

**DeSoto Independent School District**  
**Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>**

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**Competitive Preference Priority 1: Need for Assistance**

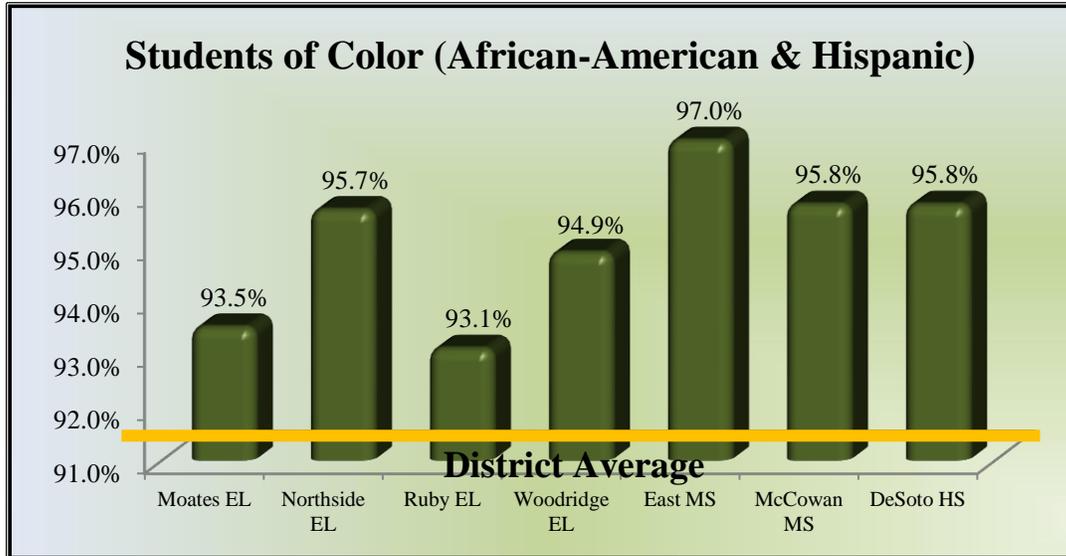
**Introduction:** DeSoto Independent School District (ISD), a local education agency (LEA) proposes an innovative Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP), entitled *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup> (Academies for Academic Enhancement and Excellence)*, aimed at *Equality, Excellence, and Effectiveness for ALL Students*. (Appendix A – All Endnotes validating responses and narrative).

**Goal: Maximize student choice, improve diversity and reduce minority isolation through maintaining racial balance to empower communities of learners to engage in rigorous academic content to overall increase performance in preparation for college and careers.**

As a novice applicant, DeSoto ISD will utilize these federal funds to **implement three new and four revised** (7) magnet school programs to reduce the minority group isolation of students of color (African-American and Hispanic), through project *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*.

**Target Region:** DeSoto is a small north Texas suburb located just 15 miles south of Dallas in Dallas County. DeSoto’s total population including Glenn Heights consists of **63,849** residents of which **54%** are African-American, **10%** are Hispanic, **30%** are White, **6%** are Asian or Other and **11.9%** are considered to be low-income or in poverty.<sup>1</sup> **On the contrary**, the population of DeSoto ISD consists of **9,400** students of which **80%** are African-American, **18%** are Hispanic, and **2%** are **White** or **other**, a rate far behind the city’s demographics at **36%**.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, over **70%** of DeSoto ISD’s students are considered to be low-income, a rate **six times** that of the city (11.9%). DeSoto ISD’s predominantly minority student population is notably more low-income and at-risk of not completing high school than the average Texas student.

**Minority Group Isolation:** Based on the surrounding cities demographics and DeSoto ISD’s campus data, there is compelling need to implement *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*. The chart below depicts DeSoto ISD’s schools with the highest concentration of students of color ready to participate.

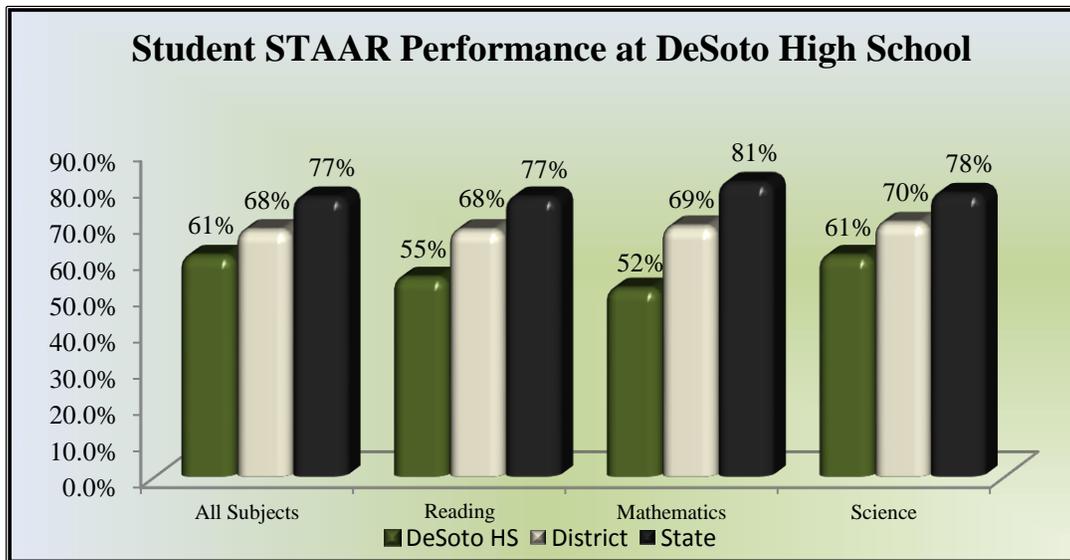


MSAP funding will be used to create magnet schools to reduce minority group (African-American and Hispanic) isolation at these sites through maintaining racial balance. The MSAP project will also create unique learning environments – two Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics (elementary and high school) Academies, one Blended Learning (elementary school) Academy, two Fine Arts (elementary and middle school) Academies, and two Environmental Science and Medical (elementary and middle school) Academies. These themes will not only create a school climate that will attract and retain diverse students, but it will also empower DeSoto ISD to design and implement significant school-wide and system-wide improvements aimed at increasing students and parents interest to ensure students succeed in mastering challenging academic content. Thus, the MSAP funding is critical for DeSoto ISD to fully implement the successful iSTEAM3D, Medical, etc., magnet schools as well as adding additional engaging magnet themes that will attract a balanced representation of students with rigorous, creative, stimulating and motivational instructional programs described later.

**Academic Assessment:** Predictors of academic preparedness for school and college in Texas is based on STAAR-EOC (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness and End-of-



Course). Texas administers STARR-EOC annually to measure a student’s ability to meet state academic standards in core subjects in grades 3-12, including college readiness in Math and Reading. Despite DeSoto ISD’s strong emphasis on innovative college and career preparatory programs, students continue to struggle academically. For example, DeSoto ISD’s secondary student (target K – 12<sup>th</sup> grade pipeline) performance on **STAAR** fell below their district and statewide peers in all testing areas. As depicted in the chart below deficiencies in all core subjects for students in 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade were significant.



A contributing factor to low STAAR rates could also be influenced by the high disciplinary issues at the participating campuses. Based on the 2015 Texas Education Agency (TEA) school conduct data report, target schools illustrated over **4,474** student disciplinary violations.<sup>3</sup>

**Target School District:** DeSoto ISD includes the cities of DeSoto and Glenn Heights, Texas, and consists of **twelve** campuses including **seven** elementary, **three** middle schools, **one** high school, and **one** alternative school. DeSoto ISD is committed to creating graduates that are highly regarded. Thus, high school students can choose from one of five College and Career Institutes (Professional, Health and Science, Arts and Performance, Classical, Business and



Technology). The Institutes are unique in that ALL students have the opportunity to earn college credit (60+ Hours) and explore careers without losing traditional school experiences. Similarly, middle school students participate in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education through DeSoto ISD Magnet iSTEAM3D Academies. This takes the STEM and adds the arts – STEAM – with the *3D standing for ‘discovering, designing and developing.’* The magnet school uses an enhanced, project-based learning (PBL) – an open-room concept method of delivering curriculum. Such learning experiences assure each student attains skills and attitudes deemed essential for a productive high school and college experience.

Although the Magnet iSTEAM3D, Medical, etc., magnet schools have been very successful in attracting, retaining and increasing students’ academic achievement levels, this initiative has only been piloted in three DeSoto ISD middle schools (grades 6 – 8) over the past four years for only **100** students in each campus. Until recently, lack of resources has restricted DeSoto ISD from replicating this successful magnet model. However, in December of 2015, DeSoto ISD was successful in obtaining an Investing in Innovation (i3) Development grant from the U.S. DOE in the amount of \$3 million over a three-year period. These resources, yet limited, have afforded DeSoto ISD the opportunity to replicate the iSTEAM3D, Medical, etc., magnet schools model across one elementary, and a high school (9<sup>th</sup> grade) to serve 300 additional students annually.

However, it is not sufficient. Many students not exposed to such a rigorous and engaging setting continue to struggle academically and many families, predominantly White, have moved their students to private, charter, or to other magnet and traditional school districts through inter-district transfers, as evident by the city and school demographics above. DeSoto ISD’s goal is to continue this momentum and secure resources from the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) and from other private and local funding institutions to not only replicate the



iSTEAM3D, Medical, etc., magnet schools but also to revise and create new magnet schools within the district whereby revitalizing the district to achieve racial balance and be an accurate representation of the diverse community (*Appendix B-STEAM Content and Case Study*).

Providing students and their parents with **school choice** is a priority of DeSoto ISD, as validated above and by the Board of Trustees approved Voluntary Desegregation Plan (*Appendix C – Desegregation Plan and Appendix D – Minutes*). Thus, ***Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*** will feature the following unique themes selected by DeSoto Board of Trustees, educators, students, parents and community stakeholders: 1) **iSTEAM3D Academies** (grades K – 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>); 2) **Environmental Science and Medical Academies** (grades 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>); 3) **Blended Learning Academy** (grades K – 5<sup>th</sup>); and 4) **Fine Arts Academies** (grades 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>).

**Reducing segregation:** Segregated minority schools are much more likely to be in poor neighborhoods, have lower graduation rates and offer minority students far fewer opportunities to take the kinds of academic enrichment courses that prepare them for college.<sup>4</sup> In fact, altered by immigration trends over the last half-century, segregation of students of color is most pronounced in Texas, California and New York.<sup>5</sup> In fact, Texas is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most segregated state for Hispanics, with **47.8%** of Hispanic students in extremely segregated schools.<sup>6</sup>

To counter this trend, DeSoto ISD continuously strives to achieve quality education and student equality by eliminating segregation, diversifying all schools, and by providing a safe and drug free environment where students from all backgrounds (race, ethnicity, socioeconomic, gender, age, ability, or disability) can actively engage and learn. Thus, ***Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*** will not only better prepare students academically and socially to meet the state academic standard, college requirements and life-long experiences, but also provide the necessary momentum to empower administrators, teachers, and staff to be highly-effective educators in a personalized



learning environment. The concept behind *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will establish *rigor, relevance, and relationships* that underscore essential components of equality and high achieving magnet schools: school choice, specialized curriculum, diverse environment, challenging academics, college and career culture, strong parental support, technology integration, authentic learning experiences, PBL opportunities, real-world concepts and a personalized approach to teaching and learning through data-driven decisions. Regarding education, Gardner (2011) argues equilibrium must exist between students’ “analytical,” “creative” and “practical abilities.”<sup>7</sup> For students to understand a concept and solve a problem, he or she must appreciate one’s inherent creative abilities, and apply multiple intelligences to link the concept and problems in practical ways to real-world situations.<sup>8</sup> With the full integration of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* and the unique target magnet themes will allow students to learn and do just that.

*(a) The costs of fully implementing the magnet schools project as proposed...*

**Identifying Needs:** During the planning stages DeSoto ISD conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to ensure all students’ needs were identified, parents were involved and teachers, principals, Superintendent, counselors and community partners were included. This included the review of several objective data sources to support the need(s) for this project. This inclusive process allowed participants to share their perspectives and knowledge to not only identify each school needs, but also to inform the program delivery design and proposed budget.

*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will establish seven theme-based magnet schools as listed in Table 1.

| <b>Table 1. Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&amp;E<sup>2</sup> Target Schools</b> |              |                                   |                             |
|---|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Magnet Schools</b>   | <b>Theme</b> | <b>Grades Served</b>              | <b>Projected Enrollment</b> |
| The Meadows Elementary  | iSTEAM3D     | K - 5th                           | 150                         |
| DeSoto High School  | iSTEAM3D     | 9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> | 150                         |



|   |                                    |                                   |              |
|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Ruby Young Elementary                               | Environmental<br>Science & Medical | PK-5 <sup>th</sup>                | 75           |
| East Middle School                                  | Environmental                      | 6 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> | 75           |
| Frank Moates Elementary                             | Blended Learning                   | K - 5 <sup>th</sup>               | 500          |
| Woodridge Elementary                                | Fine Arts                          | K - 5 <sup>th</sup>               | 275          |
| McCowan Middle School                               | Fine Arts                          | 6 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> | 275          |
| <b>Total Projected Enrollment for All Academies</b> |                                    |                                   | <b>1,500</b> |

The target theme-based magnet schools (*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*) will provide participating students with a desegregated learning environment – enhanced rigorous curriculum and enriched learning aimed to help students succeed academically. To do this, Magnet school funding is needed to transform traditional schools into seven 21<sup>st</sup> century state-of-the-art magnet schools. MSAP funding will provide sufficient funds for staff, partners, curriculum integration, coaching, tutoring, professional development, high-quality print and electronic materials, technology, and digital devices, online resources, a secured database, instructional assistance for teachers, students, and parents, resources for an external evaluator to ensure program fidelity and public relations support for recruitment and outreach. Table 2 summarizes the projected five year funding needed to successfully implement the seven magnet schools proposed by this project.

| <b>Funding</b> | <b>Year 1</b> | <b>Year 2</b> | <b>Year 3</b> | <b>Year 4</b> | <b>Year 5</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Personnel      | \$609,500     | \$645,350     | \$676,182     | \$697,609     | \$726,147     | \$3,354,788  |
| Fringe         | \$126,640     | \$132,547     | \$137,900     | \$142,174     | \$147,352     | \$686,613    |



|                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                     |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Benefits           |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                     |
| Travel             | \$71,070           | \$75,850           | \$81,070           | \$75,850           | \$81,070           | \$384,910           |
| Equipment          | \$78,600           | \$45,600           | \$26,400           | \$25,000           | \$25,000           | \$200,600           |
| Supplies           | \$15,400           | \$4,800            | \$4,800            | \$4,800            | \$4,800            | \$34,600            |
| Contractual        | \$1,485,000        | \$2,160,000        | \$2,160,000        | \$1,860,000        | \$1,500,000        | \$9,165,000         |
| Other              | \$125,600          | \$119,600          | \$119,600          | \$119,600          | \$119,600          | \$604,000           |
| Direct Costs       | \$2,511,810        | \$3,183,747        | \$3,205,952        | \$2,925,033        | \$2,603,969        | \$14,430,511        |
| Indirect 4.1%      | \$97,772           | \$125,886          | \$126,815          | \$115,061          | \$101,628          | \$567,163           |
| <b>Total Costs</b> | <b>\$2,609,582</b> | <b>\$3,309,633</b> | <b>\$3,332,767</b> | <b>\$3,040,094</b> | <b>\$2,705,597</b> | <b>\$14,997,674</b> |

To adequately support implementation of the seven proposed magnet school programs and to ensure objectives are met as presented in the scope of work, DeSoto ISD requests approximately **\$14,997,674** over the five-year period for personnel, stipends, travel, instructional materials, equipment, supplies, external resources, professional development and independent evaluator. Details are provided in the attached Budget Narrative.

DeSoto ISD is consistently struggling to make declining resources meet the ever-growing needs of students living in this community – resulting in academic performance gaps. In fact, The Education Week Research Center’s 2015 “Quality Counts” report puts Texas **49<sup>th</sup>** in the nation for its level of school spending per pupil (**\$8,299**) which is substantially lower than the state of New York who ranks **1<sup>st</sup>** with a per-pupil spending at **\$19,818**. This low investment in the state explains why the overall ranking for Texas on school finance is a letter grade of **D**. The Education Week research findings back up what Texas educators — and a Texas state court — have seen in our under-resourced schools: a state system of school funding that does not meet constitutional requirements to ensure **equitable** and **adequate** educational opportunity to **ALL**



students. Furthermore, with the continuing economic forecast predicted for the state, this dim picture is unlikely to improve in the immediate future. DeSoto ISD students need educational With MSAP funds, DeSoto ISD would not only reduce minority group (African-American and Hispanic) isolation through maintaining racial balance at the proposed magnet schools it would also offer students a “school choice” to a customized alternative education program designed to promote high quality rigorous academic programs ensuring students’ full engagement and academic success. Unfortunately, the costs of initiating these seven innovative **new** and **revised** magnet schools exceed DeSoto ISD’s current capacity to fund a project of this scope. Thus, MSAP funding is needed to provide seed money for new curriculum, capacity building, provide parent and community outreach, design a comprehensive marketing plan, external evaluation, purchase supplies, materials and equipment that will be sustained at the magnet schools and continue to be sustained after the funding period.

***(b) The resources available to the applicant to carry out project if funds were not provided...***

Funding from the MSAP is necessary for DeSoto ISD to implement its plans for seven new and revised magnet schools of choice in North Texas. Without federal support, DeSoto ISD although fully committed to schools of choice, will not be able to fully implement ***Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>***, as proposed. Over half of the school district’s funding comes from the State, and the investment (49<sup>th</sup> in the nation) including cuts Texas has made to educational funding, has significantly diminished DeSoto ISD’s budget. Despite the current deep cuts in budget, DeSoto ISD maintains its educational priorities of increasing student achievement and educator capacity and thus, continues to aggressively search for additional funding (e. g. GEAR UP-2014 and i3 in 2015) to fill the funding gaps. DeSoto is in process of, and will continue to aggressively pursue funding (private, local, state, federal) opportunities aligned to the goals and vision of the district.



DeSoto ISD strongly believes in the magnet model of school choice and theme-based magnet academic programs and is fully committed to investing and leveraging over \$2.2 million annually in local funds to provide basic infrastructure of facilities, furniture, equipment, transportation, technology, computer labs, salaries and benefits of classroom teachers, counselors, principals, and support staff. Other than the \$2.2 million, DeSoto ISD has no additional resources to initiate seven magnets school programs. Also, it should be noted that there has also been tremendous support for *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* among the Board of Trustees, teachers, administrators, students, parents and stakeholders in the community. Yet, without federal funding, current and potential students at DeSoto ISD, will not have the same opportunity as their peers in the urban cities of Dallas and Houston (with over **146** magnet schools) – of school choice, theme-based instruction, smaller learning communities, and an advocacy program that is designed to effectively prepare students for postsecondary or career options while offering a stimulating climate that is proven to attract and engage their interests.<sup>9</sup>

*(c) The extent to which the costs of the project exceed the applicant’s resources...*

DeSoto ISD has made exhaustive attempts to solicit additional funds, some successful (e.g. GEAR UP and i3) and others not (Raise Your Hands Texas – Blended Learning) to enhance educational instruction for all students. However, given the actual budget constraints, the costs of the proposed MSAP project exceeds DeSoto ISD’s current resources. Through extensive planning, DeSoto ISD determined that the MSAP federal funds would best be allocated towards the following critical services and products of the proposed *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* project:

**Project Management:** The project director, site coordinators and theme coach positions are critical to the success of the magnet schools due to the fact they are charged with the overall leadership and guidance needed to develop a clear vision of each theme at each magnet site



so that it is implemented with fidelity. The Project Director will play a key role in both the administrative and programmatic integrity and accountability to ensure all contractual compliances are in accordance and objectives are met. This also includes acting as liaison to Desoto ISD administrators, principals and teachers and to the USDOE Magnet program office.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Local resources:</b> \$2,442,202 salary for district staff only over the 5 years |  |
|---|--|

**Customized Curriculum and Instruction:** The development of each unique magnet theme including the pedagogical instructional strategies necessary to implement each theme with fidelity, will require extensive planning and development time, teacher training, and piloting new curriculum and approaches to teaching. Teachers, administrators and educators will need time to make the necessary cross-curricular connections necessary for PBL strategies, and to integrate STEM, Arts, Medical/Health and Blended Learning into core academic content, create new electives and afterschool enrichment opportunities to enhance student learning, design new performance-based assessments, create new lessons and identify effective strategies and best practices that will be sustainable and shared with other educators after MSAP funding ends. An external evaluator, will also help develop new assessments, train and guide teachers to access, analyze and utilize student data to drive and improve instruction.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Local resources:</b> \$275,000 over five years | <b>MSAP \$ needed:</b> \$1,454,980 over five years |
|---|--|

**Professional Development:** Through extensive planning and piloting current magnet school programs (iSTEAM3D, Medical, etc.), DeSoto ISD recognizes that teachers, administrators and educators will need extensive, rigorous and high quality professional development training, coaching, and follow-up focused at each theme in order to implement the innovative instructional programs proposed. Thus, all educators will participate in 60 hours annually of extensive



capacity building activities specific to their magnet theme. Magnet teachers will also be provided training in the magnet philosophy, desegregation strategies, technology integration, student-led conferences, effective parent communication, etc. Overall, MSAP resources will help build the capacity of local educators to not only continue these new innovative project strategies and activities but to also train and coach other teachers and educators way beyond the funding period.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Local resources:</b> \$373,671 – Leveraged resources to support these efforts | <b>MSAP \$ needed:</b> \$1,108,333 over five years |
|--|--|

**Enrichment and Extended Learning:** To effectively implement these new or revised magnet school programs, particularly at the elementary and middle schools, students will require more time, guidance and support in order for them to acquire the rigorous standards and high level skills needed to master the content. Thus, DeSoto ISD will extend the school day at both the elementary and middle schools in collaboration and support of a new potential 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) – After School program through the Texas Education Agency. DeSoto ISD will also offer new enrichment and elective programs at the middle school to highly engage students and their parents in diverse and enriching experiences.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Local resources available:</b> Currently \$0 | <b>MSAP \$ needed:</b> \$2,765,333 over five years |
|---|--|

**Supplies and Materials:** In order to effectively implement the seven magnet school programs and four themes (iSTEAM3D, Environmental Science/Medical, Blended Learning and Fine Arts) numerous supplies and materials will be needed for both educators and students. The target 21<sup>st</sup> century innovative themes above will desperately require new authentic tools, digital devices and software, upgraded technology, computers, print and electronic supplies and materials that DeSoto ISD cannot currently afford to invest for the proposed magnet sites. MSAP funds will be allocated for both one-time and ongoing consumable and non-consumable purchases that will



build DeSoto ISD’s ongoing capacity to implement the seven magnet schools effectively. MSAP funds will ensure each school is supplied with tools that will support digital integration into core content while providing teachers with the tools they need to highly motivate students’ curiosity.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Local resources available:</b> \$887,500 will be allocated for consumable supplies, textbooks and basic materials | <b>MSAP \$ needed:</b> \$2,765,333 over five years |
|--|--|

**Recruitment & Outreach:** An aggressive marketing and outreach campaign has been created to support the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* project. MSAP funds will be used to develop ongoing consistent and positive messages in both English and Spanish about the magnet school programs to increase recruitment and outreach efforts to gain further interest, awareness and support. These resources will assist DeSoto ISD’s capacity to extend beyond its district boundaries to raise awareness about all the exciting things that are happening in education at their magnet school academies.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Local resources available:</b> \$184,392 | <b>MSAP \$ needed:</b> \$383,333 over five years |
|---|--|

**Tracking, Monitoring and Evaluation:** The utilization of a high-tech digital management information system (Youth Connection) to track on-time student data, progress, benchmarks and outcomes will be essential to the success of each magnet academy. Equally important, is the incorporation of a highly effective rigorous evaluation design and plan to apply systematic research methods to measure each magnet school programs’ implementation, fidelity, outcomes and outputs. This evaluation would not only focus on assessing impact on students’ outcomes, it will also look for systemic changes in magnet school practices that may have proximal effect on school-based outcomes (e.g., graduation rates, college enrollment, etc.). The evaluation team in collaboration with the MSAP project director and staff will help monitor project implementation, impacts on teachers, students, and parents, and determine which strategies and/or components have been effective and which need to be adjusted, improved or eliminated.



Local resources available: \$50,000

MSAP \$ needed: \$1,000,000 over five years

It should be noted that these key budget component constraints above are not inclusive of all the resources requested and needed to fully implement the seven magnet school programs to scale. These items were exclusively selected due to the limited resources currently available.

**(d) Difficulty of effectively carrying out plan/consideration – impacts the ability to carryout...**

Creating unique learning environments – will necessitate the following but not be limited to: staff, partners, curriculum integration, coaching, tutoring, instructional assistance and guidance for teachers, students, and parents, teacher training to include: job-embedded sophisticated professional development, extensive program development, high-quality print and electronic materials, high-end technology, equipment, software, supplies and digital devices, online resources, specialized magnet-themed curriculum materials, a secured database and resources for an external evaluator to ensure program fidelity and public relations support for recruitment and community outreach. Opening/revising high-tech, state-of the-art theme-based magnet school programs will require DeSoto ISD, to onboard magnet themed highly qualified effective teachers, coordinators and project director who possess the expertise, skills and knowledge of magnet programs within the identified themes. Additionally, elementary, middle and high magnet schools will require full-time theme-based coaches for the fidelity of implementation of **Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>**. Historically, newly on boarded or highly skilled and/or developed from within content/theme-based Coaches have been instrumental in initiating new magnets, with visionary and innovative ideas.<sup>10</sup> Particularly in DeSoto ISD’s magnets that historically have required a thorough and thoughtful process to hire the best and brightest to serve their unique predominantly minority students of color population that is notably more low-income and at-risk of not completing high school than the average Texas student. These combined expenses,



essential to start-up, paired with the challenges of implementing innovative new magnet theme curriculum, would make it virtually impossible for DeSoto ISD to implement these programs in a timely efficient and effective manner with high fidelity without MSAP funding. Taking into consideration the positive impact and the momentum at DeSoto ISD with the newly granted i3 funding for such a small scale model, and resources, yet offered DeSoto ISD limited opportunity to only serve 300 additional students annually. The timing is ideal to push forth on this surge of momentum and effectively carry out the approved full magnet school plan to increase opportunities of school choice for students in these unique seven learning environments. The innovative plan is fully approved and endorsed by DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees and community. However, as noted above, lack of substantial resources including staff and training would detrimentally impact the design of the magnet project and the overall ability to fully and successfully carryout DeSoto ISD's *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* plan. If funded, this innovative design would move forward and not only revitalize a growing community of innovation but also offer significant revisions to current magnet schools and add new sites along with increased opportunities for students. As noted above, with MSAP funds, the project will have a much broader reach far beyond current existing district feasibility. The project will have a direct impact on over **120** staff members (instructional/non-instructional) and over **1,500** students in Year One. This constitutes a much higher impact than the current iSTEAM3D, Medical, etc., magnet schools, that provides program access to **300** students. DeSoto ISD is poised and capable of facing numerous challenges and knows the current leadership has the vision and willingness to move forward in carrying out the proposed magnet plan. However, along with DeSoto ISD's vision to provide higher quality educational options for all students, these challenges will take a considerable amount of time and resources to move forward with the full scope of the plan.



**Facing Challenge:** A key example of DeSoto ISD’s ability to rise above challenges with set amounts of allocated funding in recent years is the significant change and reputations of specific low-performing campuses (as rated by the State of Texas – *Appendix E*) to a higher rating and standard of excellence for children. With a minimal loan from the State of Texas, resources (USDOE-Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZAB) were sought after and strategically allocated to fulfil a plan of a school-within a school concept. This required a long-term commitment from the district, and operational flexibility as well as significant resources allocated specifically to meet the unique needs of target campuses. With MSAP, this approach of revising and/or initiating new theme based program offerings will require significant modifications to the operations at target schools. As noted and based upon recent experience, conducting the professional development and providing the staffing needed to meet new, rigorous theme-based academic standards is a costly endeavor, both fiscally and in terms of staff time for professional development. With the schools introducing seven new and/or revised magnet themes, numerous activities must be carried out to ensure success. With MSAP support, DeSoto ISD can continue the successful history of providing students and parents with academic choices through increased opportunities of magnet schools. *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* is designed to continue the legacy of innovative forward-thinking as well as reducing minority group (African-American and Hispanic) isolation, closing achievement gaps and offering students a world-class education.

*\* In addition to Table 5 & 6 although not required, see below Priority 2 & 3 included:*

**Competitive Preference Priority 2: New/Revised Magnet Schools and Evidence**

Based on input during the planning stages and lessons learned from the iSTEAM3D, Medical, etc., magnet schools, DeSoto ISD is proposing to implement Three **New** evidenced based (described below) and **Four Revised** Magnet Schools with demonstrated record of success which will constitute the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* project model. Through customizing evidenced based



methods and practices such as but not limited to; enhancing curriculum, integrating exciting 21<sup>st</sup> century themes and adding additional grades (K – 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>) more students will have access to school choice and a higher quality education. These magnet themes were identified based on principals’, educators’, students’, parents’ and community involvement, interest, and research driven practices<sup>11</sup> and the strong desire to offer theme-based instructional opportunities for increasing student academic achievement, reducing isolation of minority groups.

