

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2009-2010 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2004.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 or 2009.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district: (per district designation)	178	Elementary schools (includes K-8)
	39	Middle/Junior high schools
	37	High schools
	2	K-12 schools
	256	TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 10405

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

- ☒ Urban or large central city
☐ Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
☐ Suburban
☐ Small city or town in a rural area
☐ Rural

4. 3 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	22	24	46	6	23	26	49
K	32	30	62	7	26	21	47
1	39	30	69	8	22	17	39
2	42	32	74	9			0
3	25	36	61	10			0
4	20	24	44	11			0
5	34	18	52	12			0
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL							543

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: % American Indian or Alaska Native
10 % Asian
16 % Black or African American
46 % Hispanic or Latino
 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
28 % White
 % Two or more races
100 % Total

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

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 5 %

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

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	12
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	15
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	27
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	543
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.050
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	4.972

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 29 %

Total number limited English proficient 156

Number of languages represented: 15

Specify languages:

German, Russian, Ukranian, Urdu, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Farsi, Spanish, Nahuatl, Greek, Bahasa, Tagalog and French.

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 63 %

Total number students who qualify: 340

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 4 %

Total Number of Students Served: 24

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>0</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>7</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>5</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>16</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>22</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>
Total number	<u>43</u>	<u>0</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 22 :1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
Daily teacher attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
Teacher turnover rate	11%	22%	18%	11%	15%
Student dropout rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Please provide all explanations below.

The teacher turnover rate for some years is above 12% due to maternity leave, promotions and teachers returning to graduate school.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2009 are doing as of the Fall 2009.

Graduating class size	0	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0	%
Enrolled in a community college	0	%
Enrolled in vocational training	0	%
Found employment	0	%
Military service	0	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	0	%
Unknown	0	%
Total		%

PART III - SUMMARY

“I believe in myself. I am not afraid to dream. I have the courage. I have the pride to meet each challenge. I will not quit. I am an important member of the team and my successes will inspire others. I have the heart of a winner. I am a Briarmeadow Bronco!”

The above mantra echoes through the walls of Briarmeadow Charter School and into the hearts and minds of every student, teacher, parent, and administrator on campus every morning. This pledge is the school’s affirmation of its mission which is to perpetuate a learning-centered community that expects the highest level of achievement for all through interdependency and shared commitment to ensure the success of every student.

Briarmeadow, a Pre-K through eighth grade child-centered school, opened its doors in August 1997 as an educational choice for families in west Houston. It is a product of collaboration between educators committed to academic excellence and dedicated parents looking for a “private school environment within a public school setting.” Teachers founding the school were philosophically aligned with cognitive and developmental theories of Piaget and wanted to develop a constructivist school that would be focused on creating a stimulating learning environment responsive to individual needs and strengths. The Houston Independent School District (HISD) offered that possibility as an HISD internal charter school. As such, Briarmeadow is able to set stricter guidelines for academic excellence while maintaining flexibility in implementation.

Briarmeadow caters to a diverse student population which includes 0.1% American Indian; 10.6% Asian; 15.7% African American; 46% Hispanic; and 27.6% white. As a constructivist school, Briarmeadow is able to respond to the unique needs of each and every student on campus. The tailored curriculum and the child-centered pedagogy are key elements in helping all students reach their utmost potential.

The structure of the classrooms and the systems in place reflect the school’s constructivist philosophy that deep learning requires time, human interaction in community, and flexibility. Class size is limited to 22 students which allows for individual focus on student capabilities. Currently, the school’s total enrollment is 543 -- conducive to creating a caring community where “everybody knows everybody.” Furthermore, clustered classrooms and grade level looping foster positive student-teacher relationship which enhances student learning.

Briarmeadow believes in the giftedness of all students. All classrooms utilize teaching strategies designed for gifted programs so that every student has the chance to be challenged academically. Co-curricular and extracurricular activities are critical components of Briarmeadow’s program to help students find their personal strengths and niche in the community.

Acknowledging that highly effective teachers drive student achievement, every teacher is certified in her/his area of instruction. Additionally, all teachers are required to have English as a Second Language and Gifted and Talented certifications to differentiate learning within the classroom. These passionate teachers, who believe in the value of assessment for learning, are provided dedicated time throughout the week to examine student data and work samples together. Professional training and collaboration are ongoing and operationally essential for teachers to develop their ability to observe, assess, and plan for student growth.

Community and family involvement is encouraged and expected at Briarmeadow. Parents volunteer in the library, participate in school events, and even run most school’s fundraisers. Briarmeadow is truly blessed to have a very active PTO which has supported many of the school’s student field experiences which include educational trips to points of interest in Houston, Austin, San Antonio, and a culminating visit to Washington

D.C. Undoubtedly, these firsthand experiences are instrumental in meeting the needs of Briarmeadow's diverse student population.

