

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Michael Williams

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

Official School Name Amador Valley High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1155 Santa Rita Road

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

City Pleasanton State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 94566-6176

County Alameda County

Telephone (925) 461-6100 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL http://amador.pleasantonusd.net/ E-mail mawilliams@pleasantonusd.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.

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

Name of Superintendent\*Ms. Micaela Ochoa E-mail mochoa@pleasantonusd.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Pleasanton Unified School District Tel. (925) 426-5500

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 Ms. Joan Laursen  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

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

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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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. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 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.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2011 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
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.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

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

15 TOTAL

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

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	351	326	677
10	342	349	691
11	356	300	656
12 or higher	305	318	623
<b>Total Students</b>	1354	1293	2647

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 36 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 10 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 3 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 49 % White
  - 0 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2015 – 2016 school year: 4%

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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	39
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	66
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	105
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	2647
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.040
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %  
91 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Arabic, Armenian, Assyrian, Bengali, Cantonese, Dutch, Farsi, Filipino, French, German, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kannada, Korean, Mandarin, Marathi, Polish, Portuguese, Punjab, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Taiwanese, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 6 %  
Total number students who qualify: 149
8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %  
188 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 26 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 7 Emotional Disturbance
- 4 Hearing Impairment
- 10 Mental Retardation
- 1 Multiple Disabilities
- 5 Orthopedic Impairment
- 45 Other Health Impaired
- 73 Specific Learning Disability
- 18 Speech or Language Impairment
- 1 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 1 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	4
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	107
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	15
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	10

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 30:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	97%	90%	97%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	98%	99%	98%	97%	98%

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 2016.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	625
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	71%
Enrolled in a community college	24%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	2%
Found employment	1%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
Other	1%

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. 2006
15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

We believe all students will be college and career ready upon graduation.

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

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Amador Valley High School's mission is to promote and enhance the intellectual and personal growth of all our students. As one of two comprehensive high schools in the Pleasanton Unified School District, Amador Valley serves approximately 2643 students, including 7.7% in special education, 3.2% qualifying for English Language Learner support, and 6.2% qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. Amador Valley has been recognized as a California Distinguished School, a National School of Character, a National Blue Ribbon School, and a National AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) Demonstration School.

In the school's most Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) review, the school stakeholders developed the three ESLRs of Academic Achievement, Innovative Thinking, and Demonstration of Civic Responsibility. Our ESLRs now serve as the basis of the question we want students to explore while at Amador Valley: How will you A.I.D. your world? Using a foundation of academic achievement and a commitment to innovative thinking and democratic participation, we expect to see students engage in their world in meaningful ways.

Approximately 75% of our student body participates in one or more of our extracurricular programs. Amador Valley offers twenty-three varsity sports with over 1,000 students participating. Approximately 10% of the student body participates in the marching band. "We the People" Competition Civics, DECA, Marching Band, Color Guard, Robotics, Varsity Cheer Squad, and school yearbook have all received national recognition. Amador staff and students explore, discover, and compete through the approximately 50 different clubs on campus.

Although the enrollment size has averaged around 2,600 students since 2005, our two largest subgroups have changed considerably, with the white subgroup declining from 72% to 50%, and the Asian subgroup increasing from 14% to 35%. Amador Valley has also seen growth in our cultural, gender, and religious representation, as well as in the percentage of English Language Learner, Special Education, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students who call our campus home.

To greater serve the needs of students with disabilities, Amador Valley redesigned its approach from a lab-centric SPED model to a co-teaching one in which special education teachers and students are integrated into mainstream courses throughout their day. The restructuring has allowed students to participate in the rigor of a general education setting, (Least Restrictive Environment) while receiving additional support from having a special education teacher in the classroom. The ELL program has evolved significantly as well in the past two years, providing greater support via smaller student-to-teacher ratios and two-hour ELA blocks (targeting students English language level), in which learners can dive deeper into both language acquisition skills as well as Common Core State Standards. In the past three years, Amador Valley (Home of the Dons) has also celebrated its increasingly varied student population with an annual week-long celebration called Doniversity.