**Magnet Pipeline:** With these new and revised magnet programs, DeSoto ISD will not only extend school choice to more students and create diversity while focused on increasing academic achievement, it will also have the opportunity to create a formal a pipeline from elementary, to middle, to high school for students to continue in the same or related theme.

**Highly-Effective Leaders and Teachers:** To implement magnet theme-based schools effectively, DeSoto ISD must recruit, identify and select highly-effective and highly-qualified administrators, teachers, coordinators and coaches for each unique theme-based academy. Additionally, to support these top-quality educators, ongoing job-embedded professional development will be integral part of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* project model to support staff as they master the instructional strategies, develop theme-based curriculum and work to implement the theme with fidelity. The majority of professional development will be based at the magnet campus level with occasional magnet-focused professional development at the district level.

The following table depicts DeSoto ISD’s *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* themes.

| <b>Table 3. Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&amp;E<sup>2</sup> Target Schools</b> |              |                                   |                   |                       |
|---|--------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Magnets</b>  | <b>Theme</b> | <b>Grade</b>                      | <b>Enrollment</b> | <b>New or Revised</b> |
| The Meadows Elementary  | iSTEAM3D     | K - 5th                           | 150               | New                   |
| DeSoto High School  | iSTEAM3D     | 9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> | 150               | New                   |



|                         |                                    |                                   |       |         |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Ruby Young Elementary   | Environmental<br>Science & Medical | PK-5 <sup>th</sup>                | 75    | Revised |
| East Middle School      | Environmental<br>Science & Medical | 6 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> | 75    | Revised |
| Frank Moates Elementary | Blended Learning                   | K - 5 <sup>th</sup>               | 500   | New     |
| Woodridge Elementary    | Fine Arts                          | K - 5 <sup>th</sup>               | 275   | Revised |
| McCowan Middle School   | Fine Arts                          | 6 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> | 275   | Revised |
| Total                   |                                    |                                   | 1,500 |         |

Since the above stakeholders were involved in the selection of the magnet school grades and themes, DeSoto ISD has witnessed a high interest and demand for the proposed **Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>** project, as described earlier in regards to the large waiting list for iSTEAM3D. Unfortunately, it is currently impossible for DeSoto ISD to accommodate these requests without additional resources to set the foundation and momentum. Given DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees is fully committed (*Appendix C – Desegregation Plan*) to the MSAP philosophy, the proposed new and significantly revised magnet schools will be an integral part of the school districts’ daily operations and administration. The new and revised magnet school themes and objectives will not only be aligned to MSAP’s five required performance measures, but also to DeSoto ISD’s district and campus improvement plans and to the Superintendent’s and Board of Trustees’ commitment to prepare all students for success in college and workforce.

**Evidence-Based Magnet Program:** DeSoto ISD, in the last three years likely due to system-



wide improvements (e.g. STEAM) aimed at increasing students and parents interests and ensuring students' success in mastering challenging academic content, the impact upon levels of racial integration and socioeconomic diversity across their local education system is evident.

Providing students and their parents with school choice and equity and equality in public education is a priority. DeSoto ISD will look to supporting strategies from evidence to continue this positive growth and trajectory to increase racial and socioeconomic diversity.

DeSoto ISD further affirms that in creating processes, products, strategies and practices that meets What Works Clearing House Standards without Reservations. Therefore, evidence is gleaned from two relevant studies as follows: **Citation(s):** (1) a. *Chavez, L., & Frankenberg, E. (September 2009). **Integration Defended: Berkeley Unified's Strategy to Maintain School Diversity.** Los Angeles: Civil Rights Project/ Proyecto Derechos Civiles., combined with follow-up study* (1) b. *Frankenberg, E., & Siegel-Hawley, G. (2011). **Choosing diversity: School choice and racial integration in the age of Obama.** Stanford Journal on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties 6 (2), 219-252.*<sup>12</sup> Meets What Works Clearing House Standards without Reservations. As well as, (2) *Frankenberg, E., & Siegel-Hawley, G. & Wang, (2011) **Magnet programs encompass the largest form of school choice,***<sup>13</sup> (Appendix F, G, H). Meets What Works Clearing House Standards without Reservations. **Citation Outcome(s):** (1) This study drawn from a year-long analysis of the BUSD integration plan, district's historical commitment to desegregation

describes how the current plan works, analyzes the extent the plan had a statistically significant impact upon desegregating the schools despite being located in racially and socio-economically segregated neighborhoods. The study further discusses the plan's implementation including the policies and practices that promote participation in its controlled choice assignment plan and matriculation once assigned. (2) This study found that specific cited desegregated settings have a



statistically significant impact upon heightened academic achievement for minority students, with no corresponding detrimental impact for white students. Black students who attended desegregated schools in this study were significantly more likely to graduate from high school and college, than students who did not attend desegregated schools. According to the study design, in part, because they are more connected to challenging curriculum and social networks that support such goals. **Relevance to Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>**: The proposed project will create a Magnet Program with similar interventions in the study in the form of target themes, ongoing job-embedded training, specialized courses and challenging rigorous curriculum, student choice, diverse environment, and strong parental support, and a strong desegregation plan based on the cross representation of research and studies cited have pointed to important academic gains for children attending magnet schools with such embedded interventions. Additionally, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* as indicated by Frankenberg, et. al., (2011), evidence, will focus concerted efforts on creating highly effective desegregated schools that are in turn linked to profound benefits for all children. In terms of social outcomes, racially integrated educational contexts provide students of all races with the opportunity to learn and work with children from a range of backgrounds. These settings will be created to foster critical thinking skills that are increasingly important in our multiracial society— skills that help students understand a variety of different perspectives. The study further will provide DISD a multi-faceted conceptualization of neighborhood diversity that provides equitable schooling choices for families to integrate the district’s schools. Similar in size to the Study, DISD will glean from the study’s full sample of 11 elementary schools (in three attendance zones and 445 “planning areas” consisting of 4–8 residential blocks) that are assigned a diversity category that maintained balance on the basis of race, household income, and family educational background. As the district implemented the plan, it adopted procedures



to ensure that its choice-based system did not advantage any group of families in the district while actively promoting school equity to make all schools attractive options for families. As noted in the evidenced based design research on (magnet) desegregation, students' school experiences are influenced greatly by each institution's everyday policies and practices. An analysis of the ways desegregated schools manage the shift from serving primarily or exclusively non-minority students to enrolling a more diverse student body will be helpful to *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* in illuminating the situation in DISD.

**Further Evidence:** One of the more widely disseminated reports found evidence to support higher rates of student achievement in magnets than in regular public high schools, private or Catholic schools (Gamoran, 1995).<sup>14</sup> According to; Schofield, J. (1995),<sup>15</sup> and (Boger & Orfield, 2005),<sup>16</sup> one of the only viable policies for districts interested in pursuing diverse schools are carefully crafted magnet policies. Traditionally, considerable demand for magnet schools has been present, which is likely a reason that contributed to their growth and popularity. Schools with high concentrations of poverty—a phenomenon that often overlaps with racial isolation—were also on the rise.<sup>17</sup> For example, one earlier analysis found that three-quarters of districts with magnet schools had more demand than available seats (Blank, Levine, & Steel, 1996)<sup>18</sup> furthermore, the study is supports - students in integrated schools benefit from a higher level of parental involvement, graduate at higher rates, complete more years of education, earn higher degrees, major in more varied disciplines, gain greater access to jobs, and earn higher incomes, even when controlling for a number of other background characteristics. A growing number of studies show that magnet schools, when properly integrated, stabilize diverse communities.<sup>19</sup>

A considerable demand for magnet schools has been present in DeSoto ISD, which is likely a reason that has contributed to their growth and popularity. Desoto ISD is in need of assistance



from MSAP for numerous reasons. One key example: earlier analysis found that existing magnet schools had more demand than available seats. Research conclusively demonstrates that denying students the opportunity to learn in integrated environments is not only detrimental to students of color, but it also has lifelong implications for all students, including whites.<sup>20</sup> Moving forward, it is critical that explicit goals aimed at the creation of integrated schools are established, and education system operates in a just and equitable manner. In a recent study (2015) entitled “High Schools for Equity,”<sup>21</sup> the organizations Justice Matters and The School Redesign Network at Stanford University located five California public high schools that they described as “racially just schools” included research spanning across the past fifty years that stressed the importance of noncompetitive, collaborative contact between students with equal status, from diverse backgrounds. Although this report focuses primarily on the link between racial and economic integration and academic achievement, DeSoto ISD educators, students, parents and community can benefit from the considerable findings demonstrating how to implement integration successfully through the implementation of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* project.

### Competitive Preference Priority 3: Selection of Students

Armed with research and best practice-school decision making, DeSoto ISD is committed to maximize diverse enrollment and promote equity in the selection of students for the seven magnet schools. A study entitled, “The Race Gap in High School Reading Achievement: Why School Racial Composition Still Matters,” Brown, (2006) found -racially diverse schools have smaller gaps than high schools with either very small or very large proportions of disadvantaged minority students.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Kennedy (2007),<sup>23</sup> a key supreme court decision-maker in Parents Involved case, the Supreme Court stated, “School boards may pursue the goal of bringing together students of diverse backgrounds and races through other means, including strategic site selection of new schools; drawing attendance zones with general recognition of the



demographics of neighborhoods; allocating resources for special programs; recruiting students and faculty in a targeted fashion; tracking enrollments, performance, and other statistics by race.”

The method of the lottery must be transparent, random, and conducted in accordance with the policy adopted by DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees. Furthermore, DeSoto ISD conducts the lotteries in public and at a time and location that allows for the public to attend and in a location that has sufficient room and seating for public attendance. DeSoto ISD’s enrollment and lottery policies do not require a student or his or her representative to attend the lottery to receive an enrollment offer. Additionally, DeSoto ISD’s magnet school lottery process is designed to maximize diverse enrollment and promote equity in student admissions in each of the seven magnet schools by ensuring that schools do not discriminate (GEPA 427 attached) or otherwise exclude students. Regulations and procedures are in place (*Appendix C – Desegregation Plan*) to ensure magnet schools utilize a lottery system as a random selection process when the school has more applicants than it has available spaces. The details of how DeSoto ISD conducts its lottery has been created with input from various stakeholder groups, community members, parents and educators as well as adopted by the DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees (May 23, 2016). A written policy detailing how the admission lottery is conducted in accordance with that board approved policy has been approved by DeSoto ISD’s Board of Trustees. Accordingly, DeSoto ISD selection committee methodically and carefully considered all current policy; best practices as well as the taking into account the diverse needs of its community in establishing and implementing its enrollment and lottery policies. The policies and selection procedures that ultimately guides the school’s lottery process are noted below as well as in detail in the desegregation plan (*Appendix C*). Each year, a massive outreach campaign will be implemented through local events, use of media, brochures, flyers, district web-page, etc. DeSoto ISD through



*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* proposes to implement Programs Within Schools (PWS) over the five-year period and beyond. Thus, DeSoto ISD will implement open enrollment theme-based magnet schools to achieve racial balance and attract students within and outside the district as well as students from the community's private and charter schools. Parents in collaboration with their child(ren) will complete a magnet application ranking their school and theme preferences. In regard to the aforementioned decisions about student placement, the DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees is committed to the following six guiding principles: (1) Equity educational opportunities; (2) Student diversity and choice; (3) Quality, effective and committed educators (4) Instructional improvement relevance and excellence; (5) Increased student achievement; and (6) Optimal use of facilities. (*Appendix C – Desegregation*)

**Lottery:** As noted above, DeSoto ISD magnet schools will be open enrollment and boundary-less schools with an application process and random lottery selection. The Project Director will use a software application process that will allow parents and/or students to apply online. DeSoto will also consider factors such as socioeconomic status (SES) in the lottery selection process to promote diverse and equal enrollment among students with different backgrounds. Furthermore, at each target campus the determination of available spaces is grade-specific and consistent with the magnet school policies. DeSoto ISD schools along with ensuring diverse and equal enrollment among students with different backgrounds, select its grade-level capacity appropriately so as to adhere to overall enrollment requirements throughout each magnet campus. DeSoto ISD is proactive and thoughtful in determining its capacity at each of the campus magnet sites and for the collective site grades-span as well as each individual grade-level served. Designated seats at each of the magnet schools are established by the DeSoto ISD Magnet Student Selection committee and approved by and Districts' administration team.



Annually, each magnet school submits, by grade level, the number of open seats at the school and the number of students who will continue in the school for the next school year to the Student Selection Committee on a designated date. The open Magnet seats are then assigned to students through a random selection process (the “lottery”). Any applicants not selected during this initial lottery are placed into an alternate pool. Should a student choose not to attend after being selected for a Magnet seat, the vacant seat will be assigned to a student in the alternate pool, through a random lottery selection prior to the end of the second week of each school year. Determination of space availability shall be made based on the following order of (I-VII), Priority (further described in detail below): (I) Siblings of students currently enrolled will be given priority, those new applicants who are siblings of a student currently enrolled in a DeSoto ISD school who also live at the same residence; (II) Children of school employees who reside within the district; (III) Children of school employees who reside outside of the district; and (IV) New student applicants who reside within the community and are not siblings of a currently enrolled student or the child of a school employee. Taking into account: (V) Geographic Preference, (VI) Feeder Pattern, and (VII) Transportation Preference. New applicants who reside outside of the district if the number of choice/open enrollment applicants exceeds the number of spaces available, the space availability determination shall be by lottery. Applicants not assigned to a requested school will keep their current assignment and be placed on an ordered waiting list.

**Sibling Preference:** It is the intent of DeSoto ISD to avoid separating siblings when possible. If a sibling is already enrolled in and attending an existing Magnet to which his/her sibling applies, and the sibling will continue to be enrolled in the magnet school for the coming school year, DeSoto ISD provides preference and priority to the sibling to attend the Magnet, if they are qualified and select the school as their first choice. To be eligible for the sibling preference the



parent or guardian must submit an application to their magnet school by the designated application deadline. DeSoto ISD will reserve available seats for qualified siblings. If the qualified siblings who apply comprise more than the available seats, then DeSoto ISD will randomly select students to occupy the seats. The names of those qualified siblings who are not selected will be placed in the general lottery. If applicants are twins/triplets (multiples) and one twin/triplet (multiple) is accepted through the lottery, the other twin/triplet (multiple) will also be accepted into the program if they also applied to the same magnet school. For purposes of the sibling preference, a sibling is a brother, sister, stepbrother, or stepsister living in the same household. In the case of foster children, this sibling preference applies to related siblings within the household. In a group home situation, only those students chosen through the lottery and their related siblings, if they have applied, will be included in the sibling preference.

**Children of school employees:** For children of school employees who reside within the district (his/her parent or legal guardian is employed) and continue to be employed the coming school year, DeSoto ISD provides preference and priority to the children to attend the Magnet, if they are qualified and selected to attend a magnet school. To be eligible and for the children of school employee's to receive preference the parent or guardian must submit an application to their magnet school by the designated application deadline. DeSoto ISD has available seats for children of school employees who reside within the district. If the qualified children who apply comprise more than the available seats, then DeSoto ISD will randomly select students to occupy the seats. The names of those children who are not selected will be placed in the general lottery. For children of school employees who reside within the district to receive preference, a child must live in the same household as the parent or legal guardian. Similarly, children of school employees who reside outside the district will be given the same preference in the event his/her



parent or legal guardian is employed and continue to be employed for the upcoming school year.

**Feeder Magnets:** Taking into account the desire to create a formal pipeline from elementary, to middle, to high school for students to continue in the same or related theme, DeSoto ISD will have available seats in elementary, middle and high school programs for qualifying incoming students who attend a magnet at the lower (elementary or middle) level. If the qualified feeder preference students who apply comprise more than the available seats, DeSoto ISD will then inform the parent and randomly, through the lottery, select students to fill the seats. The names of those students who are not selected will be placed in the general lottery selection process.

**Geographic Preference:** Although DeSoto ISD policy includes open enrollment and boundary-less magnet schools (in or outside of the district boundaries), each magnet school's geographic preference area, which will also be considered, is an area immediately surrounding the school that is established by DeSoto ISD Board policy. In order to be considered as a geographic preference area student preference, the parent or guardian must submit an application to their magnet school by the designated application deadline. DeSoto ISD will have available seats for qualified students who live in a geographic preference area and who apply at magnet school. If the geographic preference area students who apply comprise more than the available seats, DeSoto ISD will randomly select students to occupy the seats. The names of the students who are not selected will be placed in the general lottery selection process.

**Transportation Preference:** Similar to the geographic preference, transportation zones will also be considered to facilitate the enrollment in the magnet schools across the district. The designated transportation zones were established to both limit transportation issues and costs as much as possible, and provide transportation to those eligible students who live within the designated transportation zones and who are selected to attend the magnet school. DeSoto ISD



will reserve a set number of seats for students who live in the transportation zone of the magnet school. If the transportation zone students who apply comprise more than the available seats, then DeSoto ISD will randomly select students through the lottery to occupy the seats. The names of the students who are not selected will be placed in the general lottery selection process. The lottery process will be conducted and in the rare event, there are fewer applicants than seats available for a magnet program, all eligible applicants are offered placement. However, this has not occurred to date in the history of DeSoto ISD magnet schools, as evidenced by the continued existence of waiting lists for each target magnet theme introduced and offered district-wide.

#### **Competitive Preference Priority 4—Racial Integration and Socioeconomic Diversity**

As demonstrated above, DeSoto has historically strived to enroll a diverse cross-section of students, and further realizes that demand from a wide-ranging group of families is essential. Acquired from profound knowledge and research, DeSoto ISD realizes the following critical insights from the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)<sup>24</sup> and fully intends to push toward socioeconomic and racial integration: (1) Students in socioeconomically and racially diverse schools—regardless of a student’s own economic status—have stronger academic outcomes than students in schools with concentrated poverty; (2) Students in integrated schools have higher average test scores. Given to fourth graders in math, for example, low-income students attending more affluent schools scored roughly two years of learning ahead of low-income students in high-poverty schools; (3) Students in mixed-income schools showed 30 percent more growth in test scores over their four years in high school than peers with similar socioeconomic backgrounds in schools with concentrated poverty; (4) Students in integrated schools are more likely to enroll in college. When comparing students with similar socioeconomic backgrounds, those students at more affluent schools, are 68 percent more likely to enroll at a four-year college than their peers at high-poverty schools; (5) Students in integrated



schools are less likely to drop out. Dropout rates are significantly higher for students in segregated, high-poverty schools than for students in integrated schools. During the height of desegregation, dropout rates decreased for minority students, with the greatest decline in dropout rates occurring in districts that had undergone the largest reductions in school segregation; (6) Integrated schools help to reduce racial achievement gaps. In fact, the racial achievement gap in K–12 education closed more rapidly during the peak years of school desegregation than it has overall in the decades that followed—when many desegregation policies were dismantled; (7) African-American and Latino students had smaller achievement gaps with white students on the 2007 and 2009 NAEP when they were less likely to be stuck in high-poverty school environments; (8) The gap in SAT scores between minority and white students continues to be larger in segregated districts, and one study showed that change from complete segregation to complete integration in a district could reduce as much as one quarter of the current SAT score disparity;<sup>25</sup> and; (9) Integrated classrooms encourage critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity. Diverse classrooms, in which students learn cooperatively alongside those whose perspectives and backgrounds are different from their own, are beneficial to all students—including middle-class white students—because these environments promote motivation, deeper learning, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, etc.

DeSoto ISD will focus on socioeconomic integration strategies in combination with the aforementioned racial integration research based-approaches — are to create an education system (magnet schools) that reduce minority group (African-American and Hispanic) isolation. Strategies include but are not limited to re-evaluation and refinement of: 1) Attendance zone boundaries; 2) District-wide Choice Policies; 3) Magnet School Admission (including unique themes); 4) inter- and intra- and out of district transfer policies; and, lastly, 5) Desegregation



Plan to recruit students of different social, economic, ethnic and racial background. (*Appendix C*)

Furthermore, DeSoto ISD is implementing important steps to ensure that their school population reflects the diversity of the dynamic community. Areas of increased focus to further expanded opportunities of school choice and practices bring social – justice to the forefront of decision-making and eliminate financial barriers to participation. DeSoto ISD looks at this as an opportunity for unwavering socioeconomic school integration and further encourages the integration of classrooms and academic programs such as new and revised magnet school academy themes as established with the proposed *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*.

### (a) Desegregation

#### (1) *Plan to recruit students of different social, economic, ethnic and racial background...*

Since the opening of the school district’s first magnet program in 2012, public interest in affording parent and student choice in school/program offerings has steadily increased, due in large part to the comprehensive marketing campaign and to the Dedicated **Marketing Advisory Committee (MAC)** – (members include: Proposed Project Director, a representatives of the seven Magnet schools, local television, newspaper and radio members (English and Spanish), community-based leaders, partners, higher education institution supporters, etc.) initiated and executed by DeSoto ISD leaders and educators, as well as the innovative programming offered at the existing STEM/STEAM, Medical, Fine Arts, etc., specialized magnet schools. In addition to the **Marketing Advisory Committee (MAC)** who plays a vital part in guiding, advising and supporting DeSoto ISD Magnet marketing campaign, a **District Desegregation Committee (DDC)** was established to assist with resources, support, planning, and implementation of the Desegregation plan. A representative from each partner, superintendent, administrators, principals, teachers, evaluator, parents, and community representatives will serve on the **DDC** and meet quarterly. All members are fully trained on (bi-annually/8 hours) on effective



desegregation strategies to; develop and adopt programs and policies that are aligned to the diverse needs of students and implement systemic practices that foster a culture of racial balance characterized by enhanced academic performance and social development of students.

As described in Competitive Priority 1, DeSoto ISD has considerable experience in recruiting Blacks and Hispanics to its school campuses. Over 93% of the student population in each target campus are students of color. In recent years, DeSoto ISD has enhanced its recruitment methods to provide students more assistance to apply to its existing magnet schools. For example, DeSoto ISD engaged in multiple strategies to recruit specific minority groups to add diversity and racial balance to magnet schools. These included but not limited to: targeted postcard mailer, emails, media posts, face to face outreach (English/Spanish, etc.), brochures/flyers and information about its existing magnet schools, particularly to neighborhoods that are underrepresented. Parents of current and former students and alumni were also engaged in community outreach (underrepresented groups) and going to middle school campuses to assist interested eighth-graders with applications. These efforts have DeSoto ISD to level the playing field for students who get no such support and opportunities to study in a magnet school. As a result, applications for the 2016-2017 school years have drastically increased as compared to prior school year.

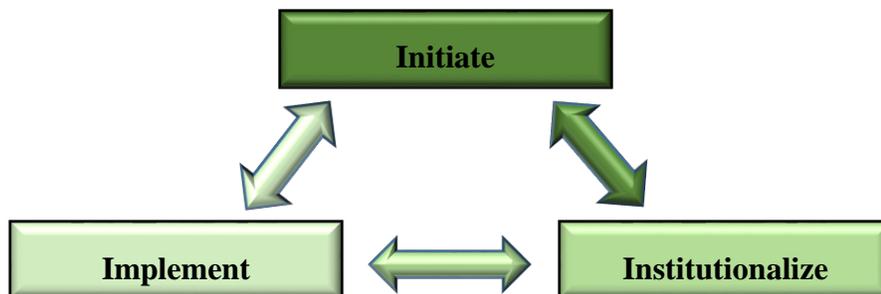
*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* is designed to do exactly that as well as ensure diversity in student enrollment. Although a lottery system is in place to determine which students enter the schools, more and more students are placed on waiting lists each year. Based on this success, DeSoto ISD leadership has sought input from a cross-representation of parents and community, as well as, planned, and developed an aggressive marketing plan (described in detail below) for the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*. This plan as aforementioned is designed to prevent minority group isolation, and to effectively recruit students from different social, economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds into



the seven magnet programs. The marketing plan is based upon educational innovation and dynamic school-change research and design<sup>26</sup> which will be implemented over five years and beyond. The plan has three wrap-around dimensions designed to: (1) **Initiate**: communicate and create awareness (market) of the 7 schools to targeted parents and students; (2) **Implement**: build brand equity of these schools within the community, and (3) **Institutionalize**: facilitate community-generated endorsements of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* magnet schools. Implementing an effective plan to recruit students of different social, economic, ethnic and racial background into DeSoto ISD is truly about quality programs that will engage students in the learning process, leading to higher achievement. Moreover, DeSoto ISD creates educational programs of interest by listening to students, parents and the community as well as state-wide and global trends/needs that are at the educational forefront, while at the same time being very conscious of the need for effective recruitment efforts for students of different social, economic, ethnic and racial background. Desoto ISD charged with research taken from the last three decades of effective school reform and innovative methods inclusive of customizing quality educational programs for diverse learners, established a plan (as noted above) with three wrap-around dimensions designed from profound knowledge (Fullan, 2007; Miles et al., 1987).<sup>27</sup> The goal of the plan after the three-year grant period is sustained **institutionalization**, yet institutionalization will not occur if the change has not been successfully **initiated** and fully **implemented**.

The plan will be implemented across *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1 *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*





Each dimension depends on the prior dimensions' success and requires different strategies.

Institutionalization means that the new practices are routine for everyone responsible for implementation and that these practices lead to the intended results.

**Initiation: Awareness/Marketing Campaign (Year One):** DeSoto ISD will build awareness as part of the collective strong name and recognition of magnet schools. This initiation process will build momentum and excitement over innovative and transformative programs as well as obtain community/stakeholder buy-in. This will occur in various ways, consisting of but not limited to: face to face meetings, online and social media, advertising on school buses, school banners, etc.

**Implementation: Brand equity "Who Are We?" Campaign (Years 1):** target key audiences and draw them to a clear call-to-action; drive awareness of the new **Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup> school** magnet offerings to the community; create program loyalty among current participants and facilitate means by which potential, future students develop similar loyalties for the program. Implementation Tactics: Marketing efforts will be focused in seven categories: (1) Multimedia/Website; (2) Social Media; (3) Signage/Critical Path (key locations); (4) Digital Banner Ads; (5) Events, Festivals and Workshops; (6) Collateral Print Materials (multiple languages); and (7) Media Placement: Newspaper, radio and television.

**Institutionalization: Recruitment at target school student from different social, economic, ethnic and racial background, (ongoing), DeSoto ISD will:**

- Involve students in the design to create an attractive model and easy to remember domain name for each school, registering it for a five-year period with the option of renewal;
- Develop a website for each school with information assigned to the domain name;
- Invite viewers to follow the school's social media; allow visitors to submit applications (for



the upcoming school year; and provide the community with news about the schools);

- Include *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* schools into DeSoto ISD's official website; (*Appendix I*)
- Involve students and parents in the creation of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* videos which provide prospective students and parents with virtual school tours of each school;
- Maintain and update the website with school-specific information and allow the school to be privy to analytical data tracking the website traffic;
- Encourage positive use of social media. For example, develop a Facebook page for each school. The presence of this page is important in the community building aspect of these schools. Content will develop as the program matures;
- Design and produce multiple banners (fence, exterior building, interior hallways) and announcements of the upcoming program(s) at *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* school-site locations;
- Create, purchase, and maintain media placement of banner ads announcing schools in key media channel outlets, e.g. local news (*Appendix J – Website Magnet Innovation*).
- Maximize partnerships with organizations, for inclusion in marketing opportunities which draws crowds of pre-teens, from different social, economic, ethnic and racial background;
- Offer events at schools to distribute materials and provide information to students;
- Hold series of events at various venues, from malls to small town hall meetings to feature *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* schools by having visible graphics/literature;
- Host an "Open House" to offer information to prospective students and their parents;
- Involve and sustain third-party organizations, such as the PTA/PTSA to inform the community of the new program(s) and direct them to a clear call-to-actions;
- Design and produce print documents, in multiple languages, to announce the opening;
- Distribute direct mail postcards to targeted zip codes announcing an "Open House" event;



- Distribute brochures and flyers throughout the community;
- Design, produce, and make multiple media key placements throughout Dallas county to inform mass quantities of targeted groups about the upcoming *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* schools;
- Bus routes will be strategically selected to key target communities within the County;
- Integrate into third-party educational search engines, to updated listing of available magnet programs and targeted advertisements to site visitors.

**School-Based Recruitment, Customizing the Message:**

The aforementioned recruiting and retention of students from different social, economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds will require that an extensive communication and marketing campaign begins at the school-based level. A belief fostered by DeSoto ISD leaders is that all decisions should be consistent with the vision, mission and goals; anchored in sound theory and practice; and focused on the best interest and academic achievement of students. This commitment to the school's mission provides purpose and a true north direction, much like a guiding compass for decision-making. This belief further translates to action and decision-making. Therefore, school-level decisions should be made at the most appropriate level and closest to the point of implementation and be made by those who are competent and committed to the school's vision.<sup>28</sup>

Teachers and leaders foster an understanding that choices, not circumstances, control outcomes. In order to provide choice and effective recruitment of students from different social economic, ethnic and racial background, each magnet school will partner with District leaders, staff and partners to (as noted above) create, publish, and involve students in delivering a customized school/theme-based outreach and communication campaign that notifies all students and parents about the new magnet offerings, the advantages of attending, college and career



enhancements related to magnets, and the academic results of attending the program. As noted above, DeSoto ISD uses best practices for implementing successful magnet schools which may include staffing, leadership, instructional focus, recruitment and assessment. Beyond utilizing best practices, DeSoto ISD ensures that all aspects of a magnet school program, including recruitment efforts, are based on cultural competency and educational equality for all students.