Briarmeadow nurtures a culture of excellence through collaboration, relationship-building, strong focus on student learning, and systematic use of its resources. As a result, the school has received several recognitions from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC), and the National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) - Just for the Kids.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. **Assessment Results:**

Briarmeadow students participate in the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) testing program. Grades 3-8 are assessed in mathematics and reading; grades 4 and 7 in writing; science in grades 5 and 8; and social studies in grade 8. TAKS is aligned to the state curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and measures student mastery of the defined knowledge and skills at each tested grade level. A scale score of 2100 meets the state standard for proficient performance with a scale score of 2400 or higher considered commended performance. Results of the TAKS administration are used to determine each Texas school's accountability rating. Schools are ranked Exemplary ($\geq 90\%$), Recognized ($\geq 75\%$), Acceptable ($< 75\%$), or Unacceptable ($< 65\%$) depending on the performance of all students and each student group meeting minimum size in all tested subject areas. Moreover, the school's performance is compared with the state, the district, and the campus group data in the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report. The campus group report shows the average performance of a group of 40 schools in Texas that are demographically comparable to Briarmeadow based on the percentage of the African American, Hispanic, White, economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient (LEP), and mobile students enrolled during the year.

An exemplary campus for two consecutive years, Briarmeadow Middle School embraces best practice instruction to support student achievement and college-career readiness. Bell-to-bell instructions coupled with rigorous Pre-AP curriculum delivered by supportive instructors prove effective in helping committed students attain the high expectations set for them. To illustrate this point, 68% of Briarmeadow middle school students achieved commended performance in reading in 2009. This percentage was double the performance of the state and the campus group. In mathematics, 44% of students were commended -- this placed us ahead of the state and the campus group by 13 and 25 percentage points respectively. These impressive accomplishments can equally be attributed to the hard work Briarmeadow Charter School (PK-5) teachers put forth in establishing a strong foundation.

Earning a separate accountability rating from the state, the charter grew from Academically Acceptable in 2007 to Recognized in 2008 and earned its Exemplary rating in 2009. A five-year analysis showed the charter slowly but surely building students' capacity to prepare them for a more complex and challenging middle school life. For example, 87% of fourth graders passed the reading assessment in 2005. Ninety-seven percent of this particular group met the reading standard in 2006; 97% in 2007; 100% in 2008; and 100% as eighth graders in 2009. This upward trend is tangible proof that teachers on both schools, upholding the school's constructivist philosophy, work hand in hand to take students one level higher at a time.

The 2005 TAKS data revealed the White subgroup dominated other student groups on both elementary and middle schools. Ninety-five percent of grades 3 -5 whites were proficient in reading and 88% were capable mathematicians. Their African American counterparts lagged behind by 14 percentage points in reading and 13 in math. The same disparity was apparent in middle school where the White student group had a math passing rate of 98% compared to 85% of their African American peers. To guarantee optimal and equitable education for all students, collective and conscious efforts were made. Necessary support systems were established immediately to give specific interventions to learners in need of specialized instruction. As a result, the 2008 and 2009 reading and math TAKS results showed comparable performance among all student groups on both campuses. Most importantly, data triangulation using other assessments given to students on a regular basis (e.g. Stanford 10, Common Benchmark Assessments, DRA, etc.) validated this steady growth. This consistency in using data to drive the instruction is what brings about the added value in each and every child at Briarmeadow. Accordingly, Briarmeadow has shown consistent and remarkable gains in

student achievement as reported in the Educational Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) -- the program HISD utilizes to track student growth.

A detailed explanation of the Texas assessment and accountability system can be accessed at www.tea.state.tx.us/.

2. Using Assessment Results:

Beginning with the end in mind, Briarmeadow uses a continuous school improvement planning model in analyzing student data. This planning process, derived from the work of Dr. Victoria Bernhardt and Dr. Douglas Reeves, calls for using multiple measures of data to focus efforts in improving the systems that generate the school's desired result: highest level of achievement for all students.

Briarmeadow's School Improvement Plan (SIP) is based on a comprehensive needs assessment performed by the campus data team prior to the start of the school year. Led by the Dean of Instruction who is highly trained and experienced in data management, the team uses disaggregated TAKS results; TEA accountability tables; Education Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS); Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS); Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS); Houston Independent School District (HISD) Chancery; and surveys from teachers, parents, and students to evaluate the school's strengths and challenges. An action plan with objectives and strategies supporting the goals outlined in the SIP are established. Likewise, resources are allocated and specific timelines are set to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the SIP.

