one year through consistent use of literacy intensive practice programs. Midland Independent School District (MISD) provides faculty with staff development to maximize use of each platform.

A designated Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) meets regularly to analyze progress demonstrated by each EB/EL scholar and to suggest additional accommodations and interventions as needed.

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

ECHS at MC has multiple activities that support homeless and migrant scholars. Providing school stability is important. School stability drives the focus and actions ECHS at MC takes to support homeless and migrant scholars. Identification of homeless and migrant scholars is the first step in meeting their needs. Ruby Payne says, “building relationships with the family through “support systems, caring about the scholar, promoting academic achievement, being role models and working with scholars to exhibit successful behaviors for school,” does make a difference for scholars. Providing an education allows students to have a choice moving forward. ECHS at MC does reach out to parents and students who have been identified as homeless and/or migrant, we identify their needs, and provide support accordingly to ensure school stability. ECHS at MC offers academic support, referral services, professional development for teachers, transportation, supplies and Social Emotional Support.

Tutoring and supplemental instruction is provided to scholars who need academic assistance. Ruby Payne, "Understanding the Framework of Poverty" Professional Development and book study is an integral part in helping professors understand and be sensitive to the needs of children and youth. Referral services are also available for scholars who have medical, dental, mental or other health needs. MISD does provide transportation for all homeless scholars. ECHS at MC provides before school, lunch and after school support for students who need academic assistance. School supplies are also provided. MISD, through their Family Support Center shares food and hygiene boxes not only during the school year but throughout the summer. Through our ECHS at MC Advisor program students will receive social emotional support and mentoring. Through relationships, supports and an education scholars have choices for a better future.

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

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

ECHS at MC faculty utilizes an array of interactive platforms to engage and inform scholars. Using a shared platform with Midland College, faculty posts the syllabus, unit modules, assignments, discussions, test reviews, and announcements. Updated daily, the platform provides a safe space for communication between students and faculty. Faculty also uses an app that sends quick messages about due dates and events to a scholar's phone. Useful during COVID when the school moved to a virtual classroom, these tools continue to be used post COVID, whether students are present in the classroom or virtually joining the class.

ECHS at MC maintains a no excuses philosophy related to learning and success. Scholars are encouraged to view mastery as a process, and to accept that learning takes time and commitment. ECHS at MC offers support during class, and after school in daily tutorials. Midland College. Scholars also have access to the MC Writing and Math labs. If a scholar wants to succeed, support is always available.

The Common Instructional Framework drives selection of instructional practices. Collaborative group work, writing-to-learn opportunities, literacy groups, and questioning, scaffolding and classroom talk represent interventions providing scholars of all skill levels access to complex content needed for mastery of state and college-ready standards. Selected strategies maximize engagement, requiring each scholar to take an active role in their own learning

ECHS at MC scholars take ownership of learning by tracking learning targets and setting goals. In Path, scholars set SMART goals each quarter, monitor and revise goals weekly, and write new goals once original goals have been obtained. In core classes, scholars track progress toward learning targets. Faculty engage scholars in a performance of understanding related to a learning target, an activity that identifies the target for the scholar, develops understanding of the concepts and skills that make up the target, and demonstrates progress toward the target. This recursive strategy ensures collaborative effort toward closing gaps in understanding and skill development and works toward improved learning for all scholars.

These practices along with promoting social and emotional health ensures generalized success on the part of all scholars. Faculty and staff are positive role models, respond to real life situations, giving voice and choice to students, have conversations about character, advocate for participation and service in school and in the community. Mindfulness is promoted through restorative circles giving voice to the students. Scholars recognize faculty as caring and invested in achievement of college and life goals.

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

ECHS at MC promotes several opportunities for family and community engagement. Each initiative encourages faculty, families, and the community to work together to support scholar success and to foster school improvement.

An integral part of decision making, the Campus Education Improvement Committee (CEIC) includes scholars, faculty, parents, and community members. Serving in an advisory capacity, the CEIC meets regularly to address issues including budgeting, planning, curriculum, staffing patterns, school organization and staff development. The Advisory Council considers programming concerns related to instruction, problems that arise, and effective coordination between Midland College (MC) and Midland Independent School District (MISD) and includes scholars, faculty, and MC personnel. The Governance Council makes program decisions related to finances, facilities, and instructional issues and includes the ECHS Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, as well as representatives from MISD and MC.

