

**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) [X] Title I    [ ] Charter    [X] Magnet    [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Michael L. Bland

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

Official School Name Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy at B.F. Darrell Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4370 South Lancaster Road

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

City Dallas State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 75216-7111

County Texas (TX)

Telephone (972) 749-2100 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL http://www.dallasisd.org/obama E-mail mibland@dallasisd.org

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

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

Name of Superintendent\*Mr. Michael Hinajosa E-mail hinojosam@dallasisd.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

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

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Dan Micciche  
(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

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
  - 178 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 25 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 25 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools

228 TOTAL

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

- 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
- 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	79	0	79
7	81	0	81
8	87	0	87
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	247	0	247

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1 % Asian
  - 34 % Black or African American
  - 62 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 2 % White
  - 1 % 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: 1%

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	3
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	243
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.012
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 30 %  
65 Total number ELL

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

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 84 %  
Total number students who qualify: 207
8. Students receiving special education services: 1 %  
2 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.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 2 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	30
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1
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	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.  
Yes    No X

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.

Develop young men into impactful leaders through the development of their intellectual, moral, physical, social, and emotional skills for the global society of tomorrow.

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

The Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy is designated by the state of Texas and the Dallas Independent School as a magnet campus. There is a competitive and rigorous selection process to attend the campus. The process is designed to determine a student's ability to successfully master content from a Pre-AP and AP accelerated curriculum.

The first step in the admissions process is that a student must have a grade-point average higher than 80% cumulatively in their core classes. The next step in the process requires students to have scored in the 40th percentile or higher on the ITBS test or a scale score on STAAR or a district approved norm-referenced test. The next requirement is scoring within the 70th percentile on the district magnet math and writing assessment. The last requirement if the other requirements have been met is for qualified students to be interviewed by campus representatives prior to being admitted as an incoming student. The applications are then reviewed by a committee to determine the student's overall score. Students are then notified by mail if they are accepted, waitlisted or denied admission to the campus.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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The Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy (BOMLA) began six years ago with the goal to meet the educational needs of the previously underserved male youth of South Dallas. While the racial educational achievement gap is more widely known, the gender achievement gap is less well-known, and girls generally outperform boys at the higher levels of education. BOMLA tackles both gaps. While Dallas ISD has had success with an all-girls school, BOMLA was a new experiment: the first all-boys public school in the state of Texas. BOMLA has a student body that is 100% male and historically is largely Latino and Black, with a minority, other. It is located in the heart of South Dallas, an area that has traditionally struggled to meet the educational needs of its population. By many metrics, the student group that BOMLA serves is the most challenging group in Dallas ISD.

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

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

BOMLA's core curriculum is guided by the District's Blue-Print and enhanced by implementing researched based Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) which focus on Single Gender Education. Based on research of best practices for boys, it is understood that boys require a curriculum which allows movement, hands-on-activities and the ability to explore their ideas and their environment. Another strategy that fosters the curriculum is Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), which employs content and language objectives within every lesson including open-ended scenarios and inquiry-based learning and the use of 2.0 Technological Tools. These enhancements are developed through curriculum designing and planning. Each six weeks the teachers revisit the TEKS and district blueprints to plan for the entire six weeks. By creating their own curriculum guides, the teachers are able to develop rigorous lesson plans that are custom made for an all-male campus. By incorporating project based and student centered learning the young men are able to achieve at high levels, closing the achievement gap for boys in an urban setting. The curriculum is also supported by flexible seating which includes yoga balls and standing desks. This type of seating stimulates the male brain and the students are able to retain the information that is being taught. By providing this type of differentiated learning environment the teachers have the flexibility to be creative as well. Teachers and students alike are able to interact in their learning, providing a conducive learning environment that reflects the outcomes of the TEKS. Understanding the concept of teaching and exploring first and then testing is an asset that the school prides itself on.

English Language Arts uses both college preparatory and collegiate curricula that teach analytical reading and writing about fiction, non-fiction, and rhetoric from multicultural literature. Students master the writing process for various purposes including prewriting strategies to generate ideas, draw inferences with textual evidence, develop their voice as well as use writing to formulate questions, refine topics and clarify ideas. This approach was chosen in order to best equip students to be actively engaged in global competencies, and become college ready lifelong learners.