Based on this experience and expertise, DeSoto ISD, expects that school-level recruitment, communication and marketing campaign, much like the district-based level, be aligned and very successful in ensuring that students from diverse backgrounds are identified and recruited. By utilizing the skills and talents of internal and external staff, a campus-based communication and recruitment plan will focus DISD's efforts on identifying and recruiting traditionally under-represented students. The plan will be flexible and adaptive so that specific and targeted messages are generated for different grade levels of students at DeSoto ISD and neighboring school districts, for students of all backgrounds. For example, to generate sustainability and continued interest in the program a communication component will be developed to appeal to upper elementary school students (e. g. those in 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade) at Meadows, Moates, Young, and Woodridge elementary schools. Another communication component will target Middle high school students (e. g. those in 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade) at East and McGowan Middle schools and, finally, another component will be crafted to appeal to high school students (e. g. 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades) at DeSoto high school. (*Appendix K – brochures*).

**Family-Based Recruitment, Customizing the Message:**

Knowing students receive much of their guidance, information and support from parents or guardians, the home is the primary source of influence and support (Epstein, 2010).<sup>29</sup> To help ensure that parents are fully informed and knowledgeable, a home-based communication strategy



is included in DeSoto ISD’s plan of action for recruitment. Specific “family-based” communication messaging will be crafted using the knowledge and expertise of internal leaders and parental engagement specialists, along with the lessons learned during the creation of numerous existing programs. This message will be used to provide parents and guardians with information about *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*, such as the purpose and design and the anticipated benefits of the new and or revised magnet schools.

Specific messaging about *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* being designed for all students, to include females from diverse backgrounds and students with disabilities, will be created to explain the uniqueness of the program being open and accommodating to traditionally underrepresented students, and how a student can easily apply for admission. Further, special messaging will be crafted to notify parents and guardians how the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will work with the students’ home campuses to ensure that students who wish to participate in extra-curricular sports, clubs and activities, will be accommodated so that students do not have to choose between sports and the magnet program.

For parents who do not speak English or whose first language is not English, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will utilize parent volunteers and bilingual school-based staff to help deliver the family-based messaging during its recruitment and communication events. *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will link fellow parents who speak the same language with one another, encouraging informal support networks. Having someone who speaks the same language help create a sense of belonging. Efforts will be made by the Project Director to schedule quarterly meetings with parents so they can learn about their child's progress and what they need to practice at home. Each participating magnet them-based school will deliver the information in a manner that meets the customized messaging of the particular theme as well as takes into account the specific parents’ needs.<sup>30</sup>



**Community-Based Recruitment, Customizing the Message:**

As students and parents realize the benefits and opportunities offered by the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*, it will be vital that community awareness also be raised. Community support for the students enrolled is essential so that *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* is seen as a community asset. Specific awareness and messaging will be created to highlight each diverse demographic of the target population as it relates to the unique magnet theme. In combination with the planned *Awareness/Marketing Campaign* strategies listed above and skills learned from current STEM/STEAM, the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* staff is planning an extensive community marketing messaging program (English and Spanish) that will raise awareness of, and provide factual information about, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*. As noted, information will be created and distributed throughout the community via a variety of platforms. Furthermore, community members will be asked to display their support for the program by dedicating a counter and/or office space for *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* brochures and communication flyers to the public. Parent and community volunteers will be asked to help create and narrate public service announcements and to create and submit letters to the editors of local area newspapers and television stations. Others may be asked to create and maintain community-driven social networking strategies by creating and updating Facebook, twitter, YouTube, etc. In addition, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will collaborate with the DeSoto ISD Communications Department and the existing Community and Marketing executive director to help produce a parent and community friendly video that can be placed on the district website, YouTube or on other local television stations, either separately or as part of the aforementioned public service announcements. This department has extensive experience creating many successful communication campaigns (*Appendix L – E-Newsletter, DeSoto ISD Inside, Educator’s Corner and Ad, Southwest NOW-Ad, etc.*) that highlight the achievement of



students and schools, and are highly skilled at producing signage and print ads, as well. The DeSoto ISD Communications Department, has a long-standing partnership with the City of DeSoto, DeSoto Chamber of Commerce, local churches, parents and the community, builds public understanding of and support for all DeSoto ISD programs and practices.

The Communications Department will help build stronger relationships with individuals and organizations through various communication and public relations efforts vital to the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* growth and development. The Communications Department brings public relations perspectives and strategies into *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* decision-making and planning. It provides outreach expertise and services that improve the quality and effectiveness of the District's communications projects and programs. Above all, the Communications Department fosters an environment of open and honest communication aimed at building trust and credibility with the District's key internal and external stakeholders.

The marketing efforts will insure information about *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E* is accessible to the community via traditional (e.g., radio, television and print media) and social networks. In all, the goal of the community-based strategy is to ensure that the community has access to factual and real time information and can make informed decisions about the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*. Community support for the program and its efforts to provide opportunities for youth from diverse backgrounds to attend and thrive will gain momentum among the Dallas County area.

Last but not least, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* desegregation efforts will be enhanced by the ongoing efforts of DeSoto ISD to enroll a diverse cross-section of students, and further realizes that demand from a wide-ranging group of families. Acquired from profound knowledge and research, Desoto ISD realizes the following critical insights from the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)<sup>31</sup> and fully intends to push toward socioeconomic and racial



integration: (1) Students in socioeconomically and racially diverse schools—regardless of a student’s own economic status—have stronger academic outcomes than students in schools with concentrated poverty; (2) Students in integrated schools have higher average test scores. DeSoto ISD’s reasons for focusing on socioeconomic integration strategies in combination with the aforementioned racial integration research based-approaches — are to create an education system (magnet schools) that reduce minority group (African-American and Hispanic) isolation. Strategies include but are not limited to re-evaluation and refinement of: 1) Attendance zone boundaries; 2) District-wide Choice Policies; 3) Magnet School Admission (including unique themes); 4) inter- and intra- and out-of district transfer policies; and, lastly, 5) Desegregation Plan to recruit students of different social, economic, ethnic and racial background. (*Appendix C*)

Furthermore, DeSoto ISD is implementing important steps to ensure that their school population reflects the diversity of the dynamic community. Areas of increased focus to further expanded opportunities of school choice and practices, bring social – justice to the forefront of decision-making and eliminate financial barriers to participation. DeSoto ISD looks at this as an opportunity for unwavering socioeconomic school integration and further encourages the integration of classrooms and academic programs such as new and revised magnet school academy themes as established with the proposed *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*.

***(2) Foster interaction among student of social, economic, ethnic and racial background***

DeSoto ISD’s proposed magnet school program will include learning activities that require students to interact with one another and with people and resources beyond the school. The project design requires each magnet campus to incorporate multiple strategies that build relationships among students, between students and parents, between students and teachers, and between students and outside partners. Out of school/extracurricular programs will be developed



for each campus, such as after school programs, clubs, enrichment programs, camps and educational field trips. DeSoto ISD will increase the use of authentic assessments, such as projects and portfolios that require students to collaborate in order to attain academic success. Every magnet school will implement PBL in each classroom which requires real world interaction, collaboration and social dialogue and discourse created among students. Numerous activities in current magnets utilize PBL and other engaging and interactive group based dynamics that fosters students to develop empathy for diverse cultures and backgrounds.

DeSoto ISD consistently takes into account the diverse needs of its students, parents and community in establishing and implementing its classroom activities, extracurricular activities or other activities in magnet schools. DeSoto ISD has worked to develop and promote desegregation (*as noted Appendix M – Board Agenda*) and improve student outcomes for every learner. A 2013 report from the *Equity and Excellence Commission, published by the U.S. Department of Education, For Each and Every Child – A Strategy for Education Equity and Excellence*,<sup>32</sup> provides areas that the Commission deems important in order for all students to succeed. These important areas are reflected in the design of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program and its goals and objectives, and all support the promotion of desegregation. ***Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*** creation of **seven new or revised** magnet programs are designed to increase subgroup representation and interaction, rigorous and engaging advanced – PBL infused STEM/STEAM, Medical and other theme-based coursework, and ensure high quality staff, through quality professional development, support and coaching. *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will improve student services, programs and products to increase outcomes by using research-based strategies, accelerating college/career readiness, improving student support services that foster interaction among students of social, economic, ethnic and racial background in classroom activities, extracurricular activities and all



activities in each of the seven new or revised magnet schools. DeSoto ISD is a community of learners that has proven to create a collaborative culture for equity and excellence through enhancing school choice, parent engagement, community partnerships, and resources. DeSoto ISD desegregation plan (*Appendix C*), is intended to create programs that will reduce minority (African-American and Hispanic) group isolation. Acknowledging the fact that the make-up of certain neighborhoods in the Dallas County area may create inequities for students, DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees approved seven open enrollment theme-based magnet school programs to provide students, parents and community residents with options for their children. Focused on the idea of school choice, students within the district as well as students from the community's private, charter, magnet and other traditional schools are able to select a program based on interest. DeSoto ISD, (as noted in student selection/lottery section), in making decisions about student placement, is committed to providing equitable educational opportunities; increasing student diversity; reducing minority isolation and focusing on instructional improvement for all students. MSAP resources will enable DeSoto ISD to strategically optimize new and existing facilities for seven new or revised theme-based magnets to build on the aforementioned actions. MSAP resources and support will provide expanded opportunities for students in low-performing schools to attend higher performing schools by developing excellent academic programs and providing students with opportunities for greater academic achievement. MSAP resources will facilitate innovative educational methods and practices that appeal to a more diverse population of students and an outreach and recruiting initiatives that empowers parents to make choices.

**Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup> Activities that foster interaction among students...**

Students have a deeper understanding of concepts using hands-on activities (project-based learning – PBL) rather than traditional lecture-based lessons, especially for students who English



is not their first language. They are more likely to become and stay engaged in the learning process, leading to increased comprehension and retention of the material.<sup>33</sup> "As a nation, we want to increase engineering and technology education in K-12 and also improve students' critical thinking skills, which we showed can be completed through creative, hands-on design projects." *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* faculty will implement academic opportunities for all seven theme-based magnet school students to help them meet state and local standards in the core subject areas, preparing them for 21<sup>st</sup> century advances in the concepts and making scientific and mathematics literacy accessible for students from all backgrounds and socioeconomic levels.

Scientific and mathematical literacy, as defined by the internationally recognized STEM blueprint/framework, indicates that having the ability to reason mathematically and have an awareness of how science and technology shape our environments is crucial for an individual to be an engaged and reflective citizen. Students will have their choice of a particular magnet theme strand to focus on and receive instruction in core theme-infused concepts such as physics, chemistry, algebra, geometry, and other advanced level rigorous courses which are interwoven into the magnet innovative curriculum. Students will learn to make and use scientific models that are applicable to their unique magnet theme. *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will ensure that all interested students, especially youth traditionally underrepresented and/or from diverse backgrounds, are in an interactive diverse environment with opportunity to engage in all activities.

*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will develop and implement specific interactions among students, activities and opportunities for each theme area. Each will reinforce information learned in the core-curricular content and infuse the magnet theme, as well as increase the opportunities for students to learn from their peers throughout the magnet school and across other magnets. All activities are developed to further reduce racial isolation and increase interaction and peer motivation.



Activities that increase dynamic and diverse group interaction are very effective, particularly those that involve participants in learning via hands-on participation, how to design, and build and test- experimentation. Numerous theme-based activities that foster interaction among a diverse group of students involve learning through technology. Theme-based magnet school participants will be provided an opportunity to design and create gadgets such as rockets, robots, etc., depending upon their respective theme. Additionally, classroom and theme-based activities will place emphasis upon mathematics and the scientific inquiry design using PBL strategies. In establishing working groups for all activities, teachers will consider the importance of diverse background interaction, especially when participants engage in PBL to use their enriched scientific and math literacy critical thinking and problem-solving skills to design and create items of interest in their particular magnet theme (*Appendix N – PBL Classroom Connection*).

All proposed magnet campus-based activities are crucial to the success of the *Magnet – A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*, as are the appropriate levels of student interaction among diverse background to foster a collective culture that is welcoming for students so that they remain in the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*, theme through high school graduation, in order to obtain the full benefit. Students must feel supported and encouraged as well as part of the collective group and school unit while on the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* campus, or may leave the program. Thus, to ensure that recruited youth want to remain and graduate, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* teachers and staff (advocacy program) will provide support for increased interaction in classroom, extra-curricular and other theme-based magnet activities. These types of supports include but are not limited to structures as it relates to: social, interest, learning style, academic, technological; and college and career areas that foster appropriate grouping and interaction. The *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will encourage students, including those from different social, economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, to participate, engage and



be involved as well as enroll in the various theme-based program opportunities. Through this level of support and encouragement students will: learn in a theme-based integrated, PBL environment, receive instruction from highly trained and supportive educators, receive differentiated instruction, and tutoring if needed, as well as have access to counselors, create a personalized academic plan, and will have access to world-class mentors in their chosen theme area. Based on this comprehensive approach for every student, DeSoto ISD through *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program is confident that it can effectively foster a culture and climate of interaction among and within varied and diverse students from all socioeconomic backgrounds and circumstances, and enable them to transition from high school to post-secondary education of choice and become actively engaged and reflective citizens.

DeSoto ISD along with its full staff, especially those serving on magnet campuses, ensures that every student has an equal opportunity to quality education programs. DeSoto ISD is dedicated to providing equity in access to quality educational programs for all students, and thus, has not only developed the aforementioned comprehensive magnet recruitment plan for the district, but has also approved a detailed voluntary desegregation plan (*See Appendix C*). The MSAP program schools will ensure each of the activities noted below are offered to a diverse integrated potential student representation.

**Other Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup> Activities**

**Theme-based Magnet Parent Night** - is open to the entire DeSoto ISD community. Hundreds of parents, students, and community members attend this event to learn about the choices available through magnet programs. This event is a well-established tradition in the Dallas County area and regularly receives extensive local media coverage. Each Magnet program is represented by school personnel including the magnet coordinator, administrators, teachers, and a diverse group of student-volunteers. All materials and handouts are available for parents and



students in both **English and Spanish**. MSAP program schools will be given a prime location and additional recruiting space at this event in order to encourage parent interest and attract targeted students. In addition to individual school displays, there will also be a display promoting the MSAP program schools as a whole.

Career Awareness Week –Tours are available for students at every magnet campus each day as publicized by the school. MSAP schools will publicize additional parent orientation meetings with a focus on the groups currently underrepresented at each magnet school.

**Magnet School Career Days** – Magnet high school coordinators conduct bilingual presentations (in English and Spanish) at feeder pattern schools giving overview of the Magnet program followed by time to circulate among the schools represented in order to ask questions and gather information.

**Elementary Magnet Outreach Program** – is designed to meet the needs of each community the Magnet school serves as well as reach out to others outside of the community. Elementary magnet coordinators visit daycares, churches, pre-K programs, community centers and other appropriate organizations to provide magnet program information to parents in a bilingual format. Parents also receive information about secondary schools to plan for continuity for their child’s education.

**Campus-Based Recruitment** – Each Magnet program has an individually designed recruitment plan outlining strategies to recruit students from within and outside the school district. Campus based, bilingual recruitment plans for the grant program schools will be written in collaboration with staff and community.

**Feeder (lower level) school activities** – middle schools hold events for elementary students to visit the middle school campus and observe hand-on activities and participate in STEM-related



workshops, contests, and competitions. High school coordinators will do the same for middle school students. Each elementary, middle, and high school campus will build and maintain close relationships to ensure alignment, continuity, and guidance for students.

- Representatives from the Special Education Department will assist with Magnet - *A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* integrated activities and maximal inclusion is in place in order to ensure that all students have access to these high-quality *Magnets - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* programs.
- Advanced Academics will universally screen all students at the end of fifth grade to ensure that students who need more challenging coursework will be accommodated.
- Relationships with communities and institutions aligned to *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* vision will be enhanced in ways that are given the most credence in the areas served - including announcements at community gatherings, information distributed at malls and shopping centers, and by word-of-mouth.
- Through use of the website, parents are able to download applications and access the latest *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* magnet information. To accommodate the needs of families without access to technology, DeSoto ISD will ensure that either hard copies are offered (English/Spanish, etc.) or convenient computer access and assistance is provided at schools and other locations throughout the community.

At all *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* events and activities, school representatives will set up school booths, answer questions, and provide literature about the programs. Each school will provide Spanish interpreters to offer assistance to parents as needed. The aforementioned activities bring excitement and awareness of the new *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* programs throughout communities which might otherwise never have considered them as an option. The goal is to ensure that DeSoto ISD is the place for all families living within district boundaries and a strong option for those living



in surrounding areas to educate their children through a multitude of options and support services. In order to reach all families, information will be distributed at area churches, parks, community centers and shopping malls. Attracting students who are currently attending private, parochial, charter and home schools will help reduce the isolation of minority groups.

***(3) How it will ensure equal access and treatment for eligible participants...***

Guided by its non-discrimination policy, DeSoto ISD ensures that members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability will have equal access to all program and employment opportunities. Understanding the cultural and socio-economic diversity in the target area, it is the goal of DeSoto ISD to ensure that its participant demographics appropriately reflect the cultural, financial and ethnic diversity of the community by serving students based on their assessed educational need for services.

DeSoto ISD is an Equal Employment Opportunity employer and is committed to providing employment and services to the community and all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability or cultural differences. Annually, all the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* staff will be required to participate in trainings offered by DeSoto ISD Human Resources Department and/or other organizations pertaining to ethical behavior, preventing sexual harassment and discrimination, conflict resolution, cultural awareness, providing services to underrepresented populations, and other workshops associated with equity and social advocacy. DeSoto ISD has historically and will continue to give special attention to all recruitment plans, systems and processes. In addition, DeSoto ISD provides equal access and treatment to low-income, minority, English Learners, students with disabilities, and students with other risk factors associated with lower achievement.

Multiple strategies occur in the current magnet schools and will be used with *Magnet –*



*A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* to ensure equal access and treatment for all eligible students. ALL students will: (1) be given priority to enhance academic performance; (2) receive educational supportive services such as advising, tutoring, academic camps and online supports for completion of their coursework; (3) intervention services will target every student for success without exclusionary practices; (4) be provided an advisory program that supports students and parents, and include non-cognitive skills (behavior, mindset, etc.) and cognitive skills development (critical thinking, problem solving, etc.) including academic, college and career counseling, leadership, and character education; (5) staff, teachers and partners will be trained to work with diverse populations; (6) The Project Director, evaluator, partners, staff and **Magnet Advisory Council** will meet regularly to assess student progress and responsiveness to the needs of diverse learners and to examine policies and practices toward ensuring equal solicitation of services; (7) All *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* learning facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities; (8) Trainings will enhance the legal, cultural and socio-economic competency of each member of DeSoto ISD personnel to facilitate the project's efforts to provide *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* services equitably in the target area; (9) Where necessary, DeSoto ISD's attorney will provide information and services to participants at off-site locations in order to meet the needs of potential participants with disabilities, extensive employment schedules, child care issues, or lack of transportation.

Furthermore, DeSoto ISD along with its School Board of Trustees members, ensure equal access and fair outcomes for all students regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. DeSoto ISD adheres to a policy of nondiscrimination in educational programs, activities and services, and strives affirmatively to provide equal opportunity for all students as required by local, state and federal regulation, and prohibits discrimination against any student on the basis race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, DeSoto ISD



adheres to the policies and procedures that assure equal access in educational program and activities as delineated in the attached GEPA 427. Selection and participation in *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* programs will be based on student interest. Academic examination will not be used to screen or select students. DeSoto ISD will conduct a (lottery) process to fill the available spaces (as noted in student selection section and *Appendix C – Desegregation plan*). As part of the services already provided by the DeSoto ISD, students will receive adequate remediation and acceleration support to succeed through differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, PBL, Response to Intervention (RtI), individualized instruction, and tutoring. Additionally, in order to increase accessibility for students with disabilities, supplemental and related services are provided according to their Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and integrated into the students' learning activities. Peer supports will be utilized; special and general education teachers will collaborate to ensure the implementation of the appropriate accommodations in all instructional activities. Students experiencing difficulty will be provided assistance through tutoring, differentiated instruction, cooperative structures, and assistive technology.

To further exemplify and ensure equal access and treatment for eligible students DeSoto ISD will implement the list of activities below but will not be limited to the following:

- The underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities in STEM education, for a myriad of reasons, is well documented (e.g., Ceci and Williams 2007, 2010, 2011; Brown and Leaper 2010; Dweck 2007; Eccles 2007).<sup>34</sup> Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup> schools has already worked to combat this issue by implementing strategies identified as being effective for this purpose (Valla and Williams 2012);<sup>35</sup> Examples include Women in engineering, design and STEM/STEAM related activities to encourage female interest in largely male careers;
- Include business industry professionals (from a diverse population) who monitor, mentor,



and guide students, as a group as well as individually over an extended period of time;

- Provide access to the most challenging courses and supplemental services (e.g. tutoring);
- Involve long-term investment of students by participating in a magnet program that offers a four-year, sequential course of study that is related to theme-based areas;
- Provide peer-to-peer interactions in which students offer each other academic, as well as social and emotional support through group projects;
- Emphasize career mentorship and career counseling;
- Provide hands-on PBL experience and/or interactions with theme-based role models; and
- Provide opportunities to involve parents in theme-based magnet-related activities (e.g. events where students demonstrate and present projects created in their magnet classes).

*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* is designed to attract more traditionally underrepresented students to these campuses to reduce racial and minority (African-American and Hispanic) isolation and to provide the opportunities for all students to work, learn and socialize together in an academic environment that is rigorous, tolerant, relevant, and meaningful. DeSoto ISD affirms the district's long term commitment to maintain a diverse, desegregated school system. The district has for many years recognized the significant role of magnet schools can play in achieving diversity and avoiding racial and minority isolation (*Appendix C -Voluntary Desegregation Plan*). DeSoto ISD will reduce, eliminate or prevent minority group isolation and expand capacity to provide public school choice to students in Dallas County. As noted in prior sections, students are chosen for the program through a lottery system rather than academic status or history. The proposed magnet school program will recruit students of all backgrounds and circumstances and create hands-on collaborative activities for all students to work together. The plan to reduce minority group isolation of African-American and Hispanic students and increase participation of those



traditionally underrepresented at the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* magnet school provides multiple examples of how equal access and treatment for eligible students will be achieved through the project:

- Students will be randomly assigned to classes and rosters examined before they are made public to ensure that there is racial/ethnic/minority diversity in each individual classroom;
- Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Student Support, Executive Director of Innovative Programs and Project Director will ensure that equal access and treatment for eligible participants are culturally, racially, and demographically diverse;
- *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* professional development will ensure that teachers and students, working in diverse teams, are highly engaged in PBL activities.
- PBL strategies will be embedded through-out the entire curriculum to ensure students are engaged and achieving higher levels of comprehension;
- The importance of reflective thought, problem-solving, evaluation and creativity will be emphasized academic rigor and student learning to develop cognitive/non-cognitive skills;
- Parent and student information sessions will be offered to promote an awareness of real world-connections through theme-based study;
- Creating a global connection for all students, technology and digital devices will be utilized to break down barriers;
- Provide print, digital and media materials in all languages and formats and support for parents and community residents;
- Transportation will be provided to all students through their home campus to eliminate this as a barrier to participation (maximum distance from any campus or district);
- Breakfast and lunch will be provided to every student on the Free and Reduced Lunch Program through students' home campus;



- Opportunities for diverse groups of students will be organized through cooperative learning groups, via assigned projects, and other school activities;
- The entire magnet staff and educators will be charged with making sure that student groups are assigned, and reassigned if necessary, so that all students have multiple opportunities to work with different cultural, racial, and demographic groups and underserved populations;
- *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* leadership will emphasize that the program is for all students who choose to enroll, and are selected through the indicated enrollment process;
- Students have the additional benefit of attending their ‘home’ campus so they are able to participate in extra-curricular activities that would not be possible on a magnet school campus as the one described.

The enrollment of students from neighboring districts will gradually decrease minority group isolation of African-American and Hispanic students at the magnet school(s), without adversely affecting ethnic/racial diversity at other school districts. Further, ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible students will allow more students to attend the program of high interest.

*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* students in all racial, ethnic, social, economic, and language groups will participate in classroom activities, student government and various clubs and social groups. The theme-based curriculum design will create more opportunities for students in all demographic subgroups to participate in service learning opportunities, rigorous and challenging coursework and career preparation activities than have been available in the past. A system of curriculum standards of assessments that encourages students to move toward the application of knowledge instead of maintaining an exclusive focus on acquisition of knowledge, this concept will promote desegregation since students work collaboratively to achieve shared goals.



This teaching and learning model will promote desegregation and ensure equal access and treatment for eligible students in the classroom and school-wide. PBL and theme-based collaborative work enables students to gather knowledge from a variety of sources to help solve future complex problems in the workplace. *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will stress collaborative learning, personal and interpersonal integrity and individual and group accountability. Additional opportunities for students in all demographic subgroups (racial, ethnic, social, economic, and language groups) will be created through *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* for students to participate in solving problems, designing solutions to complex problems, service learning opportunities, rigorous and challenging coursework designed around career preparation activities. *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* commits to ensuring that all teachers receive ongoing high-quality professional development as well as support highly qualified teachers to plan, design, deliver and monitor excellent instruction. Teachers will be expected to motivate more students to participate in the higher-level classwork, courses and dual college credit courses, thus providing opportunities for students of differing backgrounds to work and learn together. As such, students are more likely to pursue higher education and aim for professional career fields (Hernandez-Ramos & De La Paz, 2009).<sup>36</sup> In addition to providing rigorous curricula that emphasis project-based learning, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will provide opportunities for students to continue their personal, academic, and career development through team activities. These enrichment activities ensure equal access and treatment for all eligible students of different social, economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds.

*(4) Effectiveness desegregation strategies for the elimination/reduction/prevention schools...*

Primarily, DeSoto ISD promotes school choice in order to effectively reduce minority group (African-American and Hispanic) isolation in elementary and secondary schools with substantial portions of minority students. According to an Evaluation of the Magnet Schools Assistance



Program, grantees (2003), final report,<sup>37</sup> there are key factors that influence the ability of targeted elementary schools to reduce minority isolation:

- Schools are more likely to experience decreasing minority isolation when the school has a racially and ethnically mixed group of minority students;
- Schools are more likely to experience decreasing minority isolation when parents are involved in school events and activities;
- Schools with larger numbers of students per teacher are more likely than those with lower student-to-teacher ratios to experience increases in minority group isolation.

Taking the above findings as well as analyzing the current and future projected trends surrounding the city's demographics as well as DeSoto ISD's target campus data, there is a compelling need to implement *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup> & E<sup>2</sup>*. With MSAP funding DeSoto ISD can create magnet schools to effectively reduce minority group (African-American and Hispanic) isolation at these sites, thus setting the foundation for school-wide reduction. Strategies such as but not limited to a variety of parent outreach sessions, meetings and on-going communication plans (English, Spanish, and/or other appropriate Native Language(s)) that include social media and other electronic and media platforms will be in place to *ensure equal access and treatment for eligible participants* and their parents. As formerly noted, critical to supporting effective reduction of minority group isolation, is the need to add and revise magnet schools. Furthermore, with the support of MSAP funding, one of the primary intents of the creation of unique learning environments – two Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics (elementary and high school) Academies, one Blended Learning (elementary school) Academy, two Fine Arts (elementary and middle school) Academies, and two Environmental Science and Medical (elementary and middle school) Academies, is to reduce minority group isolation.



*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup> & E<sup>2</sup>* will implement cooperative learning strategies to eliminate, reduce, and prevent isolation of students in schools with substantial minority students. Teachers will implement cooperative learning strategies in classrooms to create opportunities for collaborative dialogue among students from diverse backgrounds to ensure student engagement in learning. Interdependent, cooperative learning strategies will enhance students' self-esteem, increase positive attitudes in school, and improve inter-ethnic perceptions and race relations.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, compared to students taught traditionally, students taught in a manner that incorporates small-group learning generally achieve higher grades, learn at a deeper level, retain information longer, are less likely to drop out of school, acquire greater communication and teamwork skills, and gain a better understanding of the environment in which they will be working as professionals. The rationale for heterogeneity in cooperative learning strategies will provide minority students with good modeling of effective learning approaches and tutoring from strong students, provide strong students with the learning benefits that come from teaching others, and avoid the unfairness of allowing an isolated learning environment.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to reducing the isolation of minority students at project schools, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will attract girls, English Learners, students of low socio-economic status and minority students of color from underrepresented ethnic groups as well. The many partnerships and the numerous field experiences included in this program will give these groups, traditionally underrepresented in careers, access to role models and mentors. Computer-based and hands-on/interactive activities will enable schools to transition to a **station rotation blended learning**, a learning model in which instruction comes from both the teacher and from a computer-based interactive and collaborative adaptive system. Taking into account that collaborative learning through digital devices and technology can be less intimidating and therefore encourages and bridges student



ability to co-create, interact and then dialogue and engage in discourse through the common interests developed through this adapted blended learning model. Through the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* station rotation blended learning model, students will benefit from face-to-face time with their teacher, cooperative learning with each other, along with PBL, and with an individualized learning approach to technology that allows them to develop skills, review content material, and interact with high-interest learning activities such as games, songs, and simulations. When the student is ready, formative and summative assessments can be completed and instant feedback provided. This station rotation blended learning model eliminates distinctions between groups and instead builds on individual strengths. Numerous effective strategies within the theme-based magnets will address the array of learning styles and focus on mastery of content rather than a one-size-fits-all approach that often creates learning gaps for traditionally under-represented groups. In order to further the accessibility of the curriculum to all students, personnel from the Special Education department will work with curriculum writers to build in instructional support for Special Education students. Desoto ISD's Gifted and Talented (GT) and advanced curriculum academics leaders will work with project schools to reduce minority isolation which includes gender, English Learners, Special Education, ethnic, racial, and socio-economic groups in their respective programs that will be supported within each theme-based magnet school.