Like other HISD schools, Briarmeadow uses student portfolios, content area exemplars, curriculum benchmark assessments, common assessments, teacher made assessments, and student cyclical grades to monitor the on-going achievement of all learners. This process allows the school to identify gaps in the curriculum and instructional programs, and make adjustments as needed. What sets Briarmeadow apart, however, is its purposeful and consistent monitoring of individual student progress in a timely fashion which ensures that no student is left behind. With student achievement in mind, Briarmeadow's data-driven principal established an instructional support team (i.e. literacy coach, content specialists, and interventionists) that works side by side with classroom teachers. This instructional support team, committed to improving the school's systems, reviews student data with grade level Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) every week to plan enrichment and intervention programs that meet the needs of the school's diverse student population.

3. Communicating Assessment Results:

Briarmeadow community exemplifies the ancient African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." The school goes beyond the traditional way of communicating with parents such as sending home letters, progress reports, report cards, and assessment results. Instead, Briarmeadow makes every effort to create a non-threatening environment -- one that is warm, friendly, and open -- to promote community and parental involvement. For example, letters sent home are translated in the students' home language and translators are available during meetings. In addition, Briarmeadow has an annual tradition of inviting parents and students to an Ice Cream Social before classes commence in August. The event gives them a chance to visit with their teacher and get a glimpse of what is in store for them throughout the year. Furthermore, this allows them to see old friends and create new ones; thus, creating a culture of camaraderie and a sense of belongingness. On a weekly basis the Briarmeadow Bronco Newsletter, which is known as the "Charter Chatter" is filled with the latest and greatest highlights about the school.

The principal also uses other means of communication like the district's Connect-Ed call out system which enables him to deliver general messages and important announcements in his most enthusiastic voice. Another great addition to our communication toolkit found in the district website is Grade Speed, a web-based grade

book which gives parents and students access to their academic report. A series of parent-training was conducted to familiarize parents with Grade Speed.

The school participates in the district's "Principal for a Day" initiative which aims to encourage business community leaders to visit and get involved with public schools. Briarmeadow's "Principal for a Day" learned about the school's systems, assessment results, and how data is used to increase student achievement.

More activities promoting family and community involvement are planned year round to ensure all stakeholders are well-informed of the school goals and accomplishments as well as the state assessment and accountability system. These activities which also aim to motivate stakeholders to take an active part in the school's pursuit of academic excellence include:

1. Open House
2. Monthly Parent Network
3. Monthly meetings with the Site Based Decision Making Committee which includes teachers, parents, administrators, and community representative
4. Community tours
5. Monthly PTO meetings
6. Grade level parent meetings
7. Monthly Pre-K Parent Workshop
8. Curriculum Nights (Science, Math, Reading)

4. Sharing Success:

"Happiness is not so much in having as sharing. We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." This quote by Sir Norman MacEwan summarizes Briarmeadow's intent to remain a catalyst for educational transformation and to support the nation's quest for supremacy in today's competitive global society.

The accolades Briarmeadow received from TEA, TBEC, and NCEA have driven a number of schools to visit Briarmeadow. Through "learning walks," guests witness the high-quality instruction going on in every classroom. To maximize the impact of these visits, teachers and administrators debrief with visitors to clarify questions and wonderings.

Briarmeadow participates in various pilot programs and action-research to help the district, the state, and the nation find educational programs and implementation models that meet the demands of the 21st Century. For instance, three Briarmeadow teachers joined a cohort charged to acquire a deeper understanding of the "looping model." This effort assists other HISD schools interested in implementing the looping process. Other pilot programs at Briarmeadow include the Technology Immersion Pilot (TIP) project, Reasoning Minds, and Word Generation.

Upholding the school's constructivist belief that learning is active and social, Briarmeadow teachers and administrators support deprivatization of teaching practice. They participate in regional and district-wide PLC's where they share their expertise and passion for learning. Teachers have presented in several professional development conferences in and out of the district. More than 500 educators listened to Briarmeadow's Campus Educational Technologist in his presentation entitled "Technology for Tots" at the 2010 Texas Computer Educators Association Convention held in Austin, Texas. Similarly, the principal -- committed to helping develop a cadre of instructional leaders who desire to turn around secondary schools -- welcomes aspiring principal interns to shadow him throughout the school year. This gives the interns first-hand experiences to lead an exemplary inner-city campus. To date, he has assisted three full time interns since the inception of the program in 2009.

Briar Meadow is thrilled about this opportunity to add another validation of the school's commitment for excellence on its wall of fame: the Blue Ribbon Award. This honor will continue to motivate Briar Meadow to fine-tune its systems and share its successes to others.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

Briar Meadow has a tradition of outstanding student achievement. Teachers take pride in saying, “We are a school of producers and not of consumers.” Additionally, teachers do not see students as vessels to be filled, but as partners in the learning process. This mind-set, consistent with the school’s constructivist philosophy, allows Briar Meadow to provide students with educational experiences that exceed the expectations set in the state mandated curriculum.