Students acquire foundational skills through holistic instructional best practices engaging them in reading a wide range of representative works to understand the nature of literature artistically, historically and universally. Students read aloud major works to determine and develop styles of emphasizing important ideas and use mentor texts as models for their writing. Students conduct conferences to deepen understanding of literary concepts. Students have multiple practices with timed and process writing and confer with teachers and peers to develop college-level writing skills.

In order to develop strong accelerated mathematics programs, the math team uses online resources and learning platforms to pre-assess, adapt and expand on established conceptual knowledge, understanding and skill.

The math team uses a backward planning model to ensure improved student achievement through a deeper understanding of the students' conceptual expectations and performance skills as identified by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). This allows the Math department to design learning experiences and instructional techniques that will achieve the learning goals specified in their TEKS.

Through frequent formal and informal collaborative efforts, the math team of educators works towards vertical alignment of TEKS and College and Career Readiness standards. Selected content strands that align throughout multiple grade levels are selected based on deficiencies determined from assessment data. The team then designs and determines instructional strategies as well as utilizes curriculum support materials to aid in student learning.

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are the basis for the science curriculum at the Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy, but also includes the Next Generation Science Standards and Science College Board Standards for College Success. The Readiness and Supporting Standards of the TEKS are addressed. These standards offer guidance for teachers providing a platform that targets literacy among all students.



Students engage in activities that promote scientific literacy which includes, problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, use of science and technology in everyday life, engages in discussions with peers about issues and theories involving science, and comprehends the impact of science on humans, the Earth, and the Universe. Students are engaged in hands- on inquiry-based activities and laboratory investigation using the Claim, Evidence and Reasoning approach. By doing these, the Scientific Process skills are addressed on a regular basis.

Scientific instruction is delivered in a variety of ways emphasizing the relevance of concepts and skills to the world beyond the classroom as they explore the physical sciences, life sciences, earth/space sciences, engineering, and technology. Teachers use the 5-E (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate } Model in lesson planning and presentations which include student-led lab investigations that have interdisciplinary connections and emphasize self-discovery.

The social studies department uses techniques that are a combination of interactive and traditional methods of instructional delivery. Through the use of teacher and student discussions, project-based learning, lecture, gallery-walks, interactive notebooks, and self-discovery via teacher managed learning management system, students are taught a TEKS based curriculum at middle school levels and college readiness targeted instruction at the upper school level. These particular approaches were selected due to their proven research-based academic effectiveness, student engagement, retention, and student ownership of the material. The strategies used allow students to acquire foundational skills, such as map proficiency, chronological reasoning, causation, argumentation, contextualization, periodization, and comparison, by practicing them in the classroom with teacher oversight through games and activities that help them to further develop the skills. The department also utilizes writing strategies that emphasize thinking as a historian by employing prior knowledge of historical topics and historical documents to develop a historically defensible claim supported by evidence. Elective course themes focus on cultural understanding and awareness, citizenship, and understanding origins of stereotypes of marginalized groups.

### Career and College Readiness

Every core curriculum course at Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy is Pre-AP (middle school-grade ten) and AP (grades nine-twelve). Three instructors are national AP Exam Readers and often offer professional development in their individual departments. Students attend enrichment AP Exam prep sessions for additional instruction and remediation. Over fifty college recruiters visit the campus annually and several track interested students over the course of their four years in upper school. Every student in middle and upper school attends several college tours and fairs. During the summer students have the opportunity to participate in the Mayor's Internship Program. The campus has been blessed to have at least ten students participate in these internships. In addition to the Mayor's Internship Program several students have secured their own internships through networking with the stakeholders of the campus.

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

### Languages Other Than English

For languages other than English, or the World Language (WL) program, the students are offered Spanish and Latin three days a week for an hour and thirty minutes per day during A- Day and B-Day, and forty-five minutes on the modified day. The new Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), which are officially changing in major ways next school year, have been implemented by BOMLA as an early pilot school in Dallas ISD. The teachers at BOMLA are expected to be leaders and trainers for the new TEKS. This has led the campus to excel in the WL offerings. Students are also encouraged to study abroad, and students have, through the school, traveled to Costa Rica, Spain, France, Italy, China, Taiwan, Ireland, and Japan. The global focus helps motivate students inside the WL classroom.

Latin is offered to grades seven through nine, while Spanish is offered to grades eight through twelve. Students generally take three to five years of languages other than English at BOMLA.

The Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy band program's mission statement is "To develop young men into professional musicians through the growth and exposure to the diverse genres afforded through the study of music." In doing this, the students are given exposure to and encouraged to perform a wide range of musical styles and in a variety of settings. The band's top-performing ensemble is The Presidential Jazz Band. This group performs over forty times each school year. The presidential jazz band plays clubs, festivals, fundraisers, and community events all across the Dallas area. The young men in this group have performed for people such as President Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton, Ross Perot, and Mayor Rawlings, and have also performed with professional jazz musicians, Marion Meadows, Dave Koz, David Sanborn, and Jason Davis. In addition to the Presidential Jazz Band, sixth through twelfth grade students also participate in beginner jazz band, percussion ensemble, brass ensemble, and drumline.

The band program uses the flipped classroom method for instruction which is aligned with the TEKS and curriculum. The instructors have pre-recorded video lessons, and have created a teacher-made i-Book for students to use throughout the course. Students watch video lessons and complete assignments at their own pace. This allows the instructor to provide one-on-one instruction to students as opposed to whole class instruction which is emphasized in the TEK 8.2A that focuses on independent, accurate intonations and rhythm.

The band program also implemented an innovative grading system called "earn your grade". At the beginning of each grading cycle, all students are assigned all assignments for the grading cycle. Grades of fifty percent are assigned to all assignments. Once students pass an assignment with one hundred percent accuracy the grade is changed. Students grades will never go down only up.

BOMLA's Visual Art curriculum is designed to maximize the student's creative choice for sixth through twelfth grades. Art is offered as elective in each of these grades, for an hour and thirty minutes per day during A-Day and B-Day, and forty-five minutes on the modified day. While the state TEKS place an emphasis on the elements and principles of art, BOMLA students are taught that the elements and principles of art are a visual language they may use as a vehicle to find their own voice thus creating creative expression. Based on the TEKS, sixth through twelfth grade students are expected to create original artworks including drawings, painting, prints, sculptures, ceramics, photographic imagery and digital art and media. The students express thoughts and ideas creatively while challenging the imagination, fostering reflective thinking, and developing disciplined effort and progressive problem-solving skills.

Rather than giving students specific directions that dictate how to execute a particular project, the students are given an aesthetic problem to solve. The students will typically decide which materials and/or techniques will best address their expressive intentions. This means one student might be creating a ceramic sculpture while another may be producing a video documentary that addresses the same project. The amount of student autonomy increases by grade level. By maximizing creative choice, the student is free to find conceptual connections between otherwise disparate ideas or subject matter. They are then able to find a personal relevance and apply their unique perspective as they develop their own evaluation of content and determine their own purposeful course of action.

Physical Education at The Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy adheres to the State's mandated grade and content specific TEKS. The department, not only provides a comprehensive physical education class but also provides a unique content with strong focus on academics. The key word in physical education is "education". The goal of the department is to provide an academic class in which the TEKS are unpacked and presented in ways that are relevant to the students' day to day lives. All TEKS highlight specifically how they can affect student lives in a positive manner; students then use this information to become transformative leaders in their communities and families. The knowledge acquired in the academic class is brought to life in the physical application and performance class. In these classes, students identify how their bodies respond to the exercise, for example, heart rate, training zones, and effects of dehydration.

All students, sixth through twelfth grade, participate in Physical Education and Conditioning instruction where students learn and discover about anatomy and physiology, sports psychology, fitness training principles, and the rules of sport. Each ninety-minute class allows for application and skills performance, incorporating information that is obtained in the class. Student participation is high with clear expectations

and their participation grades reflect this.

Grades six through twelve are afforded an opportunity to study technology. The following courses are currently offered: Technology Applications (sixth and seventh grade), Introduction to Robotics (seventh and eighth grade), Introduction to Programming (seventh and eighth grade), Engineering Design (ninth through twelfth grade), Robot Automation (ninth through twelfth grade), Concepts of Engineering (ninth through twelfth grade), and Robotics (ninth through twelfth grade). Students participate in curricular activities daily as planned by their specific teacher. Although the guidelines of the lessons are planned by each instructor, the students work independently in creating and coding. The students have weekly checkpoints where they are required to demonstrate what they have been working on. At the end of the sixth weeks, each student must have their project completed. This allows the students to work at their own pace, but they are able to meet the deadline. The technology curriculum is aligned to the TEKS for each unique course offering. For example, Technology Applications lessons address all of the TEKS using a project-based approach and integrates core subjects as applicable.