*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>& E<sup>2</sup>* offers a unique approach to learning by providing students with rigorous real-world experiences. Created through utilization of best practices and collaborative planning, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>& E<sup>2</sup>* was developed considering the academic needs of all students, the need of industry partners and the overall need of the community to increase the area's skilled workforce. A priority across the nation is making America a magnet for new jobs that have not even been thought of or have been created. Through, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>& E<sup>2</sup>* current and future graduates of the



21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond will matriculate through DeSoto ISD school systems and exit fully prepared for the demands of a high-tech economy. *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>& E<sup>2</sup>* will take steps to ensure that those demands are met in the future, and met with the most qualified employees available.

The outreach and external communication efforts of targeted information in various modalities as noted above, with the implementation of an **Awareness/Marketing/Branding Campaign**, also supports effective potential reduction of minority isolation. With this in mind, all magnet schools within DeSoto ISD have access to the full campus and projected demographics and know specifically which group they need to target. DeSoto ISD recruits heavily from this population to attract students, and their parents, thereby, making the schools more diverse. DeSoto ISD also recruits students in the community's private schools, charters and magnets systems, and other traditional schools. Specific areas receive additional promotional materials along with invitations (English, Spanish, etc.) to visit a campus that may be underrepresented by the desired demographic the district is wishing to increase.

Along with the aggressive **Awareness/Marketing/Branding Campaign**, parent liaisons will utilize multiple strategies for all parents (including many who do not speak English) such as conducting face to face outreach (in English and Spanish, etc.) through: visits to community centers, apartment complexes, ballparks, churches, and community events to promote *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>& E<sup>2</sup>* to underrepresented groups. DeSoto ISD leaders coordinate tours for the Realty Association and for members of the Chamber of Commerce so that those representatives are knowledgeable and can articulate the themes of the schools. DeSoto ISD Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Student Support along with the Executive Director of Innovation Programs attends community meetings in non-profit civic organization such as Rotary, the NAACP, and LULAC. All venues are used as opportunities to share



information about the school offerings, the application process and deadlines. Strong recruitment efforts also occur at each campus-level, specifically for the transition grades – students moving from 5<sup>th</sup> grade to 6<sup>th</sup> and leaving 8<sup>th</sup> grade transitioning to high school. As indicated in the selection of students’ section, siblings students currently enrolled are given priority.

Companies desperately need highly-skilled, knowledgeable and well-rounded employees. A more highly-skilled workforce will entice new businesses and investment to Dallas County, along with creating momentum in the job-growth potential for the entire North Texas region. Students can build their career in the theme-based area of interest and can create a better quality of life for themselves and their families for generations to come. *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>& E<sup>2</sup>* is a model for other districts and communities to follow. A magnet school of this caliber provides students with the skills, and invaluable real-world experiences needed to compete in today’s economy.

Through the aforementioned plan of activities, DeSoto ISD has a desire for the district to be recognized as a world class model that purposefully welcomes, supports, develops and continuously recruits students from different social, economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds. DeSoto ISD while focusing heavily on recruitment efforts and reducing minority isolation will focus on quality programs that will not only recruit, but **keep** a diverse group of students fully engaged in learning, and prepare them for a very bright future. Please refer to the approved Board of Trustees Desegregation Plan in *Appendix C*.

**(b) Quality of Project Design**

***(1) The magnet school improves student academic achievement, including the manner...***

**Vision:** Quality education that prepares students to meet the challenges and address the changes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a top priority at DeSoto ISD. Leaders in education and business agree that 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and content in areas such as critical thinking, productivity, teamwork, cultural competence, literacy, communication (written and oral), technology



adeptness, and systems thinking are needed to succeed in school, work, and life.<sup>40</sup> Core academic subjects such as reading, writing, science, math, ELA, social studies, etc. remain the foundation of a comprehensive education. DeSoto ISD believes that it must also develop students who have the ability to think critically, apply knowledge at high levels, and use technology and tools to access, evaluate, and communicate information. DeSoto ISD is committed to increasing the achievement of all students (*Appendix O – Letters of Commitment*). Through *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*, DeSoto ISD will provide a high-quality academic and personalized learning environment focused on rigorous theme-based curriculum and instruction, multiple assessments, and high student expectations. It is envisioned that this environment will support the diversity of students' learning styles and interests and will be fostered by involvement of all stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators, community and partners).

**Approach:** In concert with the vision above and the philosophy of Equality, Excellence, and Effectiveness for ALL Students, DeSoto ISD will utilize the following research-based approach to meet the goal, objectives and outcomes of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*:

- Comprehensive, theme-driven, standards-based, and rigorous curriculum that provides seamless continuity of learning between grade levels and magnet schools;<sup>41</sup>
- Theme-driven specialized curriculum integrated with standards-based curriculum in core content areas for all grades;<sup>42</sup>
- Choice-based, and personalized learning environment designed to promote enriched collaborative learning and knowledge for all people from diverse backgrounds;<sup>43</sup>
- Periodic assessments using multiple measures of student learning to monitor achievement and modifying instruction;<sup>44</sup>
- Comprehensive and ongoing professional development aligned with educator and



curriculum needs at each magnet school;<sup>45</sup>

- Longitudinal database system that enables school leaders and teachers to meet the objectives and outcomes of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*;
- Annual review and assessment of each magnet theme and associated interventions to enable principals, teachers, and staff to keep student learning on course;<sup>46</sup>
- Educational counseling, advising, mentoring, and career and college guidance to each student and his/her parent;<sup>47</sup>
- Instructional proven practices and enrichment activities related to needs of ELs, underrepresented, and academically struggling students at each magnet school;<sup>48</sup> and
- Parental authentic engagement in school-based and home-based learning activities.<sup>49</sup>

**Core Strategies at all magnet schools:** As a matter of policy, DeSoto ISD’s Board of Trustees puts tremendous value on developing and implementing programs with a focus on making measurable, lasting improvements in student performance, educator capacity, and decision-making. All of the objectives and measurable outcomes described before embed meaningful, ambitious academic achievement goals in a structure aimed at unifying all members of the school community around the proposed themes of the magnet schools.

*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will provide education options emphasizing specialized learning environments and innovative instructional programs to promote excellence in student achievement and growth. This will be accomplished by attracting students to unique and distinctive, diverse, and engaging theme-based learning environments,<sup>50</sup> specifically designed to capitalize upon and to nurture and enhance students’ abilities, aptitudes, interests and talents. Addressing the needs of all students who are enrolled in the magnet schools will begin with an understanding of the needs and strengths of students as well as the knowledge of effective



strategies that will enable all students to reach STAAR and EOC standards.

**Concept-based and project-based learning (PBL):** Emphasis will be given to selecting curricula (design, delivery and monitoring) that shifts away from the classroom practices of short, teacher-centered lessons, to thematic, concept-based and PBL that create new and revised student-centered learning environments appropriate for magnet schools for college preparation for all students. Student achievement and engagement, lesson design and vertical and horizontal alignment will be the top priorities of all the magnet schools.<sup>51</sup> Consistent with the scope of work, DeSoto ISD will continue to ensure that rigorous curriculum for each core subject is taught and student learning is nurtured and monitored on a personal basis at each magnet school.

**Differentiated instruction:** In order to address the diverse needs of all students, and help them succeed academically, differentiated instructional strategies will be implemented at all magnet schools. Through differentiated instructional strategies, teachers will be able to assist students of different abilities, interests, or learning needs to appropriately absorb, use, develop, and present concepts as a part of the daily learning process.<sup>52</sup> This will allow students to take greater responsibility and ownership for their own learning, and provide opportunities for peer teaching and cooperative learning. In preparation, teachers will diagnose the difference in readiness, interests, and learning styles of all students, using a variety of assessment tools.

**High-Yield Instructional:** In each *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* magnet school, teachers will practice strategies such as Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) or Marzano's Nine High-Yield Instructional Strategies<sup>53</sup> and other proven practices that will address instruction to students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.<sup>54</sup> DeSoto ISD will also continue to emphasize thematic standards-based practices in curriculum design, delivery and pedagogy. Instructional strategies will be formulated around identification of desired results, acceptable



evidence of student mastery, and implementation of PBL experiences in core subjects.

**English Learners (EL):** To assist EL's in succeeding academically, all magnet schools will implement the SIOP Model. This Model is a research-based and validated instructional model that has proven effective in addressing the academic needs of EL students. The SIOP Model consists of eight interrelated components: 1) Lesson Preparation; 2) Building Background; 3) Comprehensible Input; 4) Strategies; 5) Interaction; 6) Practice/Application; 7) Lesson Delivery; and 8) Review and Assessment. Using instructional strategies connected to each of these components, teachers are able to design and deliver lessons that address the academic and linguistic needs of EL's to move them from their level of understanding to a higher level.

**Accelerated learning:** To help students with English language arts or mathematics skills that are significantly below grade-level to "catch up" and maintain or exceed proficiency, the magnet schools will provide: accelerated learning strategies such as individualized instruction, extended day (after school, weekend, summer, etc.) instruction, technology- blended instruction, tutoring, corporative learning, accelerated instruction and mentoring in areas of their academic weakness.

**Personalized learning:** Inspired by the Response to Intervention (RTI) approach, each magnet school will provide targeted interventions that will involve individualized services tailored to the unique needs of each student. Students at risk of potential low performance (including ELs) will receive: 1) enriched inquiry-based instruction to increase grade-level proficiency or receive credit recovery; 2) instructional scaffolding based on the learning styles and needs of students; 3) access to online, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive instructional materials and assessment instruments; 4) academic support services, including opportunities to meet frequently with their teacher advisors; tutoring; peer study teams; skills-building lessons through technology; how-to-study strategies, etc.; and 5) access to intensive during and after-



school structured study sessions to help them acquire essential skills and knowledge in core content. Rather than categorizing students, teachers will recognize individuals' strengths and limitations, areas of intelligence, interests, and unique backgrounds and use these insights to assist students in increasing academic achievement. The approach also includes a commitment to professional development for central office staff, principals and teachers in understanding the educational needs, and the cultural context for addressing the needs of all students.

Additionally, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* school advisors, using the College Board or SureScore online platforms, will provide early interpersonal support that will: 1) assist students with problems that interfere with their ability to accomplish their education goals; and 2) provide academic guidance to middle and high school students and parents regarding the benefits and of Pre-AP, AP, honors, and dual enrollment courses. The interpersonal support will be particularly important because low-income ELs typically have few resources upon which to draw in terms of parental support and institutional knowledge as they attempt to navigate the educational system.

**Technology integration:** Teachers will be trained to incorporate technology (such as navigator systems, scientific sensors, Vernier probes, etc.) in their instruction to enhance student learning and understanding of content. Instructional approaches will be enhanced through the usage of a whiteboard, a chat area, and GroupWare functions – enabled through DeSoto ISD's Moodle. Technology will also be integrated into part of the locally developed teacher/student appraisal system used to evaluate teacher/student needs and academic performance.

Using GroupWare technology, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* teachers will also have opportunities to meet with a group of student's after-school to provide tutoring, exchange ideas, discuss projects, and work together on a project. Assessment and feedback will help guide future use of these interactive features and determine how useful students found them to be. Through technology,



each magnet school will implement meaningful search processes that provide educators, students, and parents a supportive environment for access to relevant print and electronic media resources that meet their educational interests and learning needs. Core content teachers and students will receive digital devices to access a wide variety of online resources available through Discovery Education, netTrekker, easyteck, and Study Island.

Each *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* magnet school will also foster literacy scaffolds that promote and encourage reading literacy, academic achievement, and development of sustained readers.<sup>55</sup> A Follett based software will provide up-to-date and wide ranging online resources (such as digital resources, eBooks, and audio-visual materials) to help students learn how to think critically, solve problems, make decisions, and be reflective through their engagement of diverse sources of information. In addition, an online database and a networking platform will be created for teachers and administrators to collect program data as well as share success stories highlighting best practices for integrating technology, innovative uses of online teaching strategies, lessons learned and challenges in management of learning components.

**Advising:** Students (K – 12) will receive comprehensive advising by Master Teachers which will involve his/her parent in an advisory system aimed at ensuring that each student completes a coherent program of academic study. Extra help before, during and after-school will enable struggling students to successfully complete an accelerated program of study that includes high-level academic and social content.<sup>56</sup> DeSoto ISD will provide opportunities for Student-Led Conferences (SLC) starting at the elementary level through high school. During SLCs, students explain their progress toward and mastery of both academic (content/skills) and character (non-cognitive behavior) learning targets. Students justify their progress by leading families through a portfolio of assignments culled from academic classes.<sup>57</sup> The underlying ideas are socio-



cognitive/non-cognitive, socio-constructive, and formative: If the student understands his/her results, goals, and means to get there, learning will be more effective (Pihlgren, 2011a).<sup>58</sup>

**Extended Learning:** Extended learning activities: job shadowing, college camps, seminars, internships and educational study trips, will allow students in K- 12<sup>th</sup> grade to be critical thinkers, develop both cognitive and non-cognitive aptitudes including study and organization skills, and be college ready through success in advanced courses.<sup>59</sup> These customized grade-level activities will supplement core curriculum and provide college/career exploration for all students.

Employers will serve as advisors and provide work-based learning opportunities, advising and mentoring, exposing all students to careers, and encouraging them to pursue postsecondary education. Students and parents will hear from businesses leaders, professors and counselors about different college/career pathways which will also enhance interests and motivation.

**Parental engagement:** To increase parent involvement, each magnet school will communicate with parents by : 1) distributing a bi-monthly newsletter which will include school news and activities, district events, and parenting tips; 2) distributing parent involvement surveys at the beginning of each year to help develop goals and objectives for the school year; 3) offering volunteer opportunities to all parents; 4) utilizing the school and district website to communicate pertinent school information; 5) providing parents access to their child's grades and to communicate with their child's teacher; 6) engaging parents in school activities and providing quarterly parent teacher conferences per school year to discuss academic and behavioral progress; and 7) utilizing student's assignment notebooks, teacher web pages, e-mail, and telephone calls to communicate individual student's academic and behavioral progress.<sup>60</sup>

In addition, evening sessions will be held at each magnet school for parents to learn about developmentally appropriate learning activities in the home environment. Parents will also be



involved in decision making and continuous improvement through participation in a Parent Advisory Council. Parent surveys and focus groups will be coordinated to allow parents to provide feedback on the program and to select parental involvement activities that will be offered throughout the year at each magnet school. A parent survey will be distributed at the end of each school year to gather information on parental program effectiveness (*Appendix P – Power Hour*).

**Online database system:** A database system will be developed to support longitudinal analysis, management of effectiveness, and instructional improvement. Building on DeSoto ISD’s current framework of standards and multiple assessments, educators will use data to inform instructional planning in the schools, to establish professional development plans and evaluate their impact, to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers and leaders, and to monitor and publicly report on the performance of schools. By hosting an online secured database system, DeSoto ISD will create meaningful efficiencies in implementation of activities at each magnet school; support high-quality focused instruction, develop virtuous learning cycles about what works and why, and promote public stewardship of the magnet school system.

**Common Planning Time:** Designing common planning time (CPT) for teachers will be an integral part of the daily practice. Through CPT, educators will integrate the curriculum, analyze assessment data, examine student work to assess students' needs, discuss current research, and reflect on the effectiveness of instructional approaches being used to identify interventions for students, especially for struggling students. Teachers will also use CPT to address day-to-day management and scheduling of activities. The CPT will be built into the schedule and devote 90 minutes weekly of common planning time for teachers to use for core planning.<sup>61</sup>

**Strategies for each magnet school:** The following strategies will be implemented:  
**iSTEAM3D Elementary School Academy (Meadows Elementary) - iSTEAM3D is a student-**



centered, project-based interdisciplinary instructional model that integrates Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics. It is based on student driven inquiry and problem solving to facilitate innovation through collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. This Academy will focus on the student’s engagement and skills in science, math and technology through integration of the arts. With emphasis on scientific observation, technological exploration, artfully engineered design, and mathematical thinking, iSTEAM3D will serve as a catalyst for creative problem solving.

Research has shown that the arts experience of young children can play a key role in their cognitive, motor, language, and social-emotional development. It is considered developmentally appropriate practice for teachers of young children to use curricula that integrate learning both “within and across” the domains—physical, social, emotional, cognitive—and the disciplines—including art and music, language, literacy, mathematics, science, and technology.<sup>62</sup>

During the course of the year, students will be provided opportunities to become the following:

- **Problem-solvers** – able to define questions and problems, design investigations to collect and organize data, draw conclusions, and apply understandings to novel situations.
- **Innovators**– creatively use science, mathematics, and technology concepts and principles by applying them to the engineering design process.
- **Inventors**– recognize the needs of the world and creatively design, test, redesign, and then implement solutions (engineering process).
- **Self-reliant** – able to use initiative and self-motivation to set agendas, develop and gain self-confidence, and work within time specified time frames.
- **Logical thinkers** – able to apply rational and logical thought processes of science, mathematics, and engineering design to innovation and invention.



**Approach:** Integrated with standards-based curricula (as defined by STAAR), the magnet school will utilize several research-based curricula to increase student excitement and learning in STEM. Trained teachers will align several existing performing arts strategies, such as role-playing and choreography, to address the curriculum goals and standards outlined by STAAR. These performing arts strategies were also informed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards and research on mathematics learning by Copely (2010)<sup>63</sup> and others. Two examples of curricula (Bag of Dances, etc.) provide insights into how those strategies addressed mathematics instruction and student needs.

Bag of Dances is a mathematics-oriented lesson in which the teaching artist (and later, the classroom teacher) introduces children (small groups) to a series of objects (an elastic band, a feather, a spinning top, and a bouncing ball) that inspire movement. This example focuses on choreography (dance) to develop skills in patterning, which is the basis for algebraic thinking, and in data analysis, which builds problem-solving and reasoning abilities (Copely, 2010).<sup>64</sup>

**Strategies:** Explicit, systematic instruction, assessment, and intervention strategies that advocate math, science and reading proficiency for all students throughout each developmental stage of reading acquisition will be provided. In addition to assisting students to acquire STAAR-EOC standards at each grade level, instruction will be directed toward student competency in mathematical, science, vocabulary, and comprehension. The activities and assignments within each lesson will be developmentally appropriate, systematic, and incremental.<sup>65</sup> Every day, classroom teachers will provide a good balance between whole group and small group instruction; consider the purposes and timing of his/her lessons; and provide students with challenging and motivating STEM and arts-integrated project- and problem-based activities as they are working on their own or with other students. She/he will also consider the



balance between students' active and passive involvement in their learning activities as well as the balance between a) leading the learning, questioning, and other activities during large and small group lessons and b) providing support in the form of coaching and offering feedback as students are actively participating in literacy and mathematics learning activities. Each classroom also has additional decodable books and story books in the classroom library.

**iSTEAM3D High School Academy (High School)** - Using the same principles of iSTEAM3D described above, this Academy will implement a “whole school reform model” in itself, with the vision of creating enhanced learning for all students by using arts-integrated instruction.

**Approach:** Current research in project-based learning (PBL) demonstrates that projects can increase student interest in STEM because they involve students in solving authentic problems, working with others, and building real solutions (artifacts).<sup>66</sup> Through an arts-integrated approach to STEM education focused on real-world, authentic problems, students learn about the problem-solving process. Teachers will use concept-based and project-based inquiry strategies, including asking open-ended questions (such as those that elicit multiple answers), encouraging students to be thorough, soliciting multiple responses using wait-time and follow-up questions, asking students to back up interpretation with evidence from artwork, and asking students focused questions on a chosen STEM theme. Using arts (such as visual arts) as a backdrop to understand STEM concepts, students will be taken through a five-step process, characterized by Imagination, Experimentation, Flexibility, Recognition, and Self-reflection:<sup>67</sup>

Driven by STAAR standards, this STEAM Academy will be project-based and interdisciplinary, which will encourage students to experiment, revise, and try again— much like the process of creating art. Not only will the arts help students gain a deeper understanding of science and math concepts, but also make the reverse true. Learning science and math will give



students a new perspective on music, dance, theatre, or visual arts.

**Strategies:** Instruction in the classrooms will provide an atmosphere of inquiry and discovery, with emphasis on problem solving and reflection and critical thinking, rather than mere coverage of the content. Curriculum such as the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) and Agile Mind (discussed later) will be used. Agile Mind programs encompass professional development, curricula, formative assessment, test preparation, and real-time data analytics and reporting to enable teachers to ensure that all students master math and science. PLTW was selected because it is a leading provider of project-based STEM curricula that has shown promise for engaging and preparing students of diverse backgrounds. PLTW's approach relies on hands-on, real-world projects that help students understand what they learn may be applied to everyday life.

Throughout the Academy, science and mathematics classes will blur the lines among arts and STEM disciplines. For example, science courses will be experiment-based and hands-on, and projects will be connected to the broader curriculum as defined by STAAR. Lesson plans in Physics will foster students' curiosity and motivation to envision and develop solutions to project-specific design challenges using arts as a design thinking process - allowing students to experience connections between arts and the creative process across disciplines and to recognize applications in professional and daily life.<sup>68</sup> Electives such as programming and data visualization, interactive design and engineering, will also be made available for students in addition to core STEM subjects of chemistry, biology, physics, algebra, and calculus.

In addition to standards-based courses, emphasis will be given on enrolling students in courses at the honors or AP level. This Academy will give students challenging arts-integrated experiences that will allow integration of STAAR guided standards-based curriculum (required for graduation) with the rigor of PBL opportunities. With this integration, students will be better



equipped to succeed in an ever-changing technological community.

The Academy will also effectively equip students for college and career success with a focus on fostering important 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills: persistence, inquiry, communication, creativity, and collaboration. Critique and reflection will be key components in project development as students will create digital online portfolios featuring projects that illustrate growth in relation to the qualities. Students will be pushed to a higher level of thinking by discussing art and STEM concepts digitally. As students design presentations, publications, videos, and use web 2.0 tools creatively with available technology, principles of design will be taught, reinforced and utilized to communicate STEM concepts meaningfully.

The Academy will also use College Board's SpringBoard curriculum to address Conley's (2010) four dimensions of college and career readiness among high school students: 1) Key cognitive strategies; 2) Key content knowledge; 3) Academic behaviors; and 4) Contextual skills and awareness. By utilizing SpringBoard, efforts will be made to foster a college-going culture and prepare students for rigorous high school and postsecondary education. Students will be assisted to ensure success in Algebra I and English I STAAR-EOC exams and to meet the college readiness performance standards on the English III and Algebra II STAAR-EOC exams.

Additionally, teachers will pay particular attention to the needs of freshman students. Freshman students will receive curricular materials, enrichment, core instruction, and supplemental support to help them make a successful transition into high school. Academic supports and enrichment instruction will also be provided to students with a lack of adequate preparation in English language arts, math, and science.

At the core of this Academy will be the implementation of an aligned sequence of rigorous curricula in both AP and non-AP courses, using concept-based and PBL as a framework to



support student growth in key cognitive strategies and academic behavior will be at the core of this magnet school. In addition, the school will: 1) implement a series of after-school, weekend, and summer arts-integrated STEM enrichment programs (tutoring, mentoring, academic advising, supplemental instruction, standardized test preparation, etc.) for students; 2) provide exposure of students to the culture and norms of college (college visits, summer math and science camps, robotics competitions, national STEM conferences, etc.), focused on increased college readiness of students; 3) work with University of North Texas to provide professional development that helps teachers to implement problem-based curricula and provide rigorous instruction that delivers a challenging and standards-based college preparatory curriculum in the context of broad career strands/clusters; and 4) assist students and their parents in understanding issues of college requirements, affordability, and financial aid as well as providing comprehensive college application and financial aid advising and assistance.

**Blended Learning Academy (Moates Elementary School)** - Blended learning, where students' face-to-face education is blended with internet resources or online courses, has been gaining considerable attention at DeSoto ISD. It has become entangled with the ambiguous notion of personalized learning and is being positioned as the new way to individualize learning in competency-based education systems.<sup>69</sup> Inspired and trained by the Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation, and a key proponent of blended learning, DeSoto ISD aims to establish this Academy (station rotation model) that is student-centric, highly personalized for each learner, and more productive. Blended learning “designates the range of possibilities presented by combining Internet and digital media with established classroom forms that require the physical co-presence of teacher and students”<sup>70</sup>

With the proliferation of digital tools, many students now experience learning through a



blend of face-to-face and digital or online media and are able to access new ideas and resources where student attitudes and engagement towards their education can be positively supported.

Transitioning away from seat time, in favor of a structure that creates flexibility, allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace.

**Approach:** The Academy will expose students' subject matter and concepts in an age-, gender-, and culturally-appropriate and technology-integrated manner that is interactive. In particular, this Academy will use a Station Rotation blended learning approach to:

- help expose students to habits of content inquiry and show students how the learning that they encounter links to their daily lives;
- establish the link between curricula and careers (particularly STEM careers);
- promote recognition of student accomplishments and inculcate a belief that their educational and career aspirations are within their reach; and
- demonstrate the use of investigation and critical thinking to solve real-world problems.

The above approach will be successful because students are motivated to learn by understanding the relevance of what they are learning, which results in enjoyment in the learning process and generates self-motivation required to dedicate themselves to learning.

**Strategies:** Using a Station Rotation Model as a blended learning approach, elementary school students will be on block schedule taking traditional classes four days a week (Monday-Thursday). The Station Rotation Model will offer teachers quite a bit of instructional flexibility for elementary school teachers. Students will rotate through a variety of learning station activities, ranging from group discussion to individual online learning and everything in between.<sup>71</sup> The teacher will schedule the rotation from one modality to another at their own discretion, whether it is a fixed/timed or needs-based rotation. Each Friday, students will attend



a modified schedule in which the student will attend a Blended **Literacy** class half a day and a Blended **Academically** focused class half a day. In each class, elementary school students will begin by participating in whole group instruction, directions, or discussion of subject content as needed. Students/teachers would then transition to Station Rotation method consisting of: 1) individualized, skills-based, targeted instruction completed using available technology (Class Dojo, eBackpack, etc.), 2) small group/individual student differentiation, and 3) collaborative student groups in PBL. Students would also continue in a co-curricular rotation consisting of Physical Education (PE), Art, and Music. Students will participate in team-based projects that arouse their curiosity and interest, while collaborating and sharing with peers. Interventions and support during these projects will include explicit and differentiated instruction and technology-enabled practices on basic skills, organization skills, peer support, tutoring, or homework assistance.<sup>72</sup> This will involve grouping/ integrating students with similar interests and skills levels. To increase motivation, teachers will adopt differentiated instruction and support according to students' needs and help students believe that they can be successful in learning, no matter how difficult the content may present itself. Students will receive regular feedback from teachers on how well they are performing in relation to the grade-specific standards that they are expected to master. This task will not only focus on what is important to learn, it will offer an opportunity for teachers to praise small steps and performances that approximate quality work. Students who struggle with particular skill areas can progress at their own pace, receive scaffolding and additional instructional support, through a structured and sequential approach.<sup>73</sup> The Station Rotation Model will also allow teachers to focus their class time on those students who have encountered an obstacle in their skills development, and allow the teacher to spend less time with those students who are progressing without any problems.



To ensure competency-based progression, students progression will be determined as they master each task they are assigned. Using grade-specific evaluation tools (e.g. STAAR-EOC), student experience will be monitored monthly. Teachers will view data showing which students have completed each skill area, and which students have encountered any obstacles. These data will help determine which students had not yet reached mastery, and inform instructional plans so only those students will receive scaffolding and instruction on that particular content.

**Environmental Science and Medical School Academy (Ruby Young Elementary) –**

Environmental Science provides an opportunity for students to gain a more rounded understanding of contemporary science because it has two features that are absent from the current high school curriculum. Environmental Science and health is interdisciplinary and presents science that is unresolved, even at the introductory level. The study of environmental Science provides students with the opportunity to see how fundamental physical, chemical, geological, biological, and social processes interact to shape the environments that we inhabit. Environmental Science and health are very much inter-related because the environmental health deals with the natural environments that benefit the human health whereas science is focused on protecting the natural environment for the benefit of human health and ecosystem.

**Approach:** The Academy will enhance learning through Environmental Science by integrating in-school activities with outdoor experiences to enhance critical thinking and problem solving skills among students.<sup>74</sup> Environmental Science topics such as nutrient cycles, ecological awareness, and the water cycle will be taught in classrooms and then explored in outdoor settings to allow students to personally experience the environment and understand how the day-to-day scientific concepts relate with each other. Students will be encouraged to use the science process skills of observation and classification as well as making inferences and interpreting data as part



of the learning process. Introducing elementary students to science inquiry will be accomplished through open-ended design of lessons, based on students' questions and discussions about the environment and its health impacts. This approach is designed to provide students with the critical life management skills necessary to make sound decisions and take positive actions to achieve a sustainable environment.