Regular family events highlight and celebrate student learning and build community. Clubs host events such as the fall carnival, intramural sports, and the Science Spectacular Interactive Evening. A freshman candlelight ceremony where scholars receive their first college transcript from the Midland College President sets the stage for things to come. A sophomore awards program where scholars receive a letterman

jacket and a junior ring ceremony where parents present scholars with their graduation rings recognize and encourage progress. The culmination of four years of hard work, an academic signing event and banquet, recognize the accomplishments of seniors. Celebrating each milestone and committing to conquer the next milestone reflects the essence of our culture.

As a one-to-one campus, students complete the majority of their work online; chrome books are issued at no cost to each scholar. Community business partners provide funds to purchase chrome books, and also to cover the cost of college tuition, college textbooks, and graphing calculators. Most ECHS at MC scholars come from low-income homes and are first generation college students. Generous support of business partners allows these scholars access to post-secondary education.

The ECHS at MC chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS) supports various charities and community organizations. As an example, last year, NHS held a food drive in partnership a local business that made it possible to distribute Thanksgiving baskets to families in need in our community. Yearly, NHS invites scholars, parents, MC faculty and members of the student body to participate in a blood drive. Other ECHS at MC clubs work actively with other community partners. We are committed to collective and collaborative effort with community partners.

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

ECHS at MC empowers and motivates professionals by supporting their work, demonstrating their value, and giving them a voice. Working as a team, faculty gathers data, develops goals, monitors progress, measures success, celebrates achievements and begins again. Professional Learning Communities support the professional culture. Within each professional learning community, faculty engage in data driven decision making about best instructional practices. Faculty share data, consider instructional strategies, set goals, and support each other. Plans emerge from an intentional and collaborative process designed to promote improved student outcome.

Professional Development hosted by faculty members, building administrators, and the Learning Leading and Innovation Department from MISD fosters growth and excellence among professional staff. Professors who teach Advanced Placement courses regularly attend summer workshops and have ongoing professional support via resources provided by the College Board and the National Institute of Math and Science.

In preparation for enrollment in college freshman English, scholars must be reading at a Lexile Level of 1300-1500 by the end of Grade Ten. A specific reading class and intervention through an online platform, addresses the need for emphasis in reading. Scholars are continuously enrolled in the reading class until they demonstrate mastery at the required level. The online platform, utilized across the curriculum, reinforces reading in the content areas and develops critical reading skills needed in advanced level coursework. Ongoing staff development assists teachers in maximizing the use of this and other online platforms.

Accelerated by the onset of COVID, use of technology represents a primary component of the instructional program. When moving to any online platform, and with the goal of maximizing scholar engagement, training and support is first provided faculty, and then provided parents and scholars. As an example, ECHS at MC partnered with Midland College when moving to the online platform used for communication with scholars and their parents. Midland College trained all faculty and faculty subsequently trained students and families. The MISD technology department also provides ongoing support for an array of interactive platforms with the capacity to engage scholars virtually or in the classroom.

Focus on data-based decision making develops the capability to generate real-time insights and predictions, allowing faculty to plan flexibly and to optimize the performance of individual students. By using data-based decision making, we test the success of different strategies and make informed decisions that support sustainable growth. ECHS at MC organizes data and uses data with the goal of closing learning gaps and ensuring student progress.

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

Leadership team philosophy links back to the mission, ensuring scholars graduate prepared to attend a four-year university while demonstrating commitment to self and community. ECHS at MC exists under an agreement between Midland Independent School District and Midland College. The academic plan requires coordination and cooperation between the two entities.

ECHS at MC scholars earn a high school diploma and an Associate of Arts or Science Degree in four years. Because Midland College awards college credit, high school faculty and college professors must collaborate on curriculum alignment and dual credit offerings. This school within a school model, a high school operating on a college campus, requires administrators to be respectful, collaborative, cooperative, and mission driven at all times.

A chancellor and a vice-chancellor, supported by department leads, comprise the core administrative team at ECHS at MC. Working together, the leadership team implements policies and programs, as well as allocates resources contributing to student achievement. Shared leadership and collaborative practices serve to build community and support an inclusive learning environment.

The leadership team provides guidance, actively acknowledging the importance of shared decision making, not by what is said, but through routine practice. Visible presence of the campus chancellor and vice-chancellor creates a sense of transparency, shared purpose, and trust among stakeholders. The entire leadership team, including department leads, reviews and amends campus policies, protocols, and procedures.

Meeting weekly, professional learning communities discuss assessment data and establish relevant research-based goals. The intellectual mission of ECHS at MC represents a key focus of their work. They seek ways to encourage scholars to take ownership of rigorous academic standards, to maximize the positive effects of a small, personalized learning environment, to use technology to accelerate learning, and to build positive and respectful relationships among students and faculty.