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

Like many schools nationwide, mathematics, as well as English/Language Arts and Reading are target growth areas for BOMLA. The school develops strategic instructional methods, interventions, and assessments to stimulate measured growth in these areas. Teachers, along with the instructional coach, use backward planning, or “starting with the end in mind” to create units that yield mastery of content based on essential questions.

ELAR year-long methods include ratiocination, read alouds, and reciprocal teaching to aid students in a logical ordering of ideas, coherence, diction, style, and use of standard grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation. Each six weeks students read aloud in small groups in order to detect gaps in style—to be filled with appropriate transitional expressions to listen for a controlling tone and personal voice.

Teachers’ written questions on student drafts elicit further thinking and response from the student relative to controlling his tone and establishing and maintaining his writing voice. Lessons target whole class and tutorial groups regarding common writing challenges and methods of addressing them. Specialized instruction for all students, especially English Language Learner Brothers, includes teacher preparation, instructional indicators such as comprehensible input and the building of background knowledge. It comprises strategies for classroom organization and delivery.

Each six weeks teachers in all subject areas design lesson units with the end in mind using a holistic approach that creates learning goals based on current and historical data. All unit plans calendar out lessons based on essential understandings and questions students will gain and master. Unit plans account for tiered differentiated instruction. Common Assessments are scheduled mid-term and students who do not meet a minimum milestone of eighty percent attend tutorials in addition to mandatory tutorials in Upper School English and mathematics.

In mathematics, students complete an online diagnostic which gauges and tailors instructional support students need this program is aligned with the curriculum that the district supplies. This tool is utilized by the students to strategically progress their tiered instruction in order close gaps and allows them to perform on grade level. Assessment analysis is performed by each individual student and with collaborative peer groups, which include providing a rationale for both incorrect and correct solutions. Once the assessment has been analyzed, the program itself uses adaptive questioning to quickly and accurately determine what a student knows and does not know in the course, then the student is instructed by the program on the topic of need.

The assessments that are used throughout the campus are developed by several sources. The AP Instructors create their assessments based on the standards and expectations of the AP exam. Each question is developed carefully with rigor and precision. The Pre-AP instructors develop their assessments based on the expectations of STAAR TEKS and the TEKS for the EOCs. One unique feature that is demonstrated in the Algebra class is the use of open-end questions, this method is used to understand the student's thought

process of the mathematical equation. Projects are used as assessments as well on the campus, rubrics are created by the instructors and each project must reflect the directives given from the rubric. It is evident that Project Based Learning and Inquiry Based Learning are being implemented throughout the campus. The district also supplies two exams that are given at the end of the sixth weeks and at the end of the semester. These exams are developed based on the District Blueprints that focus on the Readiness Standards of the STAAR assessments.

For gaps of ten or more BOMLA utilizes disaggregated data to determine areas of student success and student need. In some cases, an academic case management plan is created by a team of teachers, an administrator, and the student to facilitate opportunities that encourage and promote student academic awareness in pursuit of academic success throughout the school day. Because the campus is a single gender male student body, deliberate strides are taken to provide staff with customized professional development that targets BOMLA's unique population and its needs. Professional speakers and book studies ensure that the staff's knowledge and best practices are current and adequate in understanding the students served, thus maintaining high levels of achievement.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

The culture and climate of the Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy are very unique. The administrative team cultivates the culture that produces leaders; they are true change agents. The educators on campus are able to advance their education and are encouraged to lead Professional Developments and PLCs. The campus administration also believes in promoting from within. If the opportunity for lateral movement is available the current staff will have ample amount of time to apply for those positions first. Professional growth is encouraged throughout the campus.

The culture of this campus begins with the heartbeat of BOMLA, which is Lyceum. Lyceum is one of the school-wide practices that has made the school successful. All students participate in this daily morning ritual. There are two thirty-minute Lyceum sessions, one for middle school and one for high school. The opening begins with the ritual recitations of the United States pledge, the school's mission and motto, the school district and campus core beliefs, the school creed and finally singing the school song.

Lyceum is conducted during the first semester by the school principal. Each week the principal leads lessons using the sixteen Habits of Mind (Costa and Kellick 2009) as his curriculum. Students are required to take notes and to respond verbally to concepts during the auditorium discussion during each lesson. During the second semester, teachers agree to present for one week topics from either their subject of expertise or topics outside of their field of high interest.

One Lyceum of note was presented by the Science teacher on genetically modified foods and their impact on the health and welfare of the United States population. Students were highly engaged during her week-long presentation and the concepts discussed served as an excellent extension of concepts they were learning in their science and social studies classes.