Since a school is an integral part of a larger community, Amador Valley's profile incorporates an overview of the community demographics. Pleasanton's population has experienced considerable growth in the past two decades. With a current estimated population of 74,982 residents, the once- small town has grown into an affluent, mid-size city with a median household income of \$124,759. According to the American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, approximately 56% of Pleasanton residents continued their education after high school earning college or advanced degrees. ACS estimates also show that, 40% of the total households in Pleasanton have children under the age of eighteen. In addition, the 2015/2016 California Healthy Kids Survey shows that 96% of 9th graders and 98% of 11th graders live with one or more parents or guardians.

Parents stay informed on upcoming events and school activities through flyers, teacher newsletters, the school marquee, the school website, eConnection, PTSA published newsletter "Amador Valley Express," an automated telephone message system, Q ParentConnect, PTSA, and on Twitter via @AVHSPRINCIPAL. Parents are encouraged to get involved in their child's learning environment by volunteering in the classroom, participating in a decision-making group, or simply attending school events. Some examples of

parent and community involvement include chaperoning, volunteer office help, AVHS Booster Club, PTSA, School Site Council, supporting student performances, WASC committee participation, Mock Trial and Competition Civics coaching, Music Booster Club, and contributing to our School Climate report.

At Amador, students benefit from parents, staff members, teachers and community members who are focused on student success and who care deeply about each of them. The Amador Way, which is the school's character education vehicle, incorporates the character traits of compassion, honesty, respect, responsibility, integrity, and self-discipline into the daily fabric of school life. A walk on campus is all someone needs to do to see evidence of this. Amador is a place where students, staff and the community members feel welcomed and connected.

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

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

Students in English courses at Amador Valley are exposed to an extensive array of opportunities to engage in the full breadth of language arts throughout all grade levels. Common listening and speaking practices include Socratic Seminars, Fishbowl, formal & impromptu debates, literary circles, and persuasive and expository speaking activities throughout all four years of high school. Apart from classroom discussions and Seminars, students in junior and senior classes practice peer speech review & analysis and participate in podcast listening projects via series such as “Serial” and “In Our Time,” which allow students to hone meaningful listening skills that facilitate various interactions, from collaborative assignments to constructive civil discourse. Preparedness for multiple pathways to success--from university to post-secondary careers--also drives our reading and writing curriculum. Close reading and annotation activities, passage-based questions, and strengthening inference and contextual understanding skills form the core approach to drawing meaning from complex texts. AVHS’ English department also targets the skills most closely linked with post-secondary success as indicated by CSU’s Early Assessment Program. By using the EAP as a guide and with bi-annual benchmark testing and other formative assessments throughout each year, the English/Language Arts program at Amador Valley is dedicated to providing students with a curriculum that embraces rigor and high expectations while also providing the flexibility to respond to the needs of individual students.

The Mathematics and Computer Science department’s vision is for every student to be enthusiastic about learning, see the value and beauty of mathematics and computer science, and become empowered by the opportunities mathematics and technology affords. We provide multiple pathways for each student to achieve at the highest levels regardless of the entry point into high school mathematics curriculum. For example, whether a student enters math in the ninth-grade year at the Algebra I, Geometry, or Algebra II level, she will have the opportunity to take AP Calculus and advanced math and computer science electives before graduation since the department offers a multi-pathway curriculum. Through focusing on Common Core Standards and Standards for Mathematical Practice, students engage in a wide array of practices and skills to become prepared for post-secondary success and readiness for the careers of the future. Students engage in collaborative problem-solving on projects, classwork, and group quizzes. Projects and tasks are “low floor and high ceiling” so that all students have the chance to participate, contribute, learn, and extend their skills. Mistakes and productive struggle are celebrated to engender a growth mindset. Theoretical studies are closely tied to the study of computer science, as well as courses in other departments, such as physics, chemistry, and biology and engineering (Project Lead the Way).