Because they have an active and valued voice in decision making, faculty feels empowered and motivated to try new strategies and take on new leadership roles. Because faculty knows what students must learn to reach specific benchmarks, planning becomes strategic and intentional. This leads to improved instruction in all curricular areas and to greater student achievement.

Students and families are encouraged to assume leadership roles. Students have opportunity to lead in clubs and organizations; as an example, to become an Early College High School Ambassador. The campus welcomes parent participation as committee members or as volunteers. Partnerships with parents contribute to a caring campus culture. Passion for the mission is contagious and a vibrant energy permeates every aspect of campus life.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Evidence of culturally responsive teaching and learning emerges in instructional practices, school curriculum, and traditions. Respect is considered foundational to the goal of ensuring equity and developing cultural awareness. Knowing small things can initiate big outcomes, faculty first works to develop relationships with each scholar, expressing interest in their aspirations, goals, activities, and ethnic backgrounds. Caring relationships are recognized as key to a positive learning environment, and accessible faculty supports the progress of each student.

The Student Parent Handbook sets clear expectations for this dimension of campus life. Defined in terms of specific behaviors, scholars must demonstrate six core values, including responsibility, respect, desire, integrity, kindness, and honesty. As an example, to demonstrate respect, scholars must use respectful words and actions, resolve conflicts peacefully, embrace differences in cultures and backgrounds, and respect themselves enough not to engage in harmful activities. Faculty regularly models and discusses values, moving them from abstract ideas to concrete actions. Expectations and standards are high and work collaborative, with the goal a safe and welcoming environment for all.

ECHS at MC represents a bold approach in school reform. Based on the principle that academic rigor, combined with the opportunity to save time and money, creates a powerful motivator for students to work hard and meet serious intellectual challenges, ECHS at MC represents equity in action. Classes are not leveled based on a student's ability or prerequisite skills. Instead, faculty finds the best ways for each scholar to utilize personal strengths and learning styles. If scholars are willing to work hard, faculty will meet them at their growing edge and support their success.

Strategic instructional planning yields culturally relevant lessons. Scholars share stories and relate cultural experiences to the lessons. In English, scholars select the novels they read, creating greater intrinsic motivation and personal connectedness to the material from personal perspectives. In social studies, scholars address current events and relate them to history, law, and constitutional rights. Instructional materials provided non-native speakers are tailored to their level of English proficiency.

Staff development includes training about bullying, child abuse, student mental health, youth suicide, and racial bias. Recognizing warning signs, knowing when and how to report, and where to seek help represents a critical step in maintaining a responsive school environment. Additionally, ECHS at MC works with Midland ISD Family Support Center to address student and family needs. The Family Support Center collaborates with non-profit agencies to provide food, clothing, counseling services and other resources in crisis situations.

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

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Building strong relationships between and among scholars and faculty represents the practice most instrumental to the success of Early College High School at Midland College. Often described as a bold approach to school reform, the school encourages student engagement in an academically challenging environment by leveraging opportunity to save time and money.

ECHS at MC holds the promise of advanced education at no cost to students, most of whom are first in their families to attend college. While a powerful motivator, students need more than desire if they do not have the skills for academic success. Students need a carefully planned program, to include high standards and consistent support. They need caring adults to work on their behalf.

Establishing strong relationships begins as students transition from eighth to ninth grade. Freshmen students participate in team building activities and orientation to campus life directed both by faculty and veteran students. Frank conversations about sensitive issues such as substance abuse are included, each discussion framed by the core values the school promotes.

Faculty provides targeted support to ensure freshman develop college readiness skills in reading, writing, math, and test taking. Students learn to take notes, keep calendars, navigate technology, and stay organized. Through their actions, faculty demonstrate that “not knowing” represents a temporary pause, not an outcome. Students begin to appreciate honest feedback, to use tools, and to see themselves as scholars. These little things, reinforced by every member of the faculty, build confidence, and engender trust.

Academic rigor increases every year, and available support increases exponentially. An intentionally smaller school, faculty has time to invest individual attention in each scholar. Strong relationships encourage scholars to seek assistance when needed, to function as their own advocates. Scholars find support in multiple ways. Offered by all faculty in each discipline, exam preparation, tutorials, and Saturday academies, provide space for intentional and collaborative work with peers and faculty.

Student survey data, spring 2021, indicates every student at ECHS at MC benefitted from a positive relationship with at least one adult at the school, impressive in any year, but especially significant given the challenges of COVID. Notably, in 2021, all 79 seniors received an associate degree from Midland College and each senior committed to attend college after graduation. ECHS at MC scholars demonstrate positive academic outcomes because faculty demonstrates caring and consistent support. Relationships, not programs, are key to success at Early College High School at Midland College.