Lessons of this nature allow students to become exposed to culturally relevant topics where they can synthesize knowledge and become evaluative thinkers and problem solvers beyond the classroom. Throughout the school year, students make presentations, lead discussions, and are recognized for academic and extracurricular achievements. These practices from Lyceum include the following benefits: enhancement of students' listening and public speaking skills before large audiences; robust exposure to ideas beyond the classroom; development of leadership skills and sharpen their ability to make connections between academic studies and the real world; finally, Lyceum allows for the reiteration of school, individual, and cultural values.

All incoming students are required to attend the orientation program League of Extraordinary Gentlemen also known as LXG. LXG is held the first two weeks of summer and is led by both BOMLA teachers and exemplary student leaders. The goal of LXG is to prepare new students for the cultural shift they will most likely experience while attending this campus. The student leaders help guide new students by teaching them cultural norms and expectations, including analysis of the Creed, School Song, and school habits of mind.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

BOMLA works closely with its families and various members of the community to ensure that student achievement is attained. The stakeholders who support the efforts of the campus include The Tzu Chi Foundation. This organization supports the campus and its mission statement, "develop young men into impactful leaders through the development of their intellectual, moral, physical, social and emotional skills for tomorrow." This foundation promotes the campus mission by providing interactive lessons that enhance the belief that people on campus are all one family. Their mission is to provide programs that are globally embraced with both love and truth. This foundation provides monthly lessons to the young men at BOMLA that cultivate love, respect, and kindness. Each month the six grade students are taught these lessons through an interactive hands-on approach so that the information can be best understood.

“We are our brother’s keeper” is an affirmation from the school creed that Brothers are expected and encouraged to participate in through community service. Brothers have participated in clothing drives for the homeless, food drives for the hungry, and collected eighteen pallets of bottled water on campus and had it transported to the citizens of Flint, Michigan.

Other community service projects include collecting toys during the Christmas toy drive, collecting coats and toiletries for the homeless. These projects are evidence of BOMLA living out its creed, being “servants of mankind”. This manifestation of the creed is seen on a weekly basis as students seek new ways to serve mankind.

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

The Mission of the campus pledges to “develop young men into impactful leaders through the development of their intellectual, moral, physical, social and emotional skills for the global society of tomorrow”. The Mission is applicable to everyone on campus, the administrative team’s responsibility is to ensure that the mission cultivates teacher success while encouraging them, inspiring them and empower each educator on the campus.

The Professional Development begins during the summer, through a campus lead program entitled League of Extraordinary Teachers (LXT). LXT was development for new teachers and staff to assist with the transition of understanding the culture and the norms that drive the campus on a daily basis. During the four-day training of LXT the Instructional Coach, Librarian, Historian, and Administrators guide the new staff through the journey of BOMLA. There are two sessions covered each day during LXT, day one consists of the Teacher Oath, Campus Expectations, The Habits of Mind, Self-Reflections, Setting Smart Goals, Creating a Personal Mission, The House System, Class Environment with Habits of Mind, and How to Create the Curriculum Guide, where each teacher is given the components of the six-week curriculum plan. During LXT faculty members are placed in a House (Justice, Decree, Alliance, and Expedition); this system provides a sense of belonging to the new faculty members.

Throughout the school year, the teachers meet with the Instructional Coach and Department Chairs for Data Meetings, Grade Level meetings, and Vertical Team meetings. These meetings are scheduled during the week at various times throughout the sixth weeks. The teachers are able to unpack the TEKS and AP standards to properly create and design their six-week curriculum plans. They are also able to dissect the data based on student outcomes to identify those students that need interventions which include reteaching and tutorials. Here at BOMLA, teachers and staff members are able to collaborate to create homework and project scheduling, so that the students are not overwhelmed with an overload of assignments per day. These PLCs of collaboration allows the staff to work together to provide an environment that is conducive for learning. Being change agents, the administration at the Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy encourages and supports higher education. Staff members are encouraged to become leaders as well. The support is provided by allowing teachers to take on leadership responsibilities on campus. Which include, but are not limited to Club Sponsors, Program Coordinators (LXG), Field Trip Sponsors, leading Lyceum, and leading PDs and PLCs on campus and for neighboring schools. The teachers are empowered to be creative, and unique. BOMLA believes that the teachers are the experts in their classroom, and therefore they are able to be creative and innovative in their delivery.