The Science Department offers a rich collection of required and elective opportunities for our young learners. As a result, AVHS science students are constantly applying their core knowledge in math and language arts in order to master concepts in both life and physical science. Students work to learn foundational principles in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. In addition, elective AP offerings are available (e.g., AP Biology, AP Environmental Science, AP Chemistry, and AP Physics) along with courses in Anatomy and Physiology, Biotechnology, Botany, and Zoology. Science students regularly engage in activities and exercises that require core skills in reading comprehension, data analysis, and research, sharing ideas via writing, public speaking, and debate. In terms of civic learning and engagement, students in Biology utilize our local creek, the Arroyo del Valle, as an outdoor laboratory to better understand the relationships that exist between organisms and their environment. Students in our Zoology classes participate in a pen pal program, where each high school student is matched with an elementary school student in order to teach and learn about animals. Chemistry students organize and host the annual Spring Science Extravaganza, where our high school students teach transitional kindergarten through third grade students a variety of exciting science-related topics.

Social Studies courses at Amador Valley immerse students in California History-Social Science Content and Common Core State Standards through a variety of methodologies. Vertical teams meet to share skills that are taught at each level so that students experience a skills progression over four years. The department’s goal is to have our students graduate with the ability to think critically and become active and contributing



members of society. Common Core-based assignments and assessments enhance student learning and ensure students' equal access to common materials and curriculum. Specific department lessons that are designed to produce Twenty-First Century learners are socratic seminars rooted in rigorous texts, "pecha kucha" oral presentations, project-based learning, primary document annotation and source analysis, interactive simulations, small group problem-solving activities, and blended learning. In addition, department assessments include Common Core stimulus based multiple choice questions and unit Document Based Questions where students work to prove a claim with supporting evidence and analysis. These opportunities include EL classes for all courses, college prep classes at all grades, honors classes at 9th and 10th grades, and seven AP courses in grades 10-12.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Each year almost half of Amador Valley High School's student body participates in the visual or performing arts. The Visual and Performing Arts Department offers classes from beginning level to Advanced Placement. Amador visual artists have access to a variety of excellent programs from traditional darkroom photography, to digital arts to classical drawing and painting. Amador supports a ceramics program of almost three hundred students, boasting hand-building spaces and forty electric wheels. Our drama students have the opportunity to perform in a variety of projects from Broadway-style musicals to student written and directed one act plays. The music program consists of five concert bands, two orchestras, two choirs, three jazz bands, all of which regularly receive unanimous superior ratings at CMEA. Amador's marching band, consisting of 320 students (12% of student population), medaled at California's State Marching Contest. Amador's Wind Ensemble is nationally recognized performing at the prestigious Midwest Clinic, WASBE, and Carnegie Hall.

The Amador Valley High School Physical Education department focuses learning on physical and mental health through daily fitness and socialization activities. The CA state standard-driven curriculum is taught in each of the five courses: Freshmen PE9, Life Fitness, Weight Training, Team Sports, and Athletic Performance PE. At the end of two years of physical education, students have the knowledge to strengthen and maintain their health throughout their adult lives and work collaboratively with all types of people. Freshmen educators spend the year teaching the five areas of fitness through a combination of individual and team activities and assessments. Over ninety percent of Amador Valley freshmen consistently pass the state fitnessgram. Physical education students use project-based video technology to demonstrate learning. The video production and editing skills obtained in these projects prepare them for their academic future and potential careers. The Physical Education department is committed to providing all students with a curriculum that teaches life long fitness and prepares them to be physically and mentally healthy as a means to be productive members of society.