**Strategies:** Teachers will use inquiry-based methods and differential instructional strategies to engage students in hands-on, PBL activities focused on a specific environmental Science topic while complementing core curriculum requirements as defined by STAAR. A variety of instructional and personalized learning and assessment strategies will be implemented by the teachers within classrooms and in outdoor settings to identify and accommodate individual learning styles and engage students in experiential learning. Teachers will also use Socratic discussions sessions to challenge students to consider interesting and relevant topics, such as described above. For example, students will interpret the local landscape by identifying key features including: flora, fauna, topography, and human impact. Instructional practices will include cooperative learning, differentiated instruction and personalized assessment, team teaching, and flexible grouping.

Instruction and learning will take place in a variety of settings, making appropriate use of the classroom, school, outdoors, and the community, as appropriate. Students will participate in special programs and activities utilizing the school-yard habitat garden, extracurricular science club, and an environmental fair within the community. Environmentally based service-learning projects, appropriate for each grade level, will be held at this Academy (e.g. Grade 5 – Energy Audits of classrooms and homes).

Instruction will provide opportunities for students to enhance their capacity for independent



thinking and creative, responsible action. Engaging in individual and group work will help students to develop these capacities independently. As part of the instruction, a strong emphasis will be made to develop communication skills among students so that they will be able to both communicate their ideas and apply their knowledge. Learning will be interdisciplinary – integrated across science, math, reading, writing, social studies and art, and incorporate lesson plans that build students’ interest for career pathways, especially for medical (health) careers.

**Environmental Science and Medical Academy (East Middle School)**

**Approach:** Using the same principles as described for the Elementary School Academy, this Academy will address many of the key environmental challenges of our time. Understanding challenges scientists are investigating is well within the capability of a middle school student, whereas the boundaries of physics, chemistry, and biology have largely expanded beyond the point that any middle school student can appreciate them. The Academy will offer students the chance to become skilled in reaching out to discover and address the diverse environmental concerns of the DeSoto community. Students will explore and evaluate challenges and concerns related to their environment, such as ecosystems, preservation, energy conservation and so on.

**Strategies:** The Academy is designed to provide students with the critical core content knowledge and life management skills necessary to make sound personal decisions to foster a sustainable environment. Using small group and teaming strategies, including hands-on observation and discovery, inquiry, community-based action research and problem solving, service learning, and PBL as part of instruction, teachers will allow students the opportunity to observe, explore, and solve environmental problems that cut across several disciplines such as Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Social Science, language arts, etc. Additionally, teachers will utilize and integrate content from high-quality, proven environmental



education materials, such as Project WILD, that have direct correlations to STAAR standards.

Guidance counselors and career and technical education professionals will also make students aware of; career and college choices that emphasize medical (health) careers, related two-and four-year degree programs, internships at local hospitals, clinics, and college visitation opportunities to promote lifelong learning. Interest inventories and aptitude tests (College Board's Readiness and Surescore College2Careers), field trips, Career Days, enrichment activities, and one-on-one advising will be used to increase students' awareness of their own interests and help them learn about a wide variety of college requirements and occupations. The Academy will offer a rigorous curriculum that focuses on the environmental and medical concepts and will prepare students for a wide range of careers in the medical (health) field. Students in the Academy will work closely with teachers, staff, administrators, parents, and community partners including surgeons, professors, hospital personnel and other professionals to create an environment supportive of creative and independent academic exploration with real-world relevance. This plan will help students and their parents select and connect their classes and school experiences to their long-term academic and professional goals.

**Fine Arts Elementary Academy (Woodridge Elementary)**

**Approach:** Fine arts programs allow students to explore their creative nature through specialized instruction in visual arts, drama, dance, writing, and more. This Academy will provide an inspiring and robust program for elementary school students by focusing on a STAAR-driven, standards focused curriculum. Through this Academy DeSoto ISD will offer students both meaningful and enriching opportunities in the areas of visual arts, dance, band, orchestra, choral music, drama, and piano. The philosophy at this Academy is built on the idea that arts can illuminate challenging academic content areas for students by providing them the opportunity to



interact with the material in a new way. The intent is to: 1) provide all students with the knowledge and skills necessary for cognitive, creative, emotional and social growth through sequential study, practice, and reflection; and 2) build literacy while developing intuition, reasoning, imagination, and dexterity into unique forms of expression and communication.

**Strategies:** In addition to core content instruction, all students from Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade will receive Visual Art, Drama, and Dance at least once a week with teachers assisted by an arts coach. The Arts Coach will work with classroom teachers to create units that integrate the arts into core content (math, ELA, etc.) subjects. These classroom-based units will be conducted in addition to regular arts classes, such as visual arts, drama, and dance. Teachers and the Arts Coach will be engaged in the use of differentiated instruction that fosters creative thinking and communication among students to imagine, innovate and realize their potential in creativity.

The teachers will set up small group studios such as painting, dry construction, wet construction, technology, collage, clay modeling, fashion, etc., where students learn to use their creative abilities to explore, design, and express themselves. The studios will be a continuation of the arts classrooms where students will receive explicit and direct instruction on core subjects, as required by STAAR. This learning approach, beginning with the classroom and then applying the knowledge in studios will help students gain a sense of ownership and autonomy as developing artists, internalizing the process of creating art on their own. Projects in the studio will fall under a variety of parameters, including “must-do” (assigned) projects, “showcase” projects (displayed outside classrooms), and “bring home” projects. Students will occasionally be given the freedom to choose what type of project they will create. In addition, student work produced during the studios will be placed on display during assemblies and other times during the school year, providing parents and community the opportunity to see and experience their



child's creativity and hard work. Classroom teachers will also develop arts integrated units that deepen understanding of core subjects. For example, when a third grade classroom teacher notices that students need to boost their comprehension of geometry shapes, an integrated art unit will be created in response. In this unit, Ms. Kitty will provide direct instruction and then provide opportunities for students to build three-dimensional objects as part of the studio.

In drama class, students will participate in a variety of activities appropriate to their age level, including game play, acting out scenes, and improvising skits. During dance class, students will explore dance through movement explorations, learning various dance styles, research and other learning activities. Parents and community stakeholders will play active roles in students' experiences and thus create a more grounded, collective learning environment.

**Fine Arts Middle School Academy (McCowan Middle School)**

**Approach:** Similar to the approach for the Academy above, various grouping strategies (individuals and small groups) will provide opportunities for all students to succeed. In addition to core subject instruction, all students in this Academy will participate in dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts as performers and creators through two modes of instruction: 1) subject-centered arts instruction in dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts; and 2) instruction connecting the arts and other core subjects. As in elementary school, art in this Academy will follow a sequential body of content knowledge and skills that will broaden students' learning experiences. Students will explore, organize, understand, and evaluate their abilities, as they express personal ideas, explore a wide variety of media, and collaborate on group projects.

**Strategies:** Art teachers will introduce students to a wide range of art areas and techniques and encourage them to take advanced courses in more than one medium. Due to the fact that instruction builds on planned student growth in art concepts and skills, classes should be taken in



sequence. Art teachers may modify course content and instructional methods using a variety of approaches, including: 1) aligning the content and delivery with the developmental level and age of the student; 2) giving instructions through several modalities, such as visual and aural demonstration and written directions, and providing instructions more than once; 3) summarizing key points before students start an assignment; 4) adjusting the pace when introducing new content; 5) asking leading questions to encourage self-assessment as work progresses; and 6) assigning clear and appropriate roles for cooperative learning activities.

While art courses in the same medium are taken in sequence, upper level courses in different media may be taken simultaneously with the approval of the art teacher(s). For example, students may follow Art I with Drawing II and Ceramics II. Teachers will encourage highly motivated art students to enroll in advanced art courses. Because the courses accommodate various learning styles and emphasize independent and guided research, students will gain valuable knowledge and skills that enable them to successfully pursue interests and careers.

All students get to delve deeply into arts areas that capture their interest as they progress through the grades. Resident artists from the community will provide professional-level arts instruction to help students master fine arts standards. Additionally, students will have opportunities to discover the many ways that art supports and reinforces language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects. When making links between the art TEKS and other content areas, teachers will ensure that the learning in both art and the content area is of the quality described in the TEKS. The Art Coach will help teachers in other disciplines through careful planning and by relating other subjects to art in meaningful ways. For example, teachers may connect art with other subjects with activities such as engaging in creative, descriptive, and analytical writing about artworks and the processes used to create them.



Individualized instruction will help each student to progress through the art curriculum at his or her own pace. Students who have not had extensive art instruction can catch up on the basics while those who have can move ahead. Art classes are especially amenable to this approach because art skills require a great deal of practice, and pacing varies among individuals. With teacher guidance, students will learn planning, preparing, and presenting their artwork. Students will develop criteria for the quality and presentation of the artwork and suitable sites for exhibits.

***(2) The applicant demonstrates it has the resources to operate the project ...***

DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees has granted their full support to the creation of the seven theme-based magnet schools in the school district service area to attract new students and reduce minority group (African-American and Hispanic – students of color) isolation. DeSoto ISD’s track record of currently supporting similar programs is demonstrated by their continued support (**\$2.2 million investment annually**) and operation of the current magnet schools (iSTEAM3D, Medical, etc.) functioning successfully. DeSoto ISD has sustained these magnet schools through local funding for the past three years. In addition, entirely from local funds DeSoto ISD has established and maintained three costly International Baccalaureate school programs (elementary and middle school) as another avenue to increase parent and student school choice while reducing minority group (African-American and Hispanic) isolation.

*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will build internal capacity to continue magnet school activities beyond the federal funded period through sustained professional development, acquisition of materials, digital devices, supplies, and technology, expansion of parents, educators, community support, development of curriculum and from actively securing additional private and local funding.

In Year One, DeSoto ISD will start a strategic process of developing a comprehensive plan for not only sustaining the theme-based magnet schools, program activities and products beyond



the federal funded program period but to also develop a method to scale-up and replicate these successful magnet models district-wide to ensure EVERY student and parent who choose to attend an innovative theme-based magnet school has that opportunity to do so at DeSoto ISD.

Upon award, DeSoto ISD pledges to USDOE that MSAP federal funds will only be used to supplement and not supplant existing funded programs. Funding will only be used to implement or expand magnet educational opportunities in an effort to meet or exceed the proposed objectives. Understanding that a successful program cannot operate in isolation, DeSoto ISD will effectively collaborate with numerous organizations to increase and secure all funds and resources possible. As testimony of their loyalty, DeSoto ISD has committed facilities, classrooms, transportation, equipment, materials, supplies and the expertise of personnel to fully implement the proposed *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* to scale, as described in the scope of work.

**Institutional Commitment to Sustainability:** DeSoto ISD's Board of Trustees' long-term goal is to sustain and scale-up the magnet school program district-wide, far beyond the five years of the project period and ultimately offer a number of school choices and whole school magnet programs to all students. During the planning stages, a comprehensive plan was developed to identify and earmark MSAP funds only as seed money to establish the foundation and momentum towards supporting the initial start-up and operating costs of the proposed three new and four revised magnet school programs during the first five years. Therefore, MSAP resources will be coordinated and leveraged with local, state, private and federal funds to maximize all available resources for students, educators, and parents. DeSoto ISD will supplement the MSAP program with resources, including but not be limited to: a) facilities, b) space, c) furniture, equipment, supplies, and text books, d) transportation and technology, and e) time and effort of personnel other than those employed in the project. The total value of the DeSoto ISD's



commitment is approximately **\$2,268,070** in Year One and will continue beyond the federal funding period.

To ensure ongoing support towards sustainability of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*, DeSoto ISD has supported all pre-grant activity costs and will continue to support all costs by leveraging non-federal resources during the grant period. The district will continue the implementation of all seven magnet schools by acquiring all costs with local funds beyond the project period.

Examples of local funds include, but limited to: funding from local and national foundations (e.g. The Meadows Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), and grants and formula funding from Texas Education Agency. The recovery of students will improve DeSoto ISD's budget because the State of Texas funding, as well as Federal formula funding, is allocated according to Average Daily Attendance. An increase in enrollment will result in more state revenue which will allow DeSoto ISD to be in a better financial position to continue the funding of the magnet schools after MSAP support ends. Since the current per student state funding is \$8,500, the addition of approximately 1500 students over the next several years can be expected to return approximately \$12,750,000 million for instructional programs. Key personnel supported by the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program will be retained by DeSoto ISD through additional local and grant funding acquired from Texas Education Agency and federal agencies such as U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Labor, etc. Furthermore, the decision to retain key personnel will be based on their annual performance review by supervisors. An annual employee review will allow DeSoto ISD and school campuses to take stock of how key personnel are doing personally and what they are doing for the program. It will serve as a vehicle that will enable DeSoto ISD and school campuses to devote time and attention to the people who have the most significant and long-term impact on the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program.



In fact, DeSoto ISD will assure USDOE that by the end of year five it will have strategically acquired the necessary funds to sustain the seven theme-based magnet schools as they were currently operating. Details of resources, services, products and budget to support the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program during and after the funding period are provided below:

**Facilities:** School buildings and amenities will be provided at no-cost to the project to ensure there is sufficient space designated for implementation of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program. The MSAP Program will be located in DeSoto ISD's Division of Curriculum, Instruction, and Student Support administration office. This location is an innovative facility designed to function as a one-stop shop for student, parent and educator services including: admissions, registration, testing, billing, child development center, health services, counseling and psychological services, college access and visitor's center. The Division also houses the following programs: Curriculum Scope and Sequence; Math, Science and Reading Initiatives; USDOE GEAR UP and i3 Development grants, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers; Staff Development and Curriculum Instruction; Principal and Teacher Academies; Gifted and Talented Programs; Year-Round and Summer Extended Instructional Support; Blended Learning, Project-based Learning (PBL) College and Career Academies, etc.

The Division of Curriculum, Instruction, and Student Support administration office is fully accessible for individuals with disabilities. Provisions have been made to accommodate access for individuals with disabilities. This includes specific parking spaces, sidewalks, curbs, power doors, doorway widths, restrooms and computer stations. All these meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

**Classroom Space:** Classroom space will be provided as needed by DeSoto ISD schools throughout the lifetime of the grant and beyond at no cost. Project staff (Theme-based Coaches)



will be located on site for immediate service delivery and more efficient programmatic and administration operations. Additionally, during before and after-school sessions, weekends, and summer, classroom space will be offered (inclusive of libraries, computer centers, science labs, conference meeting rooms, gymnasium, cafeteria, etc.) at no-cost to *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program. All schools are ADA-approved and all students will have equal access to amenities and services.

**Equipment:** In addition to the equipment allocated in the MSAP federal budget, DeSoto ISD will provide all the remaining equipment defined by USDOE as having a value of \$5,000 or more. The equipment necessary to operate the MSAP program includes, but is not limited to: infrastructure technology servers, medical equipment for magnet program, engineering hardware (e. g. NI ELVIS Laboratory Experimentation Platform, Instrument VXI Drivers, etc.) Illuminating software for virtual office hours, Tutor.com for on-line tutoring, Plato software for instructional modules, etc. Equipment/supplies under \$5,000 that will also be provided by DeSoto ISD consist of the networked printers, Smart Boards, LCD scanners, copier, etc.

**Furniture, Supplies and Textbooks:** With the exception of the items delineated in the MSAP budget, DeSoto ISD and the target schools will provide use of all necessary furniture, equipment, telecommunication peripherals (telephone, internet access, and email), server, supplies, and text books to the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* staff, teachers, students and parents during and after federal funding ends. Furniture will include desks, chairs, bookshelves, internet, locked file cabinets, and telephones. This will also include the use of all computer labs and software. Supplies will include copy paper, letterhead, pencils, tape, envelopes, writing tablets, folders, binders, computer disks and other necessary supplies. During and after the project funded period, DeSoto ISD will provide classroom text books to teachers and students including server-based software such as excel, Microsoft Word, etc. (described further in the Budget Narrative).



**Transportation and Technology:** DeSoto ISD will ensure all students have equal access to the proposed magnet schools by providing the transportation vehicles. In addition, DeSoto ISD will provide students, parents and educators access to technology-enabled facilities and classrooms (computers, server, Moodle, video-conferencing, email, Smartboards, etc.).

**Personnel:** DeSoto ISD has strong support for the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program by faculty, educators, administration and staff. DeSoto ISD district and campus personnel (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Student Support, Executive Director of Innovative Programs, Principals, Counselors, etc.) will provide technical support, guidance, and leadership to project staff and educators at no-cost during and after the funded project period (*Appendix O – Letters of Commitment*). This team will also will make certain each program is being implemented as proposed, all students, parents and educators are being treated equal and are not discriminated against (GEPA 427). This support is demonstrated by the level cooperation DeSoto ISD and its programs have committed to the success of the MSAP program. An example of these commitments during and after project period include:

- **Student Recruiter:** Will assist in the coordination of recruitment and referrals of potential students. This includes screening applications, screening participants, coordinating lottery night, assessing for minority group (African-American and Hispanic) isolation, selection of students as part of the selection committee and, administering t student survey information.
- **Marketing & Communications:** Will assist with the development of marketing materials such as brochures, press releases, PSA's, posters and flyers. This includes translating materials in appropriate languages and developing MSAP specific website content.
- **Counseling Services:** Will assist magnet students with their academic, social, and emotional counseling needs, which also includes parent and student consultations. This includes a full-



time licensed mental health counselor and school psychologist accessible to students.

- **After-School Program:** Will offer students enhanced assistance and guidance through self-paced, one-to-one and online tutorials, basic academic and computer skills building and enrichment programs that promote creativity and real-world experiences. Students will also engage in test preparation (STAAR-EOC, TSI, SAT, etc.), non-cognitive skills development, out-of-class assignments, and students will be offered Mentors.

| <b>Table 4. DeSoto ISD's Annual Institutional Commitment</b> |  |                           |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| <b>DeSoto ISD</b>  | <b>Commitment</b>  | <b>Estimated Value \$</b> |
| Facilities and Classrooms                                    | • Administration Office  | • \$105,500               |
|  | • 7 magnet building, maintenance, utilities, service positions, etc. | • \$545,000               |
|  | • Classrooms, computers and science labs                             | • \$425,325               |
|  | • Gym, internet, technology center                                   | • \$85,600                |
| Equipment and Furniture                                      | • Medical equipment and engineering hardware                         | • \$250,500               |
|  | • Desks, chairs, cabinets, book shelves, etc.                        | • \$235,645               |
|  | • Libraries, televisions, software, projectors, etc.                 | • \$125,000               |
| Supplies and Transportation                                  | • Writing pads, stapler, computers, etc.                             | • \$10,500                |
|  | • Calculators, planning calendars, journals, etc.                    | • \$25,000                |
| Institution and Personnel Commitment                         | • Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent                        | • \$54,000                |
|  | • Executive Director and Principals                                  | • \$114,500               |
|  | • Teachers   | • \$115,500               |
|  | • Student Recruiter and Marketing                                    | • \$100,500               |
|  | • Counselors and After-school Program                                | • \$75,500                |
| <b>Total Annual Dollar Value Commitment</b>                  |  | <b>\$2,268,070</b>        |



All these resources will contribute to operating an effective MSAP program aimed to not only address the multiple needs described before and achieve the proposed objectives, but to also assist students to succeed in school, college and move on to a career. The resources that DeSoto ISD has committed above will be expended simultaneously with the MSAP federal funds.

Although the current cash budget represents a five year commitment, DeSoto ISD's Board of Trustees, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Principals have agreed to meet on an annual basis to review and re-evaluate the district and campus budgets to determine if and from where additional resources could be generated to further support the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* initiative.

DeSoto ISD is confident and ensures USDOE that the total budget required (\$5.2 million annually) to fully operate the seven theme-based magnet schools to scale will be absorbed by the district and allocated to its annual district operating budget after federal funds end.

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***DeSoto ISD Multi-Year Financial and Operating Model***

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Projection of revenues and other resources is critical in order to understand the level of funding available for services and capital acquisition. Projections for future budget periods help determine the likelihood that services can be sustained and highlight future financial issues to be addressed. Preparing revenue projections also enhances a school district's understanding of revenue, sensitivity to changes in assumptions and to control factors such as changes to student enrollment, revenue, cost increases, decrease in funding or debt.

For school districts like DeSoto ISD to remain competitive, financial departments are going borderless, presenting a host of new challenges for Board of Trustees, Superintendent and Chief Financial Officers who are already stretched for time, staff, skills, and budget. Cost efficiencies, combined with school enrollment (number one source of income) and strategic insights in support of decision-makers across the institutions, have become key drivers of transformation.



Achieving these goals requires a school district that has been consciously built to address multiple dimensions of fiscal operations. In DeSoto ISD's experience, the optimum fiscal operating model encompasses ten critical levers of effectiveness that span the four broad categories of finance operations: The district's office expectations, planning and managing the institution, operations, and specialty services such as bonds, taxes, grants, reporting, and audits.

**Multi-dimensional approach:** For most educational institutions, it is no longer possible to achieve the desired cost and productivity goals through a single initiative, such as increasing student headcount, grant funds, taxes, partnering with a provider, or investing in new technologies. In fact, successful transformation, maximum productivity, advancing cost efficiencies and effective performance depends on the degree of maturity in ten underlying dimensions to optimizing a districts business (replicating corporate) operating model: 1) Strategic Alignment; 2) Governance Support; 3) Target School Improvement Plan; 4) Target Effective Protocols; 5) Regional Outsourcing Options; 6) Technology Integration; 7) Master Effective Fiscal and Data Standards; 8) Quality Professionals; 9) Fiscal and Administrative Controls and Procedures; and 10) Change Management Protocols.

Thus, based on experience and the past few years, DeSoto ISD finances are projected to continue steady improvement based on strong continued funding levels, budget management, and increased revenue sources, combined with tight fiscal planning and restraint for District spending. Accordingly, the first year of this plan is critical for establishing sustainable fiscal organizational health. A Gap Closing Plan is in development to achieve full and sustainable balance for the fiscal years ahead. Assuming that at least half of the initiatives in the Gap Closing Plan recur, the District has projected to produce an operating surplus in FY2016-17 and in subsequent years to begin rebuilding a positive fund balance reserve. The first step in deficit



elimination is for the District to continue to demonstrate that its own fiscal house is in order.

Along with its recent deficit reduction plan, DeSoto ISD has also implemented a series of creative management and productivity measures in recent years – ranging from contracting out sourcing programs and eliminating duplicate administrative support and facility service positions. Building on these and other measures, this plan addresses five key areas important to DeSoto ISD’s ongoing financial responsibility and sustainability:

- Management and Productivity initiatives – cost savings in eliminating duplication costs, field audits of providers to the thoughtful evaluation of building merger opportunities.
- Workforce cost containment through wage moderation, health benefit cost-sharing, plan design, and administrative opportunities such as pooled purchasing.
- Continued school choice and innovation through magnet programs and a strong diverse model, with careful review of performance to improve accountability and affordability.
- Targeting of future borrowing and capital programs to address ongoing infrastructure needs to manage debt service and capital plan to assess cost-effectively.
- Reliable Financial Management to ensure sound planning and budget execution, including a detailed set of fiscal controls and policies – many already underway.

As increased resources for the classroom are generated through such efforts, this plan will afford continuity to invest in the proven academic reform (magnet schools) initiated over the last few years: Magnet iSTEAM3D, Medical, etc. Schools – including the innovative core curriculum and instructional supports, enhanced school choice options, expanded educational programs, and continue offering diverse school models.

As DeSoto ISD regains fiscal stability, it will be in a position to target a significant portion of reserve funds, for multi-year increases to new academic reforms as to the theme-based magnet



school model. State Basic Education funding allocation specifically toward student academic programs totals a projected of \$70 million in FY2016-17, growing to \$75 million in FY2017-18.

Table 5 below depicts the increase in funding over the past five-years.

| <b>Table 5. Total Operating Budget – Past 5 years</b> |                     |                  |                  |                  |                  |                     |
|---|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Funds</b>  | <b>2010-2011</b>    | <b>2011-2012</b> | <b>2012-2013</b> | <b>2013-2014</b> | <b>2014-2015</b> | <b>2015-2016</b>    |
| General   | <b>\$48,418,389</b> | \$62,234,379     | \$63,424,620     | \$64,520,862     | \$60,226,353     | <b>\$65,656,078</b> |
| \$-Student  | \$5,806             | \$7,973          | \$8,152          | \$8,199          | \$7,812          | <b>\$7,922</b>      |

**Source: Texas Education Agency – Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) 2015-16**

As evident in the table above, DeSoto ISD has witnessed a steady increase in funding over the past five years which is due to both student enrollment increases and the implementation of the Gap Closing Plan. Furthermore, it should be noted that in the 2016-2017 school year, DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees, Superintendent and Cabinet projected a total operating budget of approximately \$70 million for the (2016-2017) school year. However, this amount was exceeded by over \$8 million as illustrated in the table noted below.

This increase is not only due to the student enrollment influx which DeSoto ISD sees very favorably in gaining community interest and support. In fact, much of the credit should be directed to DeSoto ISD’s Board of Trustees, Superintendent, Chief Financial Officer Finance Assistant Superintendent and Cabinet for thinking outside of the educational institutional box and looking into corporate America fiscal abilities and ventures.

As aforementioned, DeSoto ISD’s Finance Team after reviewing several successful corporate revenue models choose to emulate and incorporate – The Ten Keys to Optimizing a Finance Operating Model philosophy. As a result, the district has witnessed and continues to project a steady flow of increase in revenue and thus, generating a substantial fund balance reserve for the upcoming years. The table below projects DeSoto ISD revenue for the next five years.



| <b>Table 6. Total Projected Operating Budget – For the Next 5 years</b> |                     |                  |                  |                  |                  |                     |
|---|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Funds</b>  | <b>2016-2017</b>    | <b>2017-2018</b> | <b>2018-2019</b> | <b>2019-2020</b> | <b>2020-2021</b> | <b>2021-2022</b>    |
| General   | <b>\$78,543,354</b> | \$79,542,987     | \$85,695,123     | \$87,452,697     | \$90,432,351     | <b>\$99,498,213</b> |
| \$-Student  | \$8,355             | \$8,285          | \$8,656          | \$8,833          | \$9,044          | <b>\$9,949</b>      |

**Source: Texas Education Agency – TAPR 2015-16 and DeSoto ISD Finance Dept. 2016**

DeSoto ISD is confident that it will not only secure funds needed to operate the seven theme-based magnet schools to scale but that in the next few years, half, if not more of the district-wide schools will be transformed to Whole School Magnet Programs creating a greater opportunity for ALL students to have school choice. An example, further detailing demonstrated support from partners and stakeholders for DeSoto ISD’s Magnet Initiative can be found in *Appendix Q*.

***(3) Training/professional development is of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration ...***

The driving focus of professional development at all magnet schools will be on instructional improvement and increasing relevancy and rigor so that academic outcomes and performance of students is maximized. Increased collaboration and collegiality among teachers is one of the most frequently noted characteristics of effective professional development in the literature.<sup>75</sup> Beginning in Year One and continuing thereafter, professional development sessions (**60 hours annually**) will be implemented through face-to-face workshops, online, video-conferencing, and distance education. Through these sessions, teachers and administrators will be involved in pedagogical presentations and discussions, immerse themselves in rich content (aligned to STAAR-EOC standards), model teaching practices, and learn how to use the resources and assessments within their magnet schools. Driven by the Logic Model (*Appendix S*), ongoing professional development will not only help educators improve instructional practices,<sup>76</sup> but also help in supporting students’ knowledge and skills development.<sup>77</sup>

Professional development for teachers will be focused on the relevant magnet school themes



for all students including culturally sensitive best practices that address the needs of EL and Hispanic students as well as foster interaction among students of social, economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds in all classroom/magnet school actives. Ongoing dialogue and reflections around the pedagogical methods of active and engaged learning will be fostered through online teacher and staff forums enhanced by videoconferencing capabilities of DeSoto ISD. Varied critical success factors and topics for professional development have already been identified during the planning phase, and are noted in later sections that will drive overarching professional development and training across all seven *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* magnet programs. Key examples are included in *Appendix R – Professional Development list*. Additional topics will be added yearly for continuous improvement of the teaching and learning processes at the magnet schools.

**Job-Embedded Professional Growth:** Training activities on various pedagogical and theme-based modalities of learning will be provided to support teachers overall professional repertoire of instructional delivery and growth. Furthermore, teachers will be trained on analyzing data and deciding on an instructional path, making decisions as a collaborative team, and reviewing data to analyze whether instructional delivery with embedded interventions was effective, and how to gauge next steps if alternative methods of delivery are necessary. Teachers will be trained on: 1) how to accelerate student achievement using systematic and explicit instruction; 2) use assessment data to drive instruction; 3) lesson progressions to implement PBL activities in classrooms and in outdoor settings; and 4) questioning and discussion strategies that engage students in inquiry and learning. Follow-up sessions will assist teachers to focus on theme-based and grade-level solutions to differentiate instruction to incorporate strategies that help students who are falling behind, and tactics to decrease the number of students who are referred to special education. The Response to Intervention (RtI) framework is one example of



numerous professional development methods/ frameworks that will translate across all seven *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* magnet programs. RtI is crucial in helping educators and administrators adapt instruction and create timely interventions to support struggling and high-need students.