As the administration continues to inspire, it is important for everyone on campus to adhere to the district core. One such component of the core states, “There is no excuse for poor quality instruction”. The campus was built on this principle, the founding Principal traveled around the country identifying and seeking best practices for boys. These strategies are being used daily to reach the young men of The Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy. In addition to incorporating best practices for boys, the administration team has attended the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) and Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC) conferences and a variety of other conferences that continue to foster the climate and culture of the campus.

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

Educators today are faced with an array of cultural, socio-economic, political and philosophical factors that make the art form known as teaching exceedingly more difficult. Navigating through this sea of instability in education is quite a task for educators who lack sound leadership and guidance. As an instructional leader, the principal is obligated to provide teachers and all stakeholders with sound leadership so that the students under their care are offered a quality education despite the barriers that exist that derail students' academic success.

The role of the principal has evolved into much more than a managerial position that one would retire from and draw a decent pension after retirement. It has become a position where school accountability, student success, and teacher accountability have been thrust into the forefront of the national debate surrounding the effectiveness of how students are educated. The principal welcomes the challenges that come with this position for several reasons. He is a proponent of schools as safe havens for students that focus on educating the whole child. With this approach, he leads BOMLA supporting teachers, guiding instructional practice and developing a campus culture that is conducive to learning for all students.

The leadership structure of the campus includes a functional team of educators that takes a holistic approach to operating the campus. The campus organizational chart begins with the role of the principal as the instructional leader and head operational manager. The next role that supports the principal in articulating, executing and assessing the mission and vision of the campus is the associate principal. Support staff and faculty include the office manager, counselors, instructional coach, testing coordinator and the campus leadership team which is made up of teacher leaders. Every member of the leadership organizational chart is charged with being mission and role bound.

The leadership team meets once a week to discuss campus related issues, events, student concerns, parental concerns and/or operational tasks that determine how efficient the campus runs daily. This weekly check and balance system ensures that the needs of all stakeholders related to the campus needs are being met consistently and that all stakeholders have a voice in the decision making process.

The campus leadership philosophy believes the school's main purpose is to improve student academic achievement. Effective instruction makes the most difference in student academic performance. There is no excuse for poor quality instruction. With educators' help, at risk students will achieve at the same rate as non-at-risk students. Staff members must have a commitment to children and a commitment to the pursuit of excellence. All students can learn and will learn regardless of their differences. Education is defined as the pursuit of knowledge predicated on lifelong learning. Access to educational opportunities yields positive academic results. Lifelong learning and college readiness are the goals for all students.

BOMLA's leadership philosophy is multidimensional and the school practices an approach that reflects that variety with Stoic Leadership (facing adversity head on), Transformative Leadership (serving as change agents), and Servant Leadership (taking a communal and collaborative approach to leadership to empower others through a culture of service).

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

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It is difficult to describe the Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy without referring to its house system. The house system permeates everything that happens at BOMLA. The house system is a thread that binds all of the academic subjects together. It is a carrot on a stick to convince students to treat each other with respect. It helps the school by convincing students that it is in their interest to establish their own norms and patterns of prosocial behavior.

Young men are drawn to social groups with which they can identify. Whereas some students are drawn to team sports, others might be drawn to church groups. In BOMLA's neighborhood, many young men are drawn into gangs. The need for companionship and brotherhood in young men is quite apparent. BOMLA, as a magnet school, is a somewhat difficult position of not being allowed to participate in competitive UIL sports. The need for something to connect the students together was apparent early in the mission development. To this end, BOMLA adopted the traditional the house system.

At an all-boys school, a house system is particularly effective. The students are arbitrarily placed into one of four houses (Alliance, Decree, Expedition, and Justice). This means that often students who are good friends find themselves in different houses. That's when the competitive juices start flowing, and students try to outcompete each other with whatever points-earning-activity the staff at BOMLA place before them. One example is with the annual Tug-of-War. This and other events like it contribute to school pride, house pride, and allow opportunities to teach the young men sportsmanship, character, and brotherhood. Points are given for doing well in district competitions such as debate or the academic pentathlon. Points are also awarded for participating in social events such as the talent show or school dances. Anything valued is honorable with points. As a result, prosocial goals become part of the student's own goals, because students pressure each other to participate and do well in various events. This positive peer pressure is the lifeblood of the school. The students motivate each other, regulate each other, and help each other. They succeed and fail together, and they become Brothers.