Our World Language department offers five different language courses: French, Spanish, Japanese, Mandarin, and American Sign Language (ASL). With the exception of American Sign Language, our curriculum focuses on teaching the four modes of communication, which are reading, writing, listening and speaking, in the target language, with emphasis on grammar, language, and culture. This is accomplished through integrating and incorporating different modes of teaching such as lectures, authentic language material, technology-based learning, group discussions, and debates. Cultural learning is woven into each language and covers similar themes based on the target language. These themes include exploration of the Francophone world, issues relating to Latin American society, and Japanese culinary customs. ASL students work on Receptive and Expressive signing. This includes the five parameters of ASL: handshape, location, palm orientation, movement, and facial expressions. ASL students also learn about Deaf and Hearing cultures and events that have shaped the evolution of awareness and action for the rights for deaf people in the United States and how deaf people are affected by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Amador Valley students have regular access to technology instruction and devices in a variety of settings. There are nine mobile computer labs and four fixed computer labs available for student and staff use, resulting in a student to device ratio of approximately 5:1. Amador Valley is currently transitioning to a 1:1 ratio of technology devices to student population, a process which should be complete at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year. Students receive technology instruction directly from the school Librarian and Social Studies teachers who review lessons in Digital Literacy, including responsible technology use, proper

citation of sources, and critically assessing the reliability and validity of information. Teachers embed technology-based lessons across all curricular areas, from English to History, from Science to Math, and from Career Technical Education and the Arts to Physical Education and World Languages. Amador Valley offers multiple courses with a technology focus including Computer Science Principles, Advanced Placement Computer Science, and Project Lead the Way Engineering courses. In addition, the recently-adopted Mathematics curriculum incorporates online lessons and assessments to supplement classroom instruction. Finally, the new English Language Arts adoption includes access to online instructional materials and a variety of literary texts. State standardized testing and district benchmarks provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate technological literacy. Staff are provided with ongoing professional development in technology through quarterly job embedded workshops and common core cohort trainings led by district instructional coaches.

Students in the Career & Technical Education department have a variety of options to choose from related to Engineering, Culinary Arts, Child Growth and Development, and Health Education. All of the electives in CTE are related to a career pathway with exposure to a variety of careers. The elective courses are UC a-g approved with academics and technology infused on a daily basis. Contextual learning is the main focus with real life scenarios presented to the students as they problem solve daily projects. Students can choose to enroll in one course or take a series of courses in a specific area for academy recognition. Courses in the Engineering area follow the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) curriculum. The Culinary and Engineering programs have articulation agreements with Diablo Valley College and Las Positas College respectively. Two courses, Catering and Principals of Engineering offer college credit for those with successful completion. Health 9 is a one semester graduation requirement for all incoming freshman. This course supports students in personal and community health, mental, emotional and social health, nutrition and physical activity and growth, and awareness of the effects of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

Amador Valley uses multiple measures to assess students and uses this data collaboratively to analyze students' strengths and weaknesses in an effort to improve instructional practices to meet all students' needs. Staff analyzes data from the following assessments: CAASPP results, district benchmarks, and department-aligned assessments. Department collaboration time provides staff an opportunity to review standards, analyze and discuss data, design common assessments, and create intervention groups via our assessment management system (OARS), in which all teachers have been trained.

Multiple forms of data are used to monitor student progress. OARS data fosters collaborative conversations between colleagues and are used when designing teacher-created classroom and department formative assessments. Such assessments drive instructional discussions during collaboration time. Unit assessments, midterm exams, final exams, group projects, and oral presentations are all used to monitor progress and determine intervention needs.

Students currently not performing at grade level are provided with a variety of supports to aid in their success. Some examples include Academic Support classes, learning labs, AVID, counseling and psychologist services, intervention groups, and adaptive PE. AVHS also offers targeted after-school tutoring four days a week for two hours each day, which is led by content area teachers and peer tutors for all students.

To meet students' special education needs, our site has implemented co-teaching in English, Science and Math. Students with special education needs are also provided with a Learning Lab class which provides additional academic support for the student. Additionally, AVHS has adjusted the master schedule to increase course offerings to support English Language Development through our new EL Pathways program. In 2002, Amador Valley launched the AVID program to reach "middle" students by providing them with study skills, tutoring, mentoring, and enrichment activities. The AVID program serves approximately 100 students each year.