As noted above, in order to cause a significant change and build a teacher's instructional practices: (1) leveraging collaboration and collegiality among teachers is crucial. Additionally impactful upon teachers implementing what is learned through professional development, is giving due diligence to, (2) all training efforts being directly applicable to a theme-based classroom learning environments. Lastly, (3) providing teachers with the necessary technology and tools to create challenging learning opportunities for students allows for teachers to turn around and implement the learned strategies in their classroom. Coaches and collegial conversations in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (described in detail later) will serve to help teachers translate and embed information presented at on-site workshops into classroom practices through side-by-side co-teaching, observation, and feedback. Emphasis will also be given to assisting teachers and administrators to pursue a master's degree and develop leadership skills needed to effectively implement magnet schools.<sup>78</sup>

Master teachers and key project personnel will observe select teachers on a quarterly basis and provide strength-based non-judgmental feedback on a semi-annual basis using reflective questioning techniques<sup>79</sup> to guide teachers in areas such as: engagement, theme- and standards-based instruction, data-driven instruction, Response to Intervention techniques, formative assessment, and differentiating instruction. Feedback will be driven by the students' learning strengths and challenges in relation to teachers' instruction. If, for example, a teacher identifies a challenge in his or her classroom that revolves around how students learn and share evidence from a text, the teacher may receive feedback on pedagogical instructional strategies and



classroom resources to support learning of students. Teachers will also be allowed to observe master teachers' classes at their campuses. This purposeful interaction among teachers is critical to improving instruction and student achievement. At the root of this feedback loop is the intent to build teachers' capacity based on the underlying belief that teachers can grow in their practice through structured feedback. Creating the environment for these kinds of professional supports is a powerful way to leverage teacher learning and student growth within a school.

Through collegial conversations and in PLCs, coaches, principals and administrators will also work with teachers to build a community of learners, perfect the art and science of teaching in a thematic environment and build overall capacity of excellent educators. This will include but not limited to: 1) identifying components of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* and alignment of magnet school activities with STAAR-EOC; 2) reviewing data points and patterns to identify and assist students who are performing below grade-level at each magnet school; 3) implementing data-driven progress monitoring and evaluation methods to assess students' achievement levels at each magnet school; and 4) identifying appropriate research-based interventions and assessment tools to accomplish the objectives of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*. As part of the effort to build educator and leadership capacity across all magnets, teachers will also be involved in the creation of an annual comprehensive plan for each magnet school. Their input will be vital in assuring that the activities are relevant to their needs, colleague's needs and the needs of students. Teachers and administrators will work individually and collectively as well as in PLC's, to develop a deep understanding of the skills and strategies to ensure students learn the effective use of problem-solving skills, PBL, thinking tools, and meta-cognitive processes for life-long learning. Further capacity building opportunities in the area of technology is also noted in a later section.

**Professional learning communities (PLC):** PLCs will be the platform and vehicle of which



the aforementioned strategies, interventions and approaches will be further delved into in a climate of collaboration. DeSoto ISD will establish a professional learning community of educators, where teachers (through common planning time 90 minutes weekly) can decide what is really important for students to learn, and apply new ideas and information to better meet the student needs.<sup>80</sup> Through ongoing consultation, teachers will compile and share a portfolio of lesson plans, reading lists, assessment tools, observations, reflective notes, challenges, and lessons learned through *Educator Share*. DeSoto ISD established this Web tool to collect and provide high quality professional development resources in an interactive learning environment for teachers to collaborate. Teachers and administrators will also be involved in designing learning experiences by evaluating curricula, print/non-print learning resources, digital devices, and assessment tools to bring about the best knowledge outcomes for students.<sup>81</sup>

**Empowerment:** Principals at each magnet school will be empowered to implement *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* activities. Empowerment will open the door to local management of resources based on best practices and collaboration among the teachers, administrators, and stakeholders of the magnet school. This designation and authorization will allow each school that has demonstrated performance proficiency at specified levels to manage the operation of the school in leading academic effectiveness. For example, principals will be given latitude to: a) build and manage all budgets that impact their school activities; b) select, hire, and retain educators; and c) identify and select appropriate student activities and opportunities based on stakeholder input, high expectations, student interest, and opportunities to build capacity for the future.

**Technology capacity building:** To help teachers perform better in their jobs and be prepared to adapt and possess the core competencies that will position them for success in a learning environment: **planning, classroom management, data usage, content expertise,**



**collaboration and risk taking**, teachers will receive professional development opportunities to develop and/or enhance their skills on current learning practices, interpretation of student assessment data, use of technology, and instructional and classroom management strategies, including effective implementation of cooperative small groups in the classroom. A coach will assist teachers to plan and test new technology-integrated instructional practices and carefully assess their efficacy, while making thoughtful adjustments along the way. In addition, teachers will have an opportunity to observe other magnet school programs.

Professional development of teachers, staff, and administrators on different modalities of blended learning models will be provided monthly by the University of North Texas. Ongoing, job-embedded professional development and follow-up coaching will be provided on processes of the proposed blended learning models and its implications for curriculum, instruction, classroom management and assessment practices and tools, use of technology, and mentoring of students. Teachers and the coach will also learn how to combine face-to-face learning opportunities with technology-integrated, and online instruction to engage students using: PBL, collaboration opportunities, discussion groups, and enrichment activities. In addition to on-going professional development, teachers will hold monthly common planning to discuss instructional, classroom management, and assessment strategies that could be replicated by other teachers and expanded to additional DeSoto ISD campuses.

**Thematic areas:** In addition to the professional development strategies mentioned above, customized strategies (**30 hours**) will be developed for each thematic area by DeSoto ISD:

**For example,** iSTEAM3D teachers will participate in 30 hours of professional development annually in the following topics but not limited to: differentiated instruction, high yield strategies, PBL, culturally relevant and responsive education, support for English Learners,



assessment, TEKS, STAAR, standards, and data driven decision-making – provided by PLTW, Agile Mind, University of North Texas, Vernier, and the College Board. Additionally, training will focus on research-based strategies to effectively meet the needs of diverse learners (English Learners, at-risk, special needs, etc.). Professional development and ongoing technical assistance will be provided to teachers and educators in analyzing, reflecting upon, and improving their teaching practice both independently and collaboratively through professional learning communities and common planning time. Training for administrators will include but not be limited to: 1) use of data as an effective framework for designing and implementing iSTEAM3D; and 2) engagement of students and their parents through institutional supports and resources designed to personalize education to improve achievement of students in STEM. STEM and Arts Master coaches will play pivotal roles in assisting teachers on a variety of pedagogical practices based on inquiry teaching and learning: group investigation, Socratic seminar, inquiry training, and Project/Problem Based Learning (PBL).

**All other thematic-based schools**, teachers, educators and administrators will follow and shadow these same practices to ensure customized and individualized professional development training at each magnet school is not only culturally relevant to each theme but that it is also applicable to each grade level, core content and student learning needs based on authentic data.

**(4) *The extent to which the proposed project is supported by strong theory...***

*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* is based on the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). Known as the father of ELT, American educational theorist David A. Kolb's groundbreaking work *Experiential Learning: Experience as The Source of Learning and Development* moved educational research and practice into a new direction, focusing on the role that experience plays in learning. His work emphasizes the importance of learning from concrete real-world experiences through PBL and integration of arts with core content to foster creativity and innovation. <sup>82</sup>



**Theory of Action:** Driven by ELT, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* has developed the following:

**Learning is best conceived as a process.** Although punctuated by knowledge milestones, learning does not end at an outcome, nor is it always evidenced in performance. Rather, learning occurs through the course of connected experiences in which knowledge is re-formed.<sup>83</sup>

**Learning is an integrated and a holistic approach.** Learning is best facilitated by a process that draws out the learners' beliefs and ideas about a topic so that they can be examined, tested and integrated with new, more refined concepts and ideas. Learning is not just the result of cognition but involves the integrated functioning of the total person—thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving. It encompasses models of adaptation from the scientific method to problems solving, decision making and creativity. In Piaget's terms, learning occurs through equilibration of the dialectic processes of assimilating new experiences into existing concepts and accommodating existing concepts to new experience. Following Lewin's famous formula that behavior is a function of the person and the environment, ELT holds that learning is influenced by characteristics of the learner and the learning space.<sup>84</sup>

**Learning is interest-driven.** *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* is also based on the theory that all students, no matter where they live or who they are, are endowed with unique interests, talents, and abilities. These interests and abilities are especially cultivated in a learning community that nurtures and develops them over time. Students, teachers, coaches, and staff, who often share interests in the same themes of magnet schools, are able to create a community of learners and engage with others they may not otherwise engage and learn alongside, because they attend a school where others have also been drawn to by the magnet focus.

The theory above is significant given the current crisis in education has led to an excessive emphasis on performance and learning outcomes often resulting in rote memorization and



“teaching to the test” while ignoring the integration of broader developmental activities related with the study of art, the climate we live in, and so on. In contrast, the experiential learning theory emphasizes that learning should focus on how students arrive at answers by focusing on vital concepts, and engaging in the process of inquiry, critical thinking, and problem solving.<sup>85</sup>

Additionally, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* uses a constructivist view of knowledge and learning that emphasizes the importance of organizing educational and instructional processes around the experience of learners.<sup>86</sup> In fact, ‘learning to learn’ interventions have led to increased classroom motivation and reversed a decline in grades, as well as significant improvements in adolescents’ achievement test scores and higher grades among students.<sup>87</sup> Curricula at each magnet school will emphasize active involvement of students, teachers, and parents, employ a variety of learning activities (PBL, direct instruction, differentiated instruction, arts-integrated curricula, cooperative learning, and blended learning, and so on) and inculcate an element of choice at each Academy which will enhance motivation and personal investment of students in learning. This way, every program, course, or class session at each magnet school will have opportunities to engage and connect with learners with diverse interests and learning styles.<sup>88</sup>

A comprehensive rigorous evaluation described later, will assess implementation and outcomes and identify best practices. The evaluation methodologies will assist in understanding the effectiveness and context of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* services in accomplishing the anticipated impacts, as listed in the Logic Model (*Appendix S*). For example, to what extent does creation of each unique magnet schools impact the engagement and academic achievement levels, graduation rates, and college enrollment rates? Also, to what extent are certain “thresholds, dosages, combinations, and components” of services (Theme-based integrated curriculum, PBL, etc.) associated with the impact of each magnet on the academic development of students?



Findings such as these will be **evidence of promise** for evaluators and educators for developing early intervention and support systems that better assist students academic preparedness.

### (c) Quality of Management Plan

#### (1) Adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives on time and within budget...

The above activities will be implemented effectively by executing a management plan that utilizes established organizational and operational structures. This will ensure objectives are met.

The Board of Trustees has authorized DeSoto ISD's central office to serve as the lead and fiscal agent for the overall implementation of the proposed *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* (*Appendix O – Board President Letter of Commitment*). DeSoto ISD, with decades of educational experience, supports schools through high-quality professional development, pedagogical enhancement, curriculum development and alignment, instructional improvement, efficient organizational practices and leadership training. DeSoto ISD has extensive experience in implementing and managing numerous USDOE and other federal/state funded programs (GEAR UP, i3, etc.) all of which have achieved the goals, objectives and outcomes on-time and within budget. These programs adhere to EDGAR, GPRA, OMB Circulars, and other related federal and state regulations and have all met performance standards and financial accountability requirements.

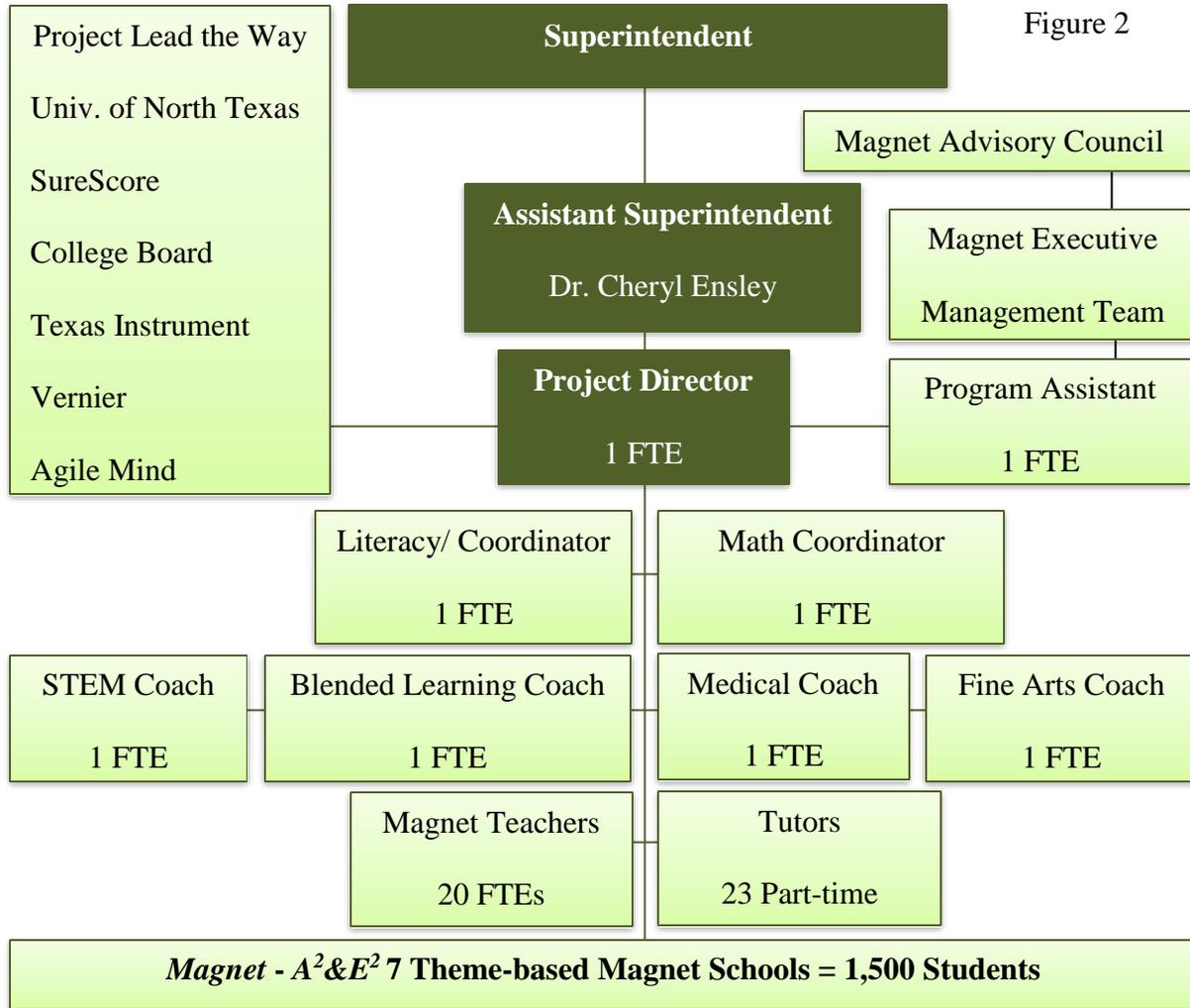
Overall, DeSoto ISD has proven and demonstrated experience in implementing, managing, sustaining, scaling and replicating numerous school-based student and educator programs successfully. DeSoto ISD will use its experience, resources and knowledge in the management of this program which is designed to integrate the following essential elements for a quality program: Hiring qualified staff that is sensitive and knowledgeable of target students' educational needs; Provisions for ongoing staff training and technical assistance; Abiding by the random lottery selection procedures to recruit students for each magnet; and Coordination with other (local, State, Federal) programs to maximize student services.



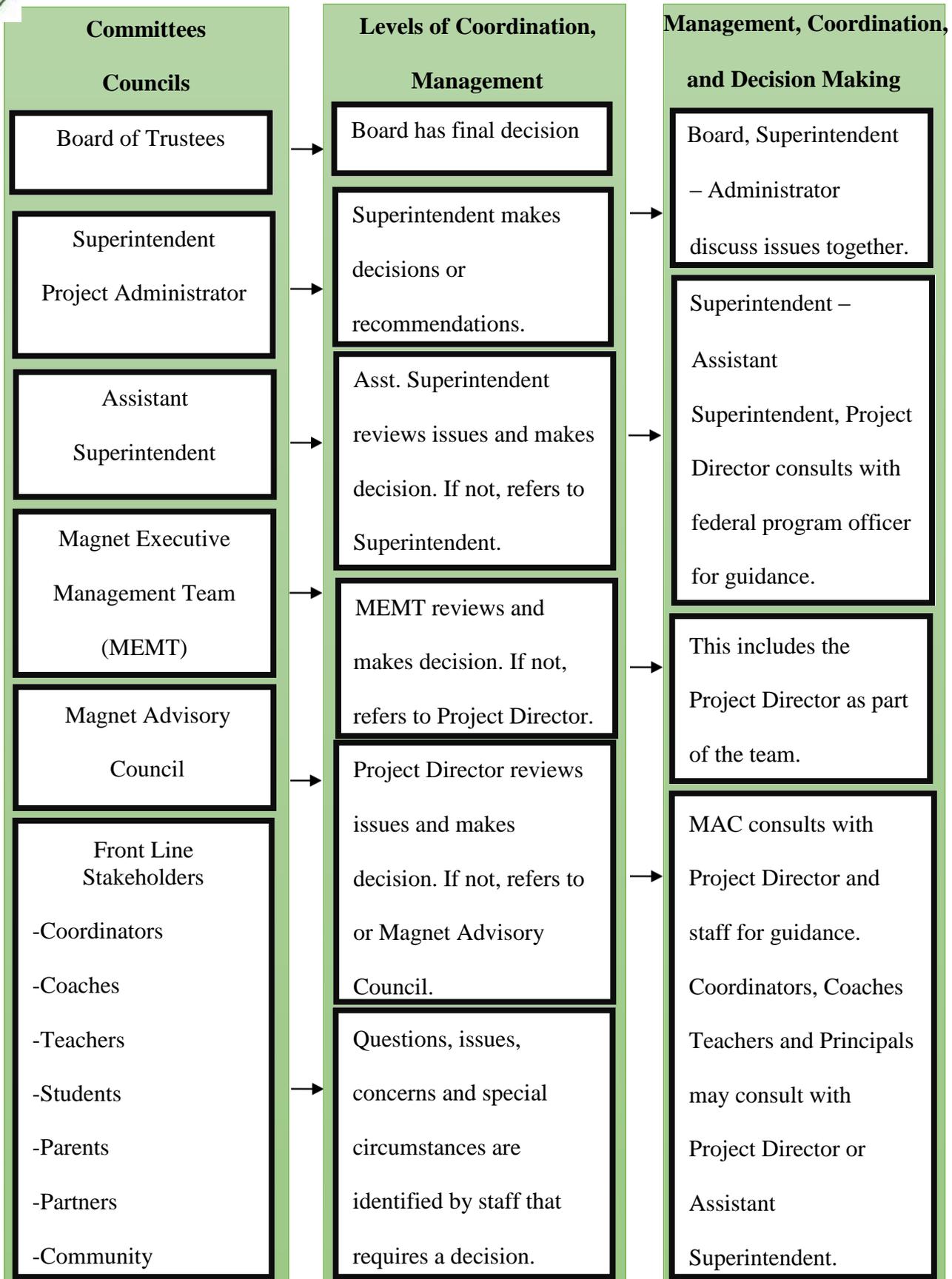
**Management Setup:** The *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program will be housed in The Division of Curriculum and Instruction. This division oversees: Curriculum Scope and Sequence; Math, Science and Reading Initiatives; USDOE GEAR UP and i3 Development grants, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers; Staff Development; Principal and Teacher Academies; Gifted and Talented Programs; Year-Round and Summer Extended Instructional Support; Blended Learning, Project-based Learning (PBL) College and Career Academies, etc. As part of the planning process *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* has been informed by lessons learned through its existing magnet schools. Through visits, observations, and discussions with the principals, administrators, and teachers of its existing magnet programs, DeSoto ISD is able to apply “lessons learned” to guide and formulate the proposed project design, services, and evaluation.

As aforementioned, to provide expertise and oversight in implementing this goal, a **Magnet Advisory Council (MAC)** was formed. A representative from each partner, project director, magnet principals, teachers, evaluators, parents, and community representatives have and will serve on the **Magnet Advisory Council**. The **MAC** will meet monthly the first six months and quarterly thereafter and play a critical role in the oversight, planning, implementation, management, guidance, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation for ongoing continuous improvement. This will assure implementation of a sound, sustainable, and scalable magnet initiative that is inclusive of both federal and non-federal resources including the experience and expertise of all stakeholders. The proposed partners were strategically selected for their knowledge, experience, capability, resources, commitment and availability to serve the magnet students, parents and educators to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to participate and succeed in college (*Appendix T – Letters of Support*).

See Figure 2: **Organizational Structure**



DeSoto ISD will also include a **Magnet Executive Management Team (MEMT)** composed of the Cabinet with authority to make decisions. This **MEMT** will include the Superintendent, Board Member, Assistant Superintendent, Project Director, Executive Director of Innovative Programs, Principals, Parent and Evaluators. The **MEMT** will meet every two months during the first year and quarterly thereafter. The **MEMT** will be the governance, policy and decision-makers for the program regarding administrative functions, budgets, contracts, program design changes, review of program status and evaluation results and other related policy matters. The Project Director will coordinate and facilitate the **MEMT** meetings. **Management Structure:** The chart below depicts the overall management structure.





Dr. Cheryl Ensley will be the Project Administrator and will provide the overall leadership, guidance and supervise the Project Director. Dr. Ensley is an experienced leader, with over 31 years of experience, with 21 of those years as educator and administrator managing federal/state programs which in school programs and leading district- and campus-wide desegregation efforts. Dr. Ensley holds a Doctorate in Educational Administration, and has earned numerous certifications (e.g. Superintendent, Mid Management, etc.). She will devote 20% of her time at **no-cost**. To maintain accountability and ensure high-quality products and services are delivered (on-time and within budget), Dr. Ensley will ensure the Project Director utilizes the Logic Model (*Appendix S*) as a guide and works closely with the Literacy and Math Coordinators and Theme-based Coaches, educators, partners and the evaluator to ensure full implementation and oversight of program activities. Dr. Ensley and the Project Director will ensure program effectiveness by maintaining a high-level of open communication among staff, educators, community and vendors. The *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* team will meet regularly to review program progress, student development, educator progress, cost efficiencies and areas needing improvement (explained further below in the Service Structure).

**Management Plan:** DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees will be the authorized governing board of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* initiative which will be located within the Division of Curriculum and Instruction. Through this division, DeSoto ISD pledges its commitment, personnel, resources, facilities, and active participation to ensure *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* is an integral part of daily operations and administrative functions. As a recipient of numerous federal, state and private grants, DeSoto ISD has administrative, programmatic, fiscal, management and evaluation control systems in place that meet the highest standards of accountability. The administrative systems use the latest organizational managing software (e. g. GrantsMaximizer), communication



systems, cost efficiency, effective staffing plans, customer feedback mechanisms for organizational control and continuous improvement. Program support utilizes state-of-the-art technology for participant tracking, monitoring progress, assessing accountability, fiscal control, management of information, evaluation, reporting and oversight for continuous improvement mechanisms. DeSoto ISD will use its knowledge in the management of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program to ensure the delivery of effective, timely, accessible, and culturally relevant services. These functions will ensure delivery of accessible, quality, coordinated, age appropriate, instructionally accurate and culturally relevant services to target participants.

The management plan is designed to achieve the goals and objectives of the program on time and within budget. The Project Director will work with DeSoto ISD's finance department to track and oversee project expenditures. This will include monthly meetings with the finance department and quarterly with **MAC** members to review actual costs against proposed budget expenditures and program objectives, milestones, and to implement program revisions when appropriate to maximize resources. Budget revisions will be conducted according to federal regulations and approved by DeSoto ISD Superintendent and Board of Trustees.

**Coordinating & Communication:** Successful management of any program requires a clear and efficient planning, coordination, and communication structure for all involved, including participants. Thus, procedures for making decisions, initiating training, addressing services, and monitoring have been established. The school level Content Coordinators and Magnet Theme Coaches will assist in coordinating the day to day aspects of the program at the magnet campus level and will maintain close communication with the Magnet Project Director.

**Timeline:** The timeline below will be used as a management tool for the **Magnet Team** to assess the progress and fidelity of program services being implemented to meet the objectives and



outcomes delineated in pages 117-120. The projected project start date will be **10/01/2017**.

**Magnet Staff: Assistant Superintendent – AS; Project Director – PD; Literacy Coordinator – LC; Math Coordinator – MC; Theme Coach – TC; Teachers – TE; Tutors – TU**

| Process Measure  | Person    | Timeline | Outcome Measure  | Obj. |
|--|-----------|----------|--|------|
| <b>PRIOR TO GRANT AWARD</b>  |           |          |  |      |
| Met with all educators, parent, community and stakeholders                         | AS        | 2-2017   | Magnet schools and themes developed                            | 1    |
| Create the Magnet Advisory Council (MAC)   | AS        | 2-2017   | MAC created and charged with MSAP                              | 1– 6 |
| MSAP solicitation planning and coordination of partners                            | AS        | 3-5/2017 | MAC charged with creating grant application                    | 1– 6 |
| Coordinate a MSAP - School Choice Night  | AS, Staff | 3-2017   | Parents and Students attend MSAP Orientation                   | 1, 5 |
| Student Magnet application distributed (print and online)                          | AS, Staff | 4-5/2017 | Magnet Application disseminated and received                   | 1, 5 |
| Students selected by examination and lottery                                       | AS, Staff | 6-8/2017 | Applications on file and students selected                     | 1, 5 |
| Review target population per each magnet school, if target not met revise strategy | AS, Staff | 7-8/2017 | Magnet and students confirmed and students and parent notified | 1, 6 |
| <b>AFTER GRANT AWARD IS ANNOUNCED</b>  |           |          |  |      |
| MSAP grantees announced  | AS        | 9-2017   | Awards Offered   | 1– 6 |



| Process Measure   | Person            | Timeline                 | Outcome Measure  | Obj.       |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------|--|------------|
| Select and develop specialized curriculum for magnet schools                      | AS                | 9-2017                   | Curriculum developed and/or selected, piloted and ready to implement | 1, 2, 3, 5 |
| Convene meeting with both MEMT & MAC  | AS, PD            | 10-12<br>2017<br>Ongoing | Master Calendar Developed  | 1 – 6      |
| Recruit, identify, interview and hire Literacy and Math Coordinators              | AS, PD            | 10-12<br>2017            | Staff hired and application on file                                  | 1 – 6      |
| Recruit, identify, interview and hire Theme-based Coaches                         | AS, PD,<br>LC, MC | 10-12<br>2017            | Staff hired and application on file                                  |            |
| Professional development training coordinated                                     | PD, LC,<br>MC     | 10-2017<br>Ongoing       | Educators participate high-quality training                          | 1, 2       |
| Start strategically planning for sustainability                                   | AS, PD            | 10-2017<br>Ongoing       | Sustainability foundation and draft plan developed                   | 1– 6       |
| Year 1 for magnet students in theme-based schools begins                          | AS, PD            | 10-2017                  | Students enrolled and attending magnet school                        | 1 – 6      |
| Outreach and recruitment plan created, reviewed and updated                       | AS, PD,<br>LC     | 10-12<br>2017            | Outreach developed, finalized and executed                           | 1, 4, 6    |
| Design bilingual brochures, flyers, newsletters and disseminate (radio, TV, etc.) | PD, LC,           | 11/2017-<br>1/2018       | Products finalized, developed and disseminated                       | 1, 4, 6    |



| Process Measure  | Person            | Timeline           | Outcome Measure   | Obj.             |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|---|------------------|
| Engage external evaluators to develop evaluation plan                          | PD, EV            | 10-2017<br>ongoing | Evaluation plan and instruments developed and baseline data collected | 1 – 6            |
| Engage all partners to provide services  | PD, LC,<br>MC     | 11-2017            | Partners providing services at each magnet                            | 1, 2,<br>3, 4, 5 |
| Implement parent component, services and activities                            | PD, TC            | 11-2017            | Parent engaged in magnet school activities                            | 5                |
| Purchase, technology devices, materials, supplies – TI, Vernier, College Board | PD, TC            | 11-2017            | Items purchased and utilized at each magnet                           | 1, 2, 3          |
| Develop a student tracking digital database                                    | PD, EV            | 11-2017<br>Ongoing | Database created and tracking student data                            | 1 – 6            |
| Purchase and set up student tablets and digital devices                        | LC, MC,<br>TC     | 12-2017<br>Ongoing | Digital devices received and student utilizing                        | 1, 2, 3          |
| Implement extended hours tutoring program                                      | TC, TU            | 1-2018<br>Ongoing  | Before, after-school, weekend and summer tutoring program executed    | 1, 2, 3          |
| Coordinate Pre-AP, AP, dual enrollment courses                                 | LC, MC,<br>TC     | 1-2018<br>Ongoing  | Students enrolled in these rigorous courses                           | 2, 3             |
| Review current status of new magnet schools                                    | AS, PD,<br>LC, MC | 1-2018<br>Ongoing  | Magnet schools provided a performance rating based on status          | 1 – 6            |



| Process Measure   | Person            | Timeline            | Outcome Measure  | Obj.          |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|--|---------------|
| Organize TSI, ACT, PSAT, SAT College Exam                         | LC, MC,<br>TC     | 2-2018<br>Ongoing   | Students complete college preparation exams                            | 3             |
| <b>Year Two</b> Magnet application distributed (print and online) | PD, LC,<br>MC     | 3-2018              | Students selected and assigned to magnet school                        | 1 – 6         |
| Coordinate and Compile STAAR and EOC state data                   | LC, MC,<br>TC     | 3-2018              | Student state exams scores collected and reviewed                      | 2, 3          |
| Review, objectives and outcome status                             | PD, EV,<br>LC, MC | 3-2018<br>Ongoing   | Objectives documented as progressing or action plan needed             | 1 – 6         |
| Post assessments disseminated (quantitative/qualitative)          | EV, TC            | 4-2018<br>Ongoing   | Data compiled, cleaned and analyzed                                    | 1 – 6         |
| Coordinate Summer Institutes                                      | PD, TC            | 5-7/2018<br>Ongoing | Summer training executed for teachers and educators                    | 1, 2,<br>3, 5 |
| Year 2 of Magnet School begins                                    | AS, PD            | 8-2018              | Year 2 executed with program changes based on data and recommendations | 1 – 6         |
| Develop and submit the Annual Progress Report                     | PD, EV            | 9-2018<br>Annually  | Data compiled and report developed and submitted                       | 1 – 6         |

Specific performance benchmarks have been developed by the team to monitor progress and achievements of each objective. The timeline and benchmarks will be used as a management tool to assess progress towards objectives, MSAP measures, and annual project outcomes. The timeline, outcomes, evaluation plan and Logic Model (*Appendix S*) will be reviewed monthly



with the **MAC** members. Thus, when services are not being implemented as proposed and benchmarks are not met, an action plan will be developed immediately for continuous improvement measures. Each year in July, the evaluators will assist in developing student and parent service benchmarks for the following year based on students' academic achievement and progress including student and parent knowledge and requests. At this time, the **MAC** and **MEMT** will also convene to review the implementation and operational plans, timelines, benchmarks, budget, assess program progress and accomplishments.