The Amador Valley EL program has also been completely restructured. Beginning 2015, the EL program shifted to a two-period block with students split into two groups: the CELDT levels 1 and 2 students in one

class, and the CELDT levels 3 and 4 students in another. Both EL blocks are held at 5th and 6th period, in order for more fluid transitions between EL groups should adjustments be needed or when a student's progress reaches a level where they should move from a lower CELDT block to the CELDT 3-4 group. In the upcoming year, the CELDT 1 and 2 class will be split into two separate two-hour blocks in order to improve teacher-student ratio and provide better, more targeted instruction for these distinct language learner levels.

In addition, the district has adopted new materials. The CELDT 1 and 2 class uses National Geographic's Edge program, supplemented with Academic Vocabulary Toolkit, a Kate Kinsella-designed workbook geared toward targeted growth in language students are most likely to encounter across all curricula. The CELDT 3-4 class uses the English 3D program.

In response to data reflected in the Healthy Kids Survey, WASC findings, and our school climate survey, Amador began in the fall of 2016 to explore school day schedule options that better respond to the academic and wellness needs of our students. The team visited demographically similar schools with alternative schedules both locally and on the San Francisco peninsula to gather best practices ideas that address not only academic success, but also challenges with student stress, anxiety, and other mental health concerns similar to those we face. Based on these visits--and incorporating feedback from students, faculty, parents, and guardians--a committee drafted a modified bell schedule that allows for an "ACCESS" period every Wednesday and Thursday. Based on the RTI2 (Response to Instruction & Intervention) model for supporting high school students, ACCESS is designed to provide an opportunity for each student to be able to connect with teachers, obtain support from counselors, address wellness choices, or pursue other academic needs, while also allowing for two late start days each week to support the natural sleep cycle of adolescent youth. The proposal, which passed a faculty vote of approximately 80% in favor and earned board approval in March, will begin its pilot in the 2017-2018 school year.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Faculty, staff, and administration at Amador Valley are united in the philosophy that we teach students, not subjects. Embracing a holistic approach to student success means that our school culture and traditions evolve to meet the varying needs of the individuals we serve.

The entire school community annually participates in a week-long celebration of our campus diversity and unity called Doniversity. Students and staff are engaged in classroom and lunchtime activities related to community and culture, including diversity awareness activities with regards to identity, culture, interests, abilities, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and race. The celebration includes video and media presentations, interactive lessons and activities, school spirit events, and cultural presentations. While the classroom lesson is planned by teachers, all other events for the week are planned and executed by student leaders representing diverse clubs and classes on campus. The week culminates in a rally that highlights the uniqueness of our student body and involves over fifteen campus groups and over 300 student and staff participants. The goal of Doniversity is to demonstrate the value of diversity, unity, and compassion while building students' capacity for empathy.

Amador Valley High School's student results on the Healthy Kids Survey, which is administered to students in ninth and eleventh grades, indicate very strong, positive connections to our school and community. Sixty-nine percent of ninth graders and seventy percent of eleventh graders indicated feeling "high connectedness" to school, as opposed to five percent for both grade levels that expressed a low connectedness. In addition, 73% in grade nine and 74% in grade eleven either "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement "I feel close to people at this school" and 84% of ninth graders and 85% of eleventh graders either "agree" or "strongly agree" that Amador Valley High School provides a safe environment for students.

To build relationships between staff and site administration, conscious efforts are made to acknowledge and empower staff members throughout the school year. Amador Valley's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), comprised of department leaders and administrators, is empowered to make schoolwide decisions focused on improving instructional methods and campus culture. At the beginning of each school year, administration hosts a luncheon for new staff members as an introduction to Amador Valley as well as multiple all-staff appreciation luncheons throughout the school year. Staff accomplishments and personal milestones are celebrated during staff meetings and via email communications to staff. Administration commemorates the winter holiday season with a token gift and also hosts a full luncheon during Teacher Appreciation Week to acknowledge and appreciate all staff. As an culminating celebration of staff, we hold an annual staff party at the end of the school year. Finally, an annual Salute to Service recognition is held on the Amador Valley campus to acknowledge years of service and appreciation for staff who are retiring.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Amador Valley benefits from extensive community involvement. From running registration in August to sponsoring the graduation ceremony in June, our parent community is actively involved in helping with daily operations of the school and maintaining our enrichment offerings to students. We have full-time parent liaisons to support our EL students and their families; the liaisons provide translation support as well as community outreach. Our parent-led ELAC group holds meetings annually and the district holds DELAC meetings. Additionally, AVHS has a fourteen-member School Site Council comprised of representatives from all stakeholder groups which meets monthly to review programs, events, and site focus areas.

Educational grants from businesses, civic groups, and parent organizations also support our academic programs and extracurricular activities. The biology department's Project Creek Watch, a California Golden Bell Award winner for science education, would not be possible without community support. Amador Valley's parents help fund our music and sports programs through the Amador Friends of Music

and Amador Athletic Boosters. In addition, the Amador Valley PTSA generously distributes mini-grants and scholarships to help support the learning goals of both staff and students. The PTSA hosts coffee with the principal, supports Amador's wellness committee, publishes the Amador Valley Express newsletter, and coordinates staff appreciation luncheons.

The Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce's non-profit organization known as Pleasanton Partnerships in Education Foundation (PPIE), which consists of small businesses and large corporations, offers student and classroom grants, provides career information, leads two-day seminars for students on decision-making, and hosts job-shadowing.

Since 2004, the Amador Valley Booster Club has hosted basketball tournaments, track meets, and volleyball competitions for the East Bay Special Olympics on the Amador campus. Boosters coordinates student and parent volunteers to help run events and manage snack bar sales.

Character education is a city-wide effort. Our community maintains high character expectations and our students embody those characteristics. The Amador Way is supported by the Pleasanton Unified School District, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Pleasanton Community of Character organization as an ongoing effort to infuse character education into our academic programs. The Amador Way emphasizes values related to individual and civic responsibility: compassion, honesty, self-discipline, respect, responsibility, and integrity. Each month, one of the six values is emphasized at school and in the community. The month-long recognition is culminated by a selection of a Student of the Month representing the respective "Amador Way" value.

### **3. Professional Development:**

As we continue to implement the California Common Core Standards (CCSS), teachers in all content areas have received in-depth professional development both at the district level and the school site. Summer Institutes provide 3 days of voluntary paid learning opportunities for staff. These institutes focus on best instructional practices for effective engagement to foster depth of knowledge (DOK) in our students. One morning collaboration per month is dedicated to professional development focused on CCSS-aligned practices including Technology integration, Philosophical Chairs, Close Reading, and Socratic Seminars.

In 2012, a weekly late-start schedule was established to facilitate collaboration, in addition to our staff's continued use of email discussions, lunch gatherings, and after-school meetings to further collaborative goals. Based on feedback on the Stanford Survey associated with the Challenge Success program, we use collaboration time to link the value and meaning of daily classwork and homework to the bigger picture for students. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) discuss critical thinking practices and develop and evolve best practices to share in collaborative focus groups.

Decisions concerning selection of staff development activities are made by all staff using teacher input and data analysis to determine areas in which additional teacher training may enhance classroom instruction and increase student achievement levels.

Teaching staff are provided the opportunity to participate in district-sponsored staff development workshops or training sessions as 1) a supplement to site-based staff development, 2) for reinforcement of or follow-up on previous training, or 3) as a follow-up training for newly implemented programs/curricula. During the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years, Amador Valley's teachers attended trainings to support the learning environment, including: Special Education Job Alike, Getting Started with Google Sites, Technical Writing for Science Class Greater Good Summer Institute for Educators, Learning Circles Seminar Series, CHSSP (California History/Social Studies Project), Google in Education California Summit, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the Common Core Standards, IntegratED Conference - Improving Education with Technology, Standards of Mathematical Practice, Math Articulation from Middle to High School, Job Embedded Blended Learning Academies, and content-area district committee meetings.