**Service Structure:** DeSoto ISD proposes to hire Literacy and Math Coordinators and Theme-based Coaches to coordinate, implement, and monitor the program at each site. These staff will work with the principals, teachers, educators, partners and parents at each *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* campus to implement and deliver the proposed services and products. To maintain accountability, the Project Director will work closely with all stakeholders to ensure full implementation and oversight of program activities. The Project Director will ensure the program is being effective and efficient by maintaining a high level of open communication among staff, partners, superintendent, assistant superintendents, principals, teachers, educators, students, parents, and community stakeholders. The Project Director, staff and partners will meet weekly to review program progress, accomplishments, challenges, cost efficiencies and areas needing immediate attention for program improvement. The *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* staff will be responsible for providing weekly reports to the Project Director detailing project status, pre or post-results and progress towards meeting program objectives and outcomes. The Project Director will further assess satisfaction through classroom attendance, test results and through formal interviews and surveys (students, parents, educators, etc.) to monitor academic progress of students to assess program, product and service effectiveness and to overall conduct monthly



assessments of objectives. Instructional support will be an essential element to ensure relevant high-quality magnet products and services are being delivered to the target population.

Instructional support, continuous data monitoring and assessment through face-to-face and online digital platforms will be a priority of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*. Specialized theme-based curriculum alignment will be an essential element to ensure students are offered a high-quality education and appropriate learning opportunities, aligned to each magnet campus thematic study. To truly implement effective data driven instructional strategies, DeSoto ISD will collect ongoing qualitative and quantitative data (students, parents, and teachers) and conduct data analyses to determine the growth/decline on each performance indicator depicted below.

### ***Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup> Objectives and Outcomes***

In concert with the competitive and invitational priorities of MSAP, *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* addresses the identified needs of target students, parents, and participating schools. During the planning stages, administrators and **Magnet Advisory Council** met with a third party evaluator to ensure the proposed objectives and outcomes were not only aligned with the required MSAP measures but were also in line with the philosophy of the S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Attainable/Achievable, Relevant, Time bound) Model. DeSoto ISD administrators and **MAC** also reviewed lesson learned from research and evaluation studies, and incorporated proven practices to design the objectives and outcomes that are measurable, quantifiable, ambitious – yet attainable. Section E will provide details on evaluation activities. Aligned to DeSoto ISDs mission and the philosophy of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*, the following goal was established:





**Logic Model:** In concert with proven practices, DeSoto ISD along with an external evaluator developed a **Logic Model** that provides a comprehensive synopsis of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* project, meets the evidence standard of a “strong theory” and will serve as a program guide for staff. This Logic Model includes the Inputs (investments), Outputs (student services), and Outcomes of summarized (results) for the entire project period (*Appendix S*).

Students will be challenged to reach their maximum potential preparing them for personal, academic, social, college, and career success. Students will participate in an active learning environment that involves engagement, complex and higher risk processes, and higher-order thinking including individual and collaborative learning strategies and activities. The integration of the latest technology tools, problem solving methods, in-depth research, presentation and communication will enable each student to become a well-educated and productive adult.

**Objectives:** The DeSoto ISD administrators and External Evaluator have developed specific **ambitious**, yet **attainable** objectives and annual measurable outcomes (that are aligned to the **five MSAP Program** Performance Measures) to address the needs identified. The following specific measurable, and quantifiable objectives and outcome measures will measure the degree of success of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* each year over the five-year period. Baseline data has been collected for a few measures while others will be collected upon award during the first year.

**Objective 1: Reduce, eliminate and prevent minority group isolation at Magnet schools.**

**1a.** Each year, outreach, and recruitment strategies will demonstrate success by satisfying **100%** of available seats in the magnet schools, as measured by data enrollment in Texas Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

**1b.** Each year, **25%** of the student application pool for the magnet school will reflect racial, ethnic, socioeconomic compositions that, in relation to the total enrollment of the schools



eliminate, reduce or prevent minority group isolations, as measured by PEIMS.

**1c.** Each year, the % and # of minority group isolation of African-American and Hispanic students will be reduced at each magnet school from the 2016-2017 baseline by 2% in Year One, by 4% in Year Two and by 6%, thereafter, until all 7 magnets reduce minority group isolation of African-American and Hispanic students, as measured by PEIMS and the external evaluator school/student survey (**Magnet Climate Survey - MCS**). \* Baseline collect upon award (**MSAP Measure**).

**1d.** Each year, DeSoto ISD will demonstrate that each magnet school site and feeder school is increasing the % and # diversity and reducing % and # minority group (African-American and Hispanic) isolation by 3% over baseline and over 55% of district-wide averages, as measured by PEIMS and the MCS assessment. \*Baseline collected upon award (**MSAP Measure**).

**1e.** By the end of Year One, seven new theme-based magnet schools will be established and sustained by the district beyond the five year MSAP funding period, as measured by the district budget allocation, school roster and the MCS assessment. \*Baseline collected upon award.

**1f.** Each year, DeSoto ISD magnet school class (African-American and Hispanic) ratios will not deviate from grade levels by more than 4%, as measured by PEIMS and the MCS assessment.

**1g.** Each year, 80% of students will indicate that magnet school climate has increased their appreciation and understanding of diverse cultures, as measured the MCS assessment data.

**1h.** Each year, 80% of teachers will indicate that they are using effective instructional and communication strategies gained through capacity building activities to encourage equitable interaction with all students (*of social, economic, ethnic and racial background in classroom activities*) including sub-groups (defined below), as measured by the MCS assessment data.

**Objective 2: Increase the academic performance of all magnet school students, particularly**



sub-groups (low-income, African-American, Hispanic, Low-income, English Learners and students with disabilities) **through creating effective high-performing magnet academies.**

**2a.** Each year, % of students (*of social, economic, ethnic and racial background*) including subgroups (low-income, African-American, Hispanic, Low-income, English Learners and students with disabilities) meeting or exceeding state annual assessment (STAAR-EOC) standards in ELA/Reading will increase by **5%**, over baseline, as compared to previous years data as measured by the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR). **(MSAP Measure).**

\*Baseline collected upon award

**2b.** Each year, % of students (*of social, economic, ethnic and racial background*) including from sub-groups, meeting or exceeding state annual assessment (STAAR-EOC) standards in Mathematics will increase by **7%**, over baseline, as compared to previous years data as measured by TAPR. **(MSAP Measure).** \*Baseline collected upon award.

**2c.** Each year, % of students (*of social, economic, ethnic and racial background*), including from sub-groups, meeting or exceeding state annual assessment (STAAR-EOC) standards in all core subjects (reading, mathematics, science and social studies) will increase by **8%**, over baseline, as compared to previous years data as measured by TAPR. \* Baseline collected upon award.

**2d.** Each year, % of students (*of social, economic, ethnic and racial background*), including sub-groups, enrolled in advanced placement (AP/IB, Pre-AP, GT, etc.) ELA, math, science and social studies courses will increase by **8%** over baseline, as measured by course enrollment data PEIMS, College Board and TAPR. \*Baseline collected upon award

**2e.** Each year, **80%** of students will have completed two years of math beyond Algebra I by 12<sup>th</sup> grade, as measured by TAPR and MCS assessment. \*Baseline collected upon award



**2f.** Each year, students who receive a (STEM/Medical/ Performing Arts) career endorsement will increase by **20%**, as measured by certificate/course grades. \*Baseline collected upon award

**2g.** Each year, students' attendance rates enrolled in magnet schools will be maintained at **95% to 100%** from a baseline of **91%**, as measured annually by TAPR and PEIMS data.

**2h.** Each year, **100%** of magnet school teachers at each school will receive approximately 60 hours of capacity building training directly related to the magnet theme, objectives and outcomes, as measured by attendance roster, professional development transcripts and MCS assessment data collected by external evaluator.

**2i.** Each project year, **85%** of participating teachers receiving professional development in ELA, math, science and social studies strategies (pedagogy), will report and demonstrate improvement in teaching, that fosters interaction with all students (*of social, economic, ethnic and racial background in classroom activities*) as measured by the MCS assessment and observation rubric.

**Objective 3: Increase the rate of high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment for all students, particularly sub-groups served in theme-based magnet schools.**

**3a.** Each year, % of high school students graduating on-time, will increase over baseline by **8%**, as defined by the Texas accountability system and reported by TAPR. (baseline is at **75.2%**).

**3b.** Each year, **90%** or more of students will be promoted to the next grade level on time, as measured by state TAPR/PEIMS promotion data and MCS assessment collected by evaluator.

**3c.** Each year, **90%** or more of students will take a state or nationally recognized college entrance placement examination TSI, SAT or ACT, THEA, etc. by their senior year, as measured by college entrance exams and MCS assessment data collected by external evaluator.

**3d.** Each year, % of graduating students enrolling in postsecondary education, will increase by **10%**, over baseline, as measured by postsecondary (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board



– THECB) enrollment data and MCS assessment collected by external evaluator (baseline is at **59.3%**). \*Baseline established at the end of year one.

**3e.** Each year, % of graduating students enrolling in postsecondary education and declaring a magnet theme-based related major (STEM, Medical/Health, Performing Arts/Technology), will increase by **8%**, over baseline, as measured by postsecondary THECB enrollment data and MCS assessment data collected by external evaluator.

**3f.** Each year, **85%** or more of students will have demonstrated and/or acknowledged they have increased academic capacity through the magnet school program, as measured by GPA, grades, TAPR, and MCS assessment data collected by external evaluator.

**3g.** Each year, **80%** or more of students will gain knowledge of postsecondary preparation requirements, options, financing and application processes, as measured by the MCS assessment data collected by external evaluator.

**3h.** Each year, **85%** or more of student's attitudes will be more positive towards school as a result of their participation in the magnet school program, as measured by disciplinary school data and MCS assessment data collected by external evaluator.

**Objective 4: Increase families' authentic engagement in the magnet schools program.**

**4a.** Each year, parents engaged in their child's education will increase by **20%**, as measured by the MCS assessment data collected by evaluator. \*Baseline collected six months after award.

**4b.** Each year, parents engaged in MSAP school activities will increase by **25%**, as measured by the MCS assessment data collected by evaluator. \*Baseline established at the end of year one.

**4c.** Each year, parents who gain knowledge of and support the magnet school program will increase by **50%**, as measured by the MCS assessment data collected by external evaluator.

**4d.** Each year, parents who indicate their child(ren) have increased academic capacity as a result of the magnet school program will increase by **25%**, as measured by GPA, grades, TAPR, and



MCS assessment data collected by external evaluator.

4e. Each year, parents who indicate their child(ren) attitude is more positive towards school due to his/her participation in the magnet school program will increase by **25%**, as measured by the MCS assessment data collected by external evaluator.

4f. Each year, parents who gain knowledge of postsecondary preparation requirements, options, financing and application processes will increase by **30%**, as measured by the MCS assessment

**Objective 5: Increase the quality, capacity, resources, persistence and enhancement of participating magnet schools through systemic reform.**

data collected by external evaluator.

5a. At the end of Year Five of the project period, and three years thereafter, **100%** of the original magnet schools that received MSAP assistance will be in full operation, as measured by state school report card data (**MSAP Measure**).

5b. At the end of Year Five, and three years after, **90%** of the original magnet schools that **received assistance will meet and/or exceed state annual measurable objectives (AMOs) in Reading and Math, and state high school 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> year longitudinal graduation rate targets (87%) – (TEA 2016) standards, as measured by state and federal reporting document data, state and federal system safeguards and state school report card data (MSAP Measure).**

*(2) The applicant will ensure a diversity of perspective are brought to bear in the operation...*

Both the Magnet Executive Management Team and Magnet Advisory Council (which represents district and campus administrators, educators, higher education institution, corporate and community-based executives, project staff, school faculty, partners, parents and community representatives) will meet monthly during the first few months and quarterly, thereafter to review



project progress, accomplishments, challenges, objectives, expenditures, evaluation data, and to



discuss alternative strategies and methods to collaborate with other agencies to improve services. An array of individuals from the district and schools, organizations, partners, businesses, participants, and parents will provide a diversity of perspectives in the decision-making process.

In addition to the magnet team above, DeSoto ISD to ensure a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the daily operations and decision-making processes of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program will incorporate the following effective feedback mechanisms for continuous program improvement. The Director will: **1)** Work and meet with project staff on a daily and weekly basis to monitor progress, review benchmarks toward Magnet project measures, assess progress of Competitive Preference and Invitational Priorities and make improvements, if needed; **2)** Meet with campus teachers, principals and educators monthly to assess program fidelity (magnet theme-based content, technology integration, pedagogical strategies, etc.) to ensure services are effectively being delivered and relevant to participants; **3)** Meet regularly with the External Evaluators quarterly to solicit feedback on project status, operations, and evaluation for program improvement; **4)** Assess program satisfaction levels through interviews/focus groups (bi-annually) and surveys (students, parents, educators, partners, etc.) – (bi-annually) to monitor program performance; **5)** Utilize digital management software daily to track and monitor project status and to assess impact on objectives each month; and **6)** Review quarterly and annual evaluation data, utilize formative (immediate feedback) and summative (overall impact) data, reports and integrate improvements to increase the effectiveness of the program.

The Logic Model (*Appendix S*) will be used as a tool to guide planning, implementation, communication and evaluation to ensure a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operations. This management tool will depict the logical relationship between the resources, activities, outputs and outcomes. It will offer timely and authentic feedback and information to



the project director, staff, educators, evaluator and stakeholders to make informed decisions related to program delivery for continuous improvement. Overall, the logic model will chart actual progress versus target on all annual benchmarks and long-term outcomes to ensure timely authentic program decisions are incorporated in effective and efficient manner.

**(d) Quality of Personnel**

***(1) The project director is qualified to manage the project...***

Guided by its non-discrimination policy, DeSoto ISD will ensure all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability have equal access to all employment and program opportunities. DeSoto ISD will hire individuals from the target population who have personal experiences in overcoming barriers similar to the target students and who are highly qualified. DeSoto ISD Superintendent and several School Board members are fully committed to desegregation efforts to achieve equity and increase parent choice and voice. The Assistant Superintendent (Dr. Ensley) and staff in the Division of Curriculum and Instruction possess training and expertise in curriculum development, desegregation efforts, and implementation of evidence-based programs with diverse student populations including ELLs and disadvantaged students. Several teachers and administrators of DeSoto ISD are bilingual.

DeSoto ISD recognizes that effective management of the MSAP program requires strong leadership skills, management experience, academic training, and an understanding of local communities. Given these essential characteristics and aptitudes, the MSAP leadership will be provided by Dr. Cheryl Ensley, a highly educated and qualified leader.

Dr. Ensley, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction with over 31 years of successful experience of educational and magnet school initiatives, will oversee the program and supervise the Project Director. Dr. Ensley, with a Doctorate in Educational Administration, will dedicate 20% of her time at no-cost. Dr. Ensley and the Project Director with the magnet



implementation at **no-cost** to the project (*Appendix U – Resumes*).

DeSoto ISD has developed the following requirements for each position. Also, given the magnitude of the proposed **Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>** Ms. Debbye Garner, Magnet and Innovative Programs/ Grant Development will serve as **Project Director (1 FTE) – Qualifications** of the Project Director are list below: with a Masters of Education and Superintendent and Principal Certifications (preferred) along with extensive (10 years) experience in managing the desegregation efforts of DeSoto ISD’s existing magnet school initiatives. Ms. Garner is the best qualified Project Director with proven knowledge and expertise in overall implementation of proposed program, including closely overseeing desegregation efforts. The Project Director will report directly to Dr. Ensley, Assistant Superintendent. The Project Director will be responsible for the overall management of the magnet program, including but not be limited to: desegregation efforts, human resources activities, progress monitoring of program objectives, budgeting, collaboration with magnet school staff, working with the external evaluator and partners and acting as the liaison to the USDOE – MSAP Office and ensure all reports are submitted in a timely manner. The Project Director will stay abreast of all current federal and state legislative magnet mandates and regulations. The job qualifications of the Project Director including relevant training and experience are: ■ Masters in Education or related field required ■ Texas Principal certification required ■ Seven plus years of experience in successfully administering and managing desegregation programs in magnet schools ■ Ability to work collaboratively with diverse project partners required ■ Supervisory experience with large federal grants required ■ Experience working with and understanding the needs of the target population required ■ Experience with college development programs for youth required ■ A proven track record of engaging in ongoing professional development required



***Other key personnel are qualified to manage the project...***

Desoto ISD when **hiring or reassigning** current Magnet staff to assist with implementation including guidance, mentoring, coaching and training of NEW staff, will seek professionals who are highly educated, best qualified, committed and affiliated with the targeted population. The following personnel will consist of new hires and/or reassigning highly experience Magnet staff. Job descriptions illustrating required qualifications and responsibilities are listed in *Appendix U*.

**Literacy/Reading Coordinator (1 FTE):** The Literacy/Reading Coordinator (**L/R**) will lead and/or assist in coordinating activities for students, educators and parents in the theme-based magnet schools. The L/R Coordinator will have a pivotal role in the reading and literacy processes – taking responsibility for ensuring that pedagogical instructional aspects are discussed and implemented effectively, instructional strategies are disseminated appropriately and timely to educators and students. Additionally, the L/R Coordinator will ensure magnet literacy programs are appropriately planned, implemented, and assessed collaboratively with school principals and the evaluator to ensure elimination, reduction, and prevention of isolation among minority students. The L/R Coordinator will lead each magnet school's process of developing and reviewing curriculum scope and sequence, alignment with national and state standards, ensure common planning time (CPT) is conducted regularly and successfully and technology integration (core content areas) and digital devices are utilized effectively by teachers and students. The job qualifications of the L/R Coordinator including relevant training and experience are: ■ Masters in Education (Literacy) or related field required ■ Texas Teaching Certificate required ■ Three plus years of experience teaching in a school setting in content area required ■ Skilled in instructional planning, consultation, and implementation of professional development courses required ■ Knowledge of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS),



and experience in providing on-site campus assistance to content teachers required.

**Math Coordinator (1 FTE):** The Math Coordinator will lead and/or assist in coordinating activities for students, educators and parents in the theme-based magnet schools. The Math Coordinator will play a critical role in the mathematic processes to ensure all curriculum is relevant and grade level appropriate, pedagogical instructional strategies are discussed and implemented effectively and instructional information is disseminated appropriately and timely to educators and students to ensure elimination, reduction, and prevention of isolation among minority students. The Math Coordinator will ensure the magnet mathematics programs are planned, implemented, and assessed collaboratively with school principals and the evaluator. Additionally, the Math Coordinator will lead each magnet school's process of developing and reviewing curriculum scope and sequence, alignment with national and state standards, ensure common planning time (CPT) is conducted regularly and technology integration (core content areas) and digital devices are utilized effectively by teachers and students. The job qualifications of the Math Coordinator including relevant training and experience are: ■ Masters in Education (Mathematics) or related field required ■ Texas Teaching Certificate required ■ Three plus years of experience teaching in a school setting in math content area required ■ Skilled in instructional planning and implementation of professional development courses required ■ Knowledge of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and experience in providing on-site campus assistance to content teachers required.

**Theme-Based Coaches: STEM, Blended Learning, Medical and Fine Arts (4 FTEs):**

The Theme-based Coaches will assist the Project Director and Coordinators with the implementation of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* programs. The Coaches will work with the partners (Project Lead the Way, College Board, Texas Instrument, Vernier, University of North Texas,



SureScore, etc.) to ensure services and products are utilized and integrated with the PBL lessons. The Coaches will be an integral part of the theme-based magnet school and provide teachers pedagogical support, job-embedded professional development, instructional delivery guidance, model and monitor effective instruction delivery and offer feedback and support. Coaches will support the classroom teachers with the following but not limited to: Project-based learning (PBL) strategies, differentiation instruction, curriculum scope and sequence and technology integration to reinforce what is taught in the classroom. The Coaches will also assist with the development of enriched learning activities such as internships. (*Appendix U – Job Descriptions*)

Additionally, the Theme-based Coaches will mentor and coach participating teachers on how to provide rigorous and dynamic standards-based learning experiences for students, and how to develop conceptual knowledge, inquiry, and innovative thinking skills and problem solving among students through utilization of technology and student devices. Theme-based Coaches will work with staff, partners, and educators to ensure culturally relevant student services, and college/career readiness programs, and activities are implemented as proposed. The Coaches will also join forces with the magnet teachers to engage students in AP, dual enrollment, and college credit courses, as well as assist in coordinating TSI, PSAT, SAT, and SCT college preparation examinations. The Coaches will also provide leadership and in-service training to teachers for the development and implementation of an enriched curriculum for all magnet students. Theme-based Coaches will serve as a resource for teachers – providing materials, methods, and ideas to ensure appropriate educational experiences for students. The job qualifications of the Theme-based Coaches (STEM, Blended Learning, Medical and Fine Arts) including relevant training and experience are: ■ Masters in Education in related content area or related field required ■ Texas Teaching Certificate required ■ Three plus years of experience teaching in a school setting



in content area required ■ Skilled in instructional planning, consultation, and implementation of professional development required ■ Knowledge of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and experience in providing campus assistance and coaching to content teachers required.

**Magnet Teachers (20 FTEs):** Magnet teachers will play a critical role in assisting the school principal and peer teachers with implementation of magnet school themes, recruitment of students, as well as be involved in interviewing colleagues during the hiring process. Teachers will provide instructional leadership in the design, development, and implementation of each unique magnet curriculum; teach course offerings; demonstrate exceptional pedagogical instructional strategies; engage students in PBL activities; engage in common planning time; integrate technology in the classroom; and demonstrate a strong grasp of the theme and subject matter. Additionally, teachers will plan and effectively implement Response to Intervention (RtI) and a program of study designed to meet the individual needs of students while creating a classroom environment conducive to learning by employing a variety of appropriate effective teaching strategies. While all teachers will provide ongoing support, each magnet school will assign a highly-qualified lead teacher to guide, facilitate, and coordinate activities with the principal at each site. The job qualifications of the Magnet Teachers including relevant training and experience are: ■ Bachelor's Degree in related field required or Master's Degree preferred ■ Texas Teaching Certificate required ■ Three plus years of experience teaching in an elementary, middle, and/or high school setting required ■ Substantial experience in delivering effective instructional strategies required ■ Skilled in instructional planning, consultation, and implementation of professional development courses required ■ Knowledge of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) required.

**Program Assistant (1 FTE):** The Program Assistant will be responsible for maintaining



extensive files, preparing written correspondence, memorandums, schedules, reports and presentations, and providing technical assistance to the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* staff and educators. Additional duties will include receiving and directing visitors, making travel arrangements, coordinating meetings, professional development arrangements, processing requisitions, purchase orders, and performing daily office procedures. The job qualifications of the Program Assistant including relevant training and experience are: ■ Associates Degree in related field required or a Bachelor's Degree preferred ■ Three plus years of experience working in a K-12<sup>th</sup> grade school system or similar setting required ■ Familiar with computers and word processing software like Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and presentation software such as Microsoft Power Point required ■ Accustom to working with a diverse population required.

**Magnet Tutors (23 part-time):** Recognizing that magnet schools are unique and offer non-traditional school settings, DeSoto ISD will hire qualified tutors. These tutors will be hired and specifically assigned to a magnet school for their unique knowledge and experience related to each theme. Tutors will be required to offer non-traditional, year-round, one-to-one, and online tutoring before, during, and after-school including weekends and summers. They will tutor 4<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to help them improve academically in core subjects, clarify learning problems, and help build students' work study skills. Tutors will provide assistance and guidance for those students struggling with both state (STAAR-EOC) and college (TSI, PSAT, ACT, etc.) assessments. The job qualifications of the Magnet Tutors including relevant training and experience are: ■ Bachelor's Degree required for teachers and/or two years of college for students required ■ Experience in providing tutoring services and knowledge in content areas required ■ Ability to work flexible hours and attend tutor training sessions required.

**Equal Access Policy:** DeSoto ISD is committed to providing equal opportunities to all



members and will not discriminate against any person regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability in recruitment and employment of personnel GEPA (Attached).

**Capacity Building:** All magnet educators and staff will be required to engage in 60 hours a year of professional development and training as described before This also includes training focused latest legislative regulations and mandates. To ensure that *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* educators and staff develop a common understanding of the proposed desegregation efforts and have access to the same types of professional development sessions as well, DeSoto ISD will hire or assign the proposed key personnel during the first quarter of Year 1, upon award. Through the proposed PLC (described in page 97), the principal of each magnet school will employ a meeting cycle in which a specific group of teachers and project staff meet to discuss issues and strategies, and share lessons learned to manage the project effectively.

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**Key Consultants qualified to collaborate with *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* initiative**

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**External Evaluator** – EGT Institute, Inc. an educational research firm with over 22 years of experience in evaluating similar USDOE programs will serve as the external evaluator for the proposed *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* initiative and conduct the rigorous evaluation. EGT Institute, Inc. has a broad knowledge of scientifically-based randomization and quasi-evaluation methodologies, data collections, analysis, implementation and reporting requirements. EGT Institute, Inc. currently serves as an independent evaluator to a multitude of educational service agencies, school districts, higher education institutions, and community based organization evaluating numerous federally funded projects, including three large GEAR UP, i3 Development, Innovative Approaches to Literacy grants, School Climate, etc. (*Appendix V – EGT Portfolio*).

EGT Institute, Inc. evaluators will work closely with the Project Director, magnet staff, principals and educators to implement a comprehensive evaluation plan within the proposed



timeline to ensure program fidelity and to assess progress on proposed objectives and outcomes. Data and information collected as part of this initiative will be compiled and analyzed by EGT Institute, Inc. Dr. Tina McIntyre, Senior Researcher & Evaluator of EGT Institute, Inc. will lead the evaluation efforts. Dr. McIntyre has over 26 years of experience working with schools and universities as a principal, administrator, professor and researcher. Dr. McIntyre has extensive experience in evaluating programs for at-risk and economically disadvantaged families.

**Project Lead The Way (PLTW)** is a nonprofit organization that provides transformative learning experiences for K-12 students and teachers across the U.S. through pathways in computer science, engineering, and biomedical science, students learn problem-solving strategies, critical and creative thinking, and how to communicate and collaborate. PLTW will provide training and technical assistance to educators and magnet students in STEM and Medical fields which also includes the engineering design process which supports the Next Generation Science Standards. PLTW incorporates training in career clusters and College & Career Readiness STEM Endorsement Pathways (*Appendix W*). Training to educators will include how to incorporate instructional strategies with PBL and flexible curricula.

**University of North Texas (UNT)** is an innovative educational institution in North Texas and leader in educator training that will provide Project-Based Learning (PBL) training to teachers on new theme-based magnet integration pedagogy. Magnet teachers will receive instruction and support in designing and implementing instructional practices that connect PBL strategies to technology and curricula. UNT will support DeSoto ISD administrators in creating a blueprint that develops highly effective principals and teachers that support, sustain, and scale-up the theme-based disciplines. UNT will support summer institutes and educational field trips related to project-based instruction in: math, robotics, science, engineering, and technology.



**SureScore** a Texas based educational institution founded in 1995, began providing private SAT and ACT classes for students (low income, first generation college applicants) that could not afford to pay. Thousands of schools throughout the country work with SureScore who offers college preparation programs from the third grade to the first year of college. Each program is research-based. SureScore remains consistent with college preparation solutions to those districts, campuses, and students that need them most. Thus, SureScore will offer students' access to Campus2Career, internships, jobs, mentoring, job shadowing, and provide professional development training to educators including sessions targeting college readiness, college planning, financial aid, college admission, test preparation, etc.