Amador Valley High School also offers support to new and veteran teachers through peer coaching and

mentoring. Instructional aides are provided targeted training focused on teaching strategies and curriculum content. Substitute teachers are invited to staff development activities, and all staff are encouraged to attend professional workshops and conferences.

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

The staff at Amador Valley High School is dedicated to the philosophy that if all students are provided opportunities for collaborative learning, communication, critical thinking, and creativity with a focus on health and wellness, then student success will increase.

Our diverse population and varied academic needs drive administrative decision-making and the overall philosophy of the leadership team. The school's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), comprised of department chairs, the school librarian, activities director, and administration solicits feedback from staff as decisions are made that impact the school's academics and culture. Decisions made by this group must always align with our WASC plan and support our school's vision to prepare our students to be college and career ready upon graduation.

The AVHS community believes that all students will be successful, which is why we focus on valuing all of our students' cultures and unique characteristics. Amador Valley has started a new tradition over the past three years which completely focuses on student acceptance: During our annual diversity celebration, we create an environment for students to discuss their cultures, interests, and identity with their peers during guided classroom lessons and discussions; additionally, our site hosts a cultural inclusion rally for all students and staff. This Doniversity celebration has brought our student and staff community closer, creating a better learning environment for all.

During the 2016-2017 school year, Amador Valley staff and administration reflected on learning practices with the lens of improving our academic and social-emotional support for all students. Our goal was to determine how a tiered support system aligned with the Response to Intervention (RtI) philosophy has been implemented in other districts. Through an exploration process involving staff members representing all content areas and community collaboration, an alternate bell schedule was established for the 2017-2018 school year. This new bell schedule provides two weekly support periods embedded within the school day for students to seek the academic, social-emotional, and mental health supports they need.

Key to our approach to student growth is acknowledging the constant need to reflect on our own practices and evolve to meet the needs of our student population. Improving equitable access to the latest and most meaningful technology, embracing new teaching methodologies and a variety of pedagogical approaches, and providing flexible day-to-day structures that tailor interventions across all three tiers drive our plans for future development.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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AVHS believes that every student's voice matters, and that although many students assertively pursue school connections, we need to proactively reach out to engage certain groups. In particular, the faculty, staff, and administration are sensitive to the fact that English Language Learners, students with special needs, and students who are academically at-risk require outreach on our part to encourage their participation and let them know that they are valued members of our school's community. Including underrepresented kids in Leadership, rallies, and other school-wide events is a standard practice.

Amador has established a variety of support mechanisms for students at-risk. Group counseling and support groups are available when students find themselves in difficult situations and in need of support. Counseling support groups are based on student need and open to referral from staff, parents, and students themselves. Some subjects addressed in group counseling include grief counseling, drug and alcohol abuse, family issues, and social skills.

Students new to the U.S. and Amador make connections to the school and feel a sense of belonging through the EL Academy as they learn to navigate both our school and mainstream culture. The EL Academy focuses on inclusion with the goal of fostering student connections within the Amador community. The Academy has partnered with our Leadership class to empower English Language Learners to use their voice at school and to show them their voice is valued. As a result, we have one EL student representative in Leadership, and hope to have more as this partnership grows.

Classes offered to students at Amador Valley are based on student selections and their interests. Each year students select their classes for the following school year. Administrators review those selections and build the master schedule to accommodate student requests. By enabling student decisions at this level, our school supports the idea of student self-determination regarding their education. Amador Valley also has an open-access policy to all Honors and AP classes. If students feel that they can handle a more rigorous curriculum, they are encouraged to do so. Student-driven scheduling has yielded measurable results in that the open-enrollment policy with regards to honors and AP courses has resulted in significant increases in the number of students taking one or more AP classes and taking AP exams.