**College Board** ensures that every student has the opportunity to prepare for, enroll in and graduate from college. College Board college readiness initiatives promote curricula, assessment tools, and guidance resources that help K-12<sup>th</sup> students prepare for the academic rigors of higher education. Through Advanced Placement (AP) college-level courses and exams, high-school students can earn college credit and learn from some of the most skilled, dedicated and inspiring teachers in the world. College Board will enable target students to build their skills and success in AP, Pre-AP, dual enrollment college credit courses and college-level work without remediation. College Board will create a college-going culture and provide teacher training on how to: use pedagogical standards and embed Pre-AP and AP teaching and learning strategies and assessments aligned with state standards including offering SAT testing and preparation.

**Texas Instrument (TI)** a leader in educational technology, will provide magnet school teachers with T<sup>3</sup> professional development. TI will provided curriculum enhancement and technology to engage students and teachers in school algebra readiness. Training consists of TI graphing calculators, Navigators, Nspire calculators for advanced math courses. TI will train



teachers in how to integrate the TI-Navigator system into their daily teaching and assessment. The system uses real-time feedback to instantly assess student understanding and provides a more interactive and engaging learning experience.

**Vernier** an innovator in easy-to-use technology for hands-on STEM education instruction puts easy-to-use data loggers, sensors, experiments and graphing/analysis software into the hands of students, helping educators develop the next generation of scientists and engineers. Vernier will provide participating magnet schools, with Vernier technology, digital tools, hardware, and software for hands-on learning. Digital tools, such as sensors and graphing and analysis software, will enhance STEM and Medical curriculum by integrating technology that helps students to visualize data and build critical thinking skills. Vernier will also provide teachers, and Coaches with access to hands-on training in data-collection technology, online training opportunities.

**Agile Mind** a pioneer in developing and testing next-generation assessments through a combination of research, high-tech, and high-touch educational strategies, was founded with a singular mission – to increase the number and diversity of students who excel in mathematics and science. By partnering with leading education entities such as The Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin, Agile Mind places research-based programs and tools in the hands of teachers and students. Agile Mind transforms the teaching and learning of mathematics and science, dramatically improving achievement in middle by fostering classrooms that embrace engagement, collaboration, and perseverance. Agile Mind will provide programs for participating magnet secondary schools that include comprehensive curriculum, formative assessment, job-embedded professional supports, student practice, and real-time data and reports.

***(3) Teachers who will provide instruction are qualified to implement the special curriculum...***

DeSoto ISD strives to recruit a talented and diverse team of educators. Teachers and school



leaders who share racial and/or socioeconomic backgrounds with our students are poised to be especially effective role models, and bring an important perspective to school teams that enhances sensitivity and cultural competence. Concerted efforts are made to create an inclusive working environment in order to attract talented people from all backgrounds—regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability. All individuals will have equal access to all employment and program opportunities. DeSoto ISD believes that strong programs of recruitment and hiring effective and qualified teachers are necessary to maintain and enhance the teaching profession within its institution. DeSoto ISD’s goal has been to allow more autonomy to school leaders, working with their personnel subcommittees, to recruit, hire and place teachers.

**Early hiring practices** are constantly applied but vary from school-to-school based on the need, vacancy, workforce preferred and the subcommittees’ input. For instance, DeSoto ISD’s philosophy is to move hiring timelines as early as possible (February, March or April) to recruit, attract and hire the best qualified teachers possible. Doing so, affords DeSoto ISD the opportunity to attract top talent and places them in a stronger position to recruit and hire a diverse pool of educators who will help strengthen each magnet school. Plus, this process makes DeSoto ISD more competitive and hiring early means that new hires are able to attend professional development and spend as much time on campus as they can before the start of the school year. Research shows that teachers hired early in the spring are more effective in the classroom than those hired in late summer (Harris, D. & Sass, T., 2011).<sup>89</sup> In fact, DeSoto ISD schools are able to move hiring timelines up significantly, if they are able to quickly decide about whether or not to fill a vacant position when a teacher leaves or retires.

Utilizing research-based assessments (TeacherFit, JodFit, AdminFit) AppliTrack is the leading all-in-one recruiting and hiring solution serving thousands of schools across the nation.



New candidates are added to the hiring pool on a daily basis. DeSoto ISD will collaborate with AppliTrack to successfully enhance and initiate recruiting and hiring practices early utilizing other internal resources. The district's goal is to have 80% of all vacancies occupied by May 31<sup>st</sup>. Additionally, early hiring practices include contacting local, regional, state or national higher education institutions (six months to one year) in advance and working with their recruitment and placement department to establish career preparation pathways for those undergraduate and graduate students interested in pursuing a career in K-12 education which could include hiring and relocation incentives. To dramatically increase the number of applicants early, DeSoto ISD also attends recruitment events, career fairs, networking sessions and develops marketing materials (i.e. brochures, flyers, website, content, face book, craigslist, etc.) that display the school's strengths. One promising ongoing method DeSoto ISD applies and is very fond of is developing highly-effective and highly-qualified teachers, administrators and educators from within. For example, DeSoto ISD currently supports and encourages teachers to obtain a Masters in specific content areas (Math, ELA, Science, etc.). The Master's degree in content areas affords DeSoto ISD's schools the opportunity to increase AP/dual enrollment college credit courses offered and will lead to additional teacher compensation with these new responsibilities.

**Evidence used to determine the quality of the applicant:** Effective employee selection is a critical component of a successful educational institution. In addition to a master list of questions that will be asked to each candidate during the interview process, DeSoto ISD also incorporates behavior-based interviewing (BBI) questions also known as **predictive analytics research**.

Predictive analytics research is not new; The May 2012 issue of the *Harvard Education Letter* noted Uplift's Education of Dallas predictive analytics show promise in helping districts match educators to the schools where they will be most effective in teaching. This process requires the



candidate to discuss past situations and problems and how they were resolved. For instance, to determine if a teacher candidate uses data to drive instruction and excel at differentiation, effective candidates are asked to give a 30 minute sample lesson on the grade level and subject they will be working with. A rubric is used to assess candidates' ability to differentiate instruction.

Thus, DeSoto ISD is extremely proactive and strategic in recruiting, hiring, and training the existing teachers (inclusive of diverse and minority candidates) who currently provide instruction and are qualified to not only implement the traditional curriculum at the regular school but that are also capable of applying the special curriculum at the existing (STEM, Medical, etc.) magnet school. This practice will continue and be further enhanced across all 7 theme-based magnet schools. DeSoto ISD through all on-boarding and recruiting processes effectively ensures teachers are racially and ethnically balanced with an appropriate representation of the students served. Lastly, DeSoto ISD has always and will continue to demonstrate innovative ways for recruiting teachers who reflect the diverse characteristics of the student and general population.

As aforementioned, DeSoto ISD onboarding/hiring policies ensure that all educators go through a rigorous interview-design process and as a result, teachers that enter the district are deemed effective and highly committed to serve the target population, regardless of race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender, age or disability. All candidates for employment are evaluated solely on qualifications for the job, for their areas of expertise, and interest in serving the school, the children, parents, peers and the community. DeSoto ISD works with local, regional and national Institutions of Higher Education to consistently seek out innovative strategies for reducing the many barriers that keep potentially good teacher candidates from entering the teaching field. For example, many of the current highly effective STEAM teachers came directly from working with Institutions of Higher Education teacher certification or



preparation degree programs and also in certain instances possess a double major in Math, science, engineering, etc. As noted previously, in seeking out potential candidates earlier in the spring (February, March, April), these candidates are recruited prior to graduation out of reputable colleges and universities. Seeking diversity of demographic and academic backgrounds of the candidates with areas of theme-based expertise as well as candidates enrolled/graduating with IHE theme-based degree plans reflects the variety of approaches considered in DeSoto ISD's hiring practices (*Appendix X – Teacher Assignment*).

As far as the seven theme-based *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* schools, all teachers will be screened to assess their interests and talents in specific content and enrichment areas that will enhance curriculum development and alignment to the unique seven-theme-based learning environments. DeSoto ISD currently and will continue to include English and Spanish speaking teachers and on-board highly qualified educators in the seven theme-based magnet programs. Any new and existing teachers being considered for the seven theme-based *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* schools must be willing to contribute the extra time and effort it will require to be part of the successful magnet school academies, spending time in planning meetings, professional development and extra events related to the theme-based magnet program. Each magnet program school will be staffed with teachers who have training in educating students from diverse backgrounds, research skills, differentiated instruction, PBL, response to intervention, technology integration, higher level thinking through visual representation, and specific training for each magnet theme.

In addition to hiring highly-effective and highly qualified magnet school teachers, DeSoto ISD as noted in the Management section will hire highly-qualified Literacy and Math Coordinators and four Theme-based Coaches to provide consistent and on-going coaching, support, strategies, job-embedded professional development such as PBL and technology



integration, blended learning, etc. to teachers. Thus, DeSoto ISD will actively recruit a diverse group of magnet teachers whose credentials will include, but not limited to the following local district, state and federal qualifications: On-line application, resume, and professional portfolio of area expertise and references (verified through on-boarding process *Appendix Y*); Bachelor's Degree in related field required or Master's Degree preferred; State Board of Educator Certification required; Three plus years of experience teaching in an elementary, middle, and/or high school setting required; Substantial experience in delivering effective instructional strategies required; Skilled in instructional planning, consultation, and implementation of professional development courses required; Knowledge of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) required; and Advanced Academics (AP/IB) or Differentiated Instruction/Problem Based Learning Certificates validating Professional Development required; and Evidence verifying content knowledge related to the theme being considered for and knowledge of technology integration where appropriate (verified through certificates, etc.).

In addition to the aforementioned behavior based interviewing (BBI), prior to this process – DeSoto ISD requires a professional portfolio consisting of area of expertise and professional references (verified through on-boarding process) from each potential teacher candidate. This portfolio as noted above must demonstrate: use of technology that showcases personal interests and professional accomplishments. As part of the next stage in the hiring process, potential teachers for each of the seven theme-based magnet school academies will be allotted time in the 30 minute- BBI interview design to present in front of an interview committee (cross representation of existing theme-based magnet teachers, coordinator, campus administrator and coaches) a presentation that is intended to incorporate the use of technology and briefly demonstrate areas of expertise and qualifications to be considered for a specific theme-based



magnet school. DeSoto will onboard Coordinators and Coaches (qualifications described in personnel section). The Coordinators and Theme-based Coaches will also support magnet teachers with organization of learning experiences such as experiential and theme-based relevant field trips and a love of teaching. Teachers are supported to work with professional engineers and scientists who will work on campus for extended periods of time (e.g. a semester), providing job-embedded staff development to successfully integrate engineering in classroom instruction.

Teachers will be required to implement PBL and other magnet-strategies that enhance academic and social skills of students to help them develop the habits and behaviors needed to succeed in rigorous academic curriculum. Furthermore, all teachers will be on-boarded and required to participate in no less than 60 hours of professional development training a year. The focused capacity building will also include teachers to be trained to effectively implement Response to Intervention (RtI) (Brown-Chidsey, & Steege, 2005) and (Council for Exceptional Children, 2007).<sup>90</sup> Response to Intervention (RtI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. Teachers will be supported to implement the Response to Intervention (RtI) process with fidelity along with the universal screening for struggling learners to know precisely how to provide effective interventions and accelerate the rate of learning.

To effectively promote the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* initiative, DeSoto ISD needs to implement strategies and staff support to reach out to the community to build partnerships and to engage parents in the active selection of a theme-based magnet school that matches their children's needs and as volunteers to advance the goals and objectives of the magnet program. Furthermore, each magnet program will create a unique approach that provides choice equitably for parents of English Learners and non-English Learners. Taking into consideration the aforementioned



process to secure teachers who will provide effective instruction and are qualified to implement the special curriculum of the magnet school, DeSoto ISD is committed to recruiting and preparing all educators to succeed in the theme-based magnet model of instruction. DeSoto ISD school-based personnel and teachers have been involved in the planning process and design of the theme-based magnet program. Community members and parents have also contributed to the identification of themes and the selection of campuses. These measures have created enthusiasm for implementation and with MSAP resources – the model can be a reality.

### **(e) Quality of Project Evaluation**

#### ***(1) Methods of evaluation for examining the effectiveness of implementation strategies...***

Independent evaluation will be conducted by a highly-qualified evaluation firm (at 5% of total cost), EGT Institute, Inc. (EGT) (*Appendix V – Portfolio*). DeSoto ISD will contract with EGT, who will: 1) assist with data collection; 2) conduct process and outcomes evaluation; 3) assist the Project Director in reporting annually to U.S. Department of Education; 4) report annually to DeSoto ISD and community stakeholders, and 5) prepare the final project evaluation report of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* in collaboration with the district and other partners.

EGT will implement two methods of evaluation – Formative and Summative. The formative and summative evaluation designs will assess the extent to which the proposed objectives, and performance indicators including the five MSAP Measures are achieved (See pages 115 – 120 for a list of objectives and performance outcomes).

**Formative Evaluation:** The ongoing formative evaluation will focus on addressing whether the objectives are being met and strategies are being implemented as planned at each magnet school. Accountability standards will be utilized to assess implementation. The plan will investigate the significance and strength of the relationship between the proposed strategies and outcomes in final year. Driven by the Logic Model (*Appendix S*), ongoing findings will be compared to



objectives, outcome measures (pg. 115-120), project timeline, and adjustments will be made, as needed. Data will be collected, as available, and analyzed and recommendations discussed with the project director and school staff throughout the year. Baseline data will be collected in Year 1. See *Appendix Z – Accountability standards for formative evaluation*.

**Methodologies for Formative Evaluation:** Formative evaluation will occur at two levels: district-wide and at each magnet school. The evaluation methodology will be well-implemented, In order to produce evidence of promise by including three critical components:

**Data analysis:** EGT will analyze annual school and district-level data to identify trends and prospects in *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* enrollments, programs, products and services. This will include district and student diversity (*of social, economic, ethnic and racial background*) population data, performance outcome data, student achievement level data, application and acceptance data, demographic data, cost-efficiencies, professional development data, etc. Records of enrollment figures will be collected to assess progress toward meeting desired racial percentages. Marketing and recruitment activities will be documented as to their nature and the results attained in relation to desegregation and choice. Innovative, theme-focused activities will be followed closely for appropriate implementation through formal and informal observation techniques. The level of racial interaction will be monitored /notated for counseling teachers on how to increase interaction. Baseline data will be gathered at onset of the grant cycle and will be used for comparison.

**Surveys:** With help from the schools, EGT will administer annual surveys that will allow students, teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and community members to solicit views about the programs. The surveys will focus on perceptions of respondents on the effectiveness of each magnet school in accomplishing the objectives, as well ask suggestions for improvement. Survey



Reports will also include item-by-item results for each school, summaries of survey construct results for each school, and, for years two, three, and beyond, comparisons between current and the previous year's results. Trends (e.g., relationship between magnet implementation and student engagement and motivation, between professional development dosage and impact) are explored.

**Interview design, site visits and focus groups:** EGT, accompanied by the Project Director, will spend a week visiting the magnet schools and community. During the visits to each magnet site, EGT will meet with district and school leaders, staff, teachers, students, parents, partners and community members to identify accomplishments and challenges in the implementation of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*. Interviews and focus groups with stakeholders will include a multitude of questions to provide context, history, and perspective about the magnet school system at DeSoto ISD. Focus groups will engage participants in conversations on the effectiveness of the program.

The formative evaluation methodologies described above will assist in assessing the effectiveness of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* services in accomplishing its objectives and outcomes, as listed in the Logic Model (*Appendix S*). It will not only assess implementation, fidelity, and outcomes (short/long-term), but will also identify best practices for enhancing academic achievement levels of students. Measures of short term outcomes, such as benchmarks, etc., will indicate whether adequate progress is being made toward the attainment of annual performance measures. Most are derived from site visit report or survey items as noted above. Evaluation will draw on a wide variety of quantitative and qualitative data (below) to investigate and provide substance and context for both formative and summative evaluation designs that meets the *What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)* evidence standards. For example, to what extent do teacher capacity building initiatives, result in practices that are aligned with rigor and relevance necessary for student success? Also, to what extent are certain “thresholds, dosages, combinations, and



components” of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* services are associated with the reduction of minority group isolation of students? Findings such as these will be of promise for developing intervention and support systems that better assist students’ learning. There may be anomalies in evaluation findings (situations working well for undefined reasons). EGT will explore those reasons to develop an understanding of plausible explanations for those anomalies.

**Summative Evaluation:** During the fourth quarter of each year, the plan will compare the performance of students in the treatment group and students in the comparison group on standardized tests in reading, mathematics, writing, and science. *This evaluation will test the hypothesis: students in the treatment group who are exposed to the Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup> will demonstrate significantly greater improvement in their academic performance, as measured by standardized test results and STAAR-EOC scores, when compared to students in the comparison group.* The summative evaluation will also examine the overall activities of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* and the individual magnet school programs to determine program quality and effectiveness. The summative evaluation will also assess outcomes including resulting changes in minority group isolation at each school campus (end of each year), and the extent of sustainability of magnet programs at each campus (Year 5 only). As measured through review of programmatic data, including data obtained through surveys, focus groups, additional funding levels, retention of key personnel, additional partnerships, etc.

**Methodologies for Summative Evaluation:** Please note that each magnet school will be housed within a general public school or feeder school. For each magnet school (elementary, middle, and high schools), EGT will randomly assign a set of students who attend a magnet school (treatment group), and then again randomly assign another set of students from the non-magnet school to form the comparison group during the fourth quarter of each year, using a technique



known as radius matching using propensity scores.<sup>91</sup> An unbiased estimate of the impact of each magnet school will be obtained through difference in the observed means of measurable outcome variables between the treatment and control groups. Driven by What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards, the use of random assignment will ensure that there is no selection bias in selecting the treatment and control groups. The following table outlines the sample size of the treatment and comparison groups for each magnet school:

| <b>Table 7. Magnet Schools</b>  | <b>Treatment</b> | <b>Comparison</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Meadows Elementary School (iSTEAM3D)</b>                                 | N=100            | N=100             |
| <b>DeSoto High School (iSTEAM3D)</b>  | N=100            | N=100             |
| <b>Moates Elementary (Blended Learning)</b>                                 | N=300            | N=300             |
| <b>Ruby Elementary School (Environmental Science &amp; Medical/ Health)</b> | N=35             | N=35              |
| <b>East Middle School (Environmental Science and Medical/Health)</b>        | N=35             | N=35              |
| <b>Woodridge Elementary (Fine Arts)</b>                                     | N=125            | N=125             |
| <b>McCowan Middle School (Fine Arts)</b>                                    | N=125            | N=125             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>820</b>       | <b>820</b>        |

The treatment group and comparison group students will be equated on key background and demographic variables, age, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, experience, and free/reduced lunch status. Each year, student enrollment and achievement data will be contrasted with the treatment and comparison group students to provide context for student academic and isolation outcomes. This method will help guard against selection effects of comparison group students, whereby differences may be found that are due to pre-existing differences between



students prior to sampling.

*(2) Evaluation uses objective performance measures that are clearly related to the outcomes...*

*Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* ambitious, yet attainable objectives, performance outcomes and MSAP Measures are provided in Section C pages 115 – 120. To measure the extent of success, evaluation methods will include assessing program implementation (actual versus proposed), school demographic enrollment data, pre-and-post academic performance of students and surveys of participants, observation rubrics of knowledge and practices of teachers, in addition to teachers' self-assessment and interviews at each magnet school. The evaluation will also measure the extent to which teachers integrate technology, utilize student-led data for lesson development, and incorporate effective pedagogy in instruction. In addition to the previous data mentioned above, teacher engagement in professional development (threshold and dosage), graduation rates, student diversity data, student enrollment in and completion of Pre-AP, AP, dual enrollment college credit courses, and student academic scores will be analyzed to determine impact of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* services in each magnet school.

**Data System:** EGT has developed Youth Connection (YC), a secured web-based database system, which is integrated with other DeSoto ISD's school-based programs. The system will be tailored to collect all the proposed performance outcome data including data on the five MSAP Measures and any new MSAP data fields created. Data will be maintained and accessed to review specific trainings and services provided. All Magnet personnel will be trained on YC.

Documentation of attendance and participant evaluations will be maintained for workshops, campus tours, field trips and other enrichment activities. In order to differentiate students by category, data (including data linked to the MSAP measures) related to each magnet school's progress, will be collected on an ongoing basis and quantitative outcome data will be collected at



the end of each year. Data such as lottery applications, school enrollment, student grades, self-assessment, course enrollment, training, and other services will be disaggregated by student and teacher subgroups (minority, low-income, etc.), grade levels, magnet school, etc.

Student progress will be measured by: 1) student achievement on STAAR-EOC and class grades (annually and monthly, respectively); 2) teacher-based performance assessments in all core content subjects (annually); 3) quality and grades of team projects (annually); 4) participation in extra-curricular activities/competitions (quarterly); and 5) capstone community projects (annually) specific to each grade level. Student portfolio of activities and projects demonstrating skills and competencies (as guided by STAAR-EOC) will also be evaluated annually. In addition to the annual review of STAAR-EOC scores, class grades (including grades and scores in Pre-AP, AP, and dual enrollment courses, SAT, ACT, etc.), and course enrollment data, DeSoto ISD will also administer College Board SpringBoard assessment tools (Embedded Assessments - which offer performance-based measurements; Unit Assessments - which contain high-quality test items with distractor rationales; and Student and Teacher Reflections - which are self-assessments that help guide thinking and provide evidence of students' learning). These instruments will be administered quarterly to identify students at academic risk by augmenting standardized achievement testing with measures of important psychosocial indicators.

**Analysis of Formative Evaluation Data:** DeSoto ISD is interested in understanding the factors that may be associated with formative evaluation of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*. Information on factors associated with the greatest or slightest impact each magnet school experienced will be useful in development of improved magnet school-related practices, policies, and programs. EGT will do an annual analysis of each magnet school based on the following questions:

- How effective is *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* services for students, teachers, and staff on the



engagement and academic achievement levels, graduation rates, and college enrollment of students? (**Objectives 2 and 3**) – *Analyzed Annually; Data sources: TAPR, student demographics, pre-post STAAR-EOC data, GPA, # of students participating in magnet school activities by grade level, pre-post student perception survey data, # of students reporting improved understanding of thematic concepts, STAAR-EOC results, class grades, student/teacher/parent engagement rates, student graduation rates, # of students in pre-Pre-AP/AP courses and passing, # of students promoted to next grade level on-time, # of students graduating on-time and # of college enrollments.*

- How effective is **Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>** services on parents’ level of engagement in their children’s?

education? (**Objective 5**) – *Analyzed Annually; Data sources: Pre-post parent survey data, # of parent school participation hours (including # of hours of involvement in children learning activities at home); # of participants-including a breakout of the types of families by socioeconomic backgrounds, race, and ethnicity; # of families involved in district sponsored involvement activities (such curriculum decisions, policy changes, school-wide improvement, etc.); % change in the degree of involvement each year; and % of academic change seen in students with involved parents as compared to uninvolved parents.*

- How effective are the instructional strategies of teachers? (**Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5**) – **Analyzed**

**Annually; Data sources: Self-assessments and pre-post surveys from teachers, administrators, and students, classroom observation data, professional development session evaluation data, common planning time hours, technology use; TAPR, PEIMS, pre-post student enrollment data, number of trained teachers/administrators, # and type of PBL activities by grade level, AYP**



*data, # of high quality teachers, review of lessons plans, review of school improvement plans.*

- To what extent are *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* cost, productivity, and resource allocation effective?

**(Objective 4)** – *Analyzed Annually; Data sources: Pre-post survey of school leaders and educators, staffing levels, School Comprehensive Plan, funding sources and levels, budget allocations, cost per student (compared to district-wide), allocation of resources to support student learning and professional development of educators, teacher and administrator experience and expertise, amount of matching budget, teacher-student ratio, proposed expenditures versus actual costs, teacher, educators and staff recruitment and retention rates.*

Central to evaluation of the above-mentioned formative evaluation questions is a determination whether or not each magnet school fares better on measurable school outcomes, as listed in page 115-120. Baseline measures will be used to derive change in outcome measures. Specifically, the difference from baseline data (course grades, STAAR-EOC, etc.) and outcome measures obtained after participation in *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* activities in each school will be calculated annually to assess fidelity of implementation.

**Analysis of Summative Evaluation Data:** To test the hypothesis mentioned before, EGT will compare performance of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* students in a treatment group and non- *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* students in a comparison group on standardized tests and STAAR-EOC scores in reading, mathematics, writing, and science, using two-tailed t-tests at 95% confidence level. Additional analysis of summative evaluation data will be done based on the following two questions:

- How effective is each magnet school in desegregation and reducing minority group isolation?

**(Objective 1)** – *Analyzed Annually; Data sources: Student enrollment data by demographics,*



*socio-economic status, application pool of feeder schools and boundaries.*

- How sustainable is the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* program? (**Objective 6**) – *Analyzed during the fourth quarter of Year 5; Data sources: Pre-post surveys of educators students, parents, community members, number of theme-based magnet schools, number of magnet programs within DeSoto ISD, number of magnet schools still in full operation after funding ends, additional funding levels, staff capacity, and plans for retention of key personnel after funding.*

Using the above-mentioned data sources, EGT will assess quantitative and qualitative data to determine the extent to which objectives and outcome measures are attained. Analysis of frequency and percentage change data will examine whether or not there are significant differences in the academic performance of treatment group students with a differential number of years of exposure to the TAKS and STARR instructional models with the comparison group students' performance. Using descriptive and inferential statistics, EGT will also compare changes in the minority group isolation of student subgroups (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, free or reduced-price lunch eligibility, ELL (English Language Learners), etc. for each campus. Data from the treatment and comparison groups will be pooled to increase statistical power and between-group aggregated and disaggregated comparisons will be conducted for students for each grade level at each school.

In addition, sustainability of the *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* programs will be analyzed (non-parametric) for each campus and DeSoto ISD as a whole from data collected through surveys, site visits, focus groups and program records to assess effectiveness of garnering additional funding, allocation of DeSoto ISD resources, level of partnerships, level of staff capacity to implement evidence-based programs and invest in strategies that improve school structure and classroom effectiveness.



**(3) *Methods of evaluation provides performance feedback and permit periodic assessment...***

EGT will develop survey instruments and conduct interviews and focus groups to measure the particular outcome measures listed on pages 115 – 120 and solicit performance feedback. To do so, EGT will consult with DeSoto ISD administrators, school principals, assistant principals, teachers, coaches, and staff as well as review the research literature, and existing survey instruments and measurement scales that have been validated by other magnet schools. Survey, interview, and focus group questions will be customized for each magnet school and will continually be reviewed and refined by EGT on an annual basis for validity and reliability.

In addition, data driven and longitudinal resources (Texas Student Data System – TSDS, Dashboard Data Mart, Acuity and EGT’s *Youth Connection – Appendix Z1*) will be used for data and evaluation comparison and analysis (parametric and non-parametric) to extract reliable evaluation findings and results. These tools will assist with data driven decision making related to management of curriculum and assessment data for greater student success. Acuity, a state aligned informative assessment tool, will support both formative assessment through its unique integration features for classroom-friendly assessments, instructional resources, reporting, and customization opportunities (*See Appendix Z2*). Acuity predictive and diagnostic assessments give valuable information about student progress relative to TEKS, STAAR and College and Career Readiness. With Acuity, educators can instantly create instructional remediation and enrichment plans based on each student's assessment results, ensuring that the right instructional support is assigned at the right time for every student, particularly for at-risk minority students.

With aforementioned assessment tools, reviews of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>* will be completed to assist school leaders in increasing school productivity and efficiency.

**Reporting, feedback, and Continuous Improvement:** EGT in collaboration with the



Project Director, teachers, and school principals will produce annual and other required reports. Reports provide feedback based on data related to project development and implementation. It will summarize the findings of the visit and include recommendations for improvement. EGT will review evaluation data weekly, monthly, quarterly and annually depending on the source and based on findings, will provide recommendations for continuous improvement. EGT will also identify areas where the magnet school/district is demonstrating success, and also areas of improvement that should be considered by the school/district. In addition and to garner feedback from authority decisions-makers the Project Director will facilitate a quarterly meeting with **MEMT** which includes the Superintendent and Cabinet, board member and EGT to review administrative functions, policy, budgets, contracts, program design delivery, program status and evaluation results. The **Magnet Advisory Council** (representative from partners, project director, magnet principals, teachers, evaluators, parents, and community representatives) will also meet quarterly to review program status, students served and the effectiveness of the program, project director, and staff to assess challenges, accomplishments, and lessons learned for ongoing continuous improvement. The evaluation data and the recommendations made by EGT will be considered by the Project Director for adoption into future activities of *Magnet - A<sup>2</sup>&E<sup>2</sup>*. Annual reports will be submitted on time to the USDOE.

**Replication:** The evaluation efforts above will lead to comprehensive evaluation reports that will assist in designing effective strategies for replication of Magnet services in different settings. Based on lessons learned from evaluation efforts, EGT will describe the implementation of the project; identify critical issues during implementation; and identify the extent to which the program was implemented as planned. This information will be shared with school leaders to foster replication of effective strategies and capacity building activities in other school settings.