Supporting the district’s goal to create a college and career-bound community, Briar Meadow offers Pre-AP classes to all middle school students. These classes -- grounded in the Laying the Foundation® (LTF) framework -- engage students in active, high-level learning and give them the opportunity to acquire the concepts, skills, and habits of mind needed to be successful in college. Consequently, programs in the lower grades are thoughtfully designed to support this intellectually challenging middle school curriculum.

Briar Meadow is known for its strong assessment-based literacy program which begins with Guided Reading and builds towards Readers and Writers Workshop (RWW) in the upper grades. Both programs encourage freedom of choice to empower Briar Meadow students to take control and ownership of their learning. Guided Reading teachers incorporate the use of anchor charts and Daily 5 model to foster self-directed learning. They match books to readers which is vital in awakening the love of reading in our students. This passion for books is strengthened in RWW where students self-select their own texts based on what they like to read and are able to read.

All Pre-K through fourth grade students utilize the EnVision Math Program with third graders using Reasoning Mind as a supplemental program. Reasoning Mind, the math curriculum fully implemented in the fifth and sixth grades, is an online program funded through an Exxon-Mobil grant received three years ago. This web-based program individualizes instruction and permits accelerated student progress essential to preparing students for Pre-AP Math and Pre-Algebra classes in seventh and eighth grade respectively.

Social studies classes engage students in various multi-sensory activities like Total Physical Response (TPR), role-playing, and simulation which promote critical thinking needed to make connections and to analyze the economic, social, political, and environmental impacts of current and historical, natural and human-caused phenomena. These rich experiences gained in the lower grades set them up for success in the middle school where they are required to have a deeper understanding of the world, Texas History, and U.S. History.

Science is an avenue to know and experience the natural world. Briar Meadow provides students with relevant, content-rich, and hands-on science experiences that extend beyond the classrooms. Students are given opportunities to investigate nature on the school’s outdoor learning center designed by teachers, students, and parents. Employing the 5-E model -- Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate -- teachers stimulate students’ inherent curiosity as they teach the required Science standards. Moreover, Science teachers are experts in using teachable moments (e.g. Hurricane Ike, snow in Houston, earthquake in Haiti) to connect the standards with real-life events and experiences.

Briar Meadow recognizes the importance of visual and performing arts in the development of the whole child. Celebrating diversity, the music room contains musical instruments from around the world which students use in studying and performing World Music. The whole campus is a museum full of students’ precious framed artwork, while the multipurpose room is the Broadway filled with students eager to show their talents in acting, directing, and writing scripts.

Spanish, Briarmeadow's foreign language curriculum, is available for high school credit at the middle school level. The course extends for a period of two years allowing students to gain Spanish proficiency in a well-balanced curriculum.

Literacy and technology encompass Briarmeadow's curriculum to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the 21st century workplace. Teachers in all subject areas incorporate literacy strategies based on Marzano's research. Most importantly, Briarmeadow's digital-natives have access to multimedia devices at school to reflect today's technology infused society.

2a. (Elementary Schools) Reading:

(This question is for elementary schools only)

"Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers." – Harry Truman

Briarmeadow aspires to produce students who will not only thrive, but lead in the 21st Century. Teachers declare when talking about the curriculum, "We believe in going deeper and wider not just fast and definitely not just the minimum." This attitude of excellence, in conjunction with the school's constructivist belief, has prompted Briarmeadow to develop an assessment-based literacy program that meets the unique demands of its diverse student population as well as surpasses the standards set by the district and the state.

Pre-K through third grade students are exposed to guided reading, leveled independent reading, dramatization, read-aloud, and storytelling while fourth and fifth graders are transitioned to a workshop environment to prepare them for a more rigorous middle school curriculum. Guided reading, grounded on the works of Fountas and Pinnell, allows teachers to work with small groups of children on text that closely matches the learners' needs, abilities, and interests. Reading skills and strategies such as phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary are learned within the context of a book. Scaffolding instruction and matching books to readers which are the main components of the program help students gain confidence, thereby cultivating the children's natural passion for literature. Needless to say, "aliteracy" is never an issue at Briarmeadow.

To effectively deliver individual and/or small group guided reading instruction, teachers incorporate the use of anchor charts and the Daily 5 program, derived from the works of "The Sisters" -- Gail Boushey and Joan Moser. This model promotes self-directed learning as students engaged in authentic reading and writing practice with read to self, read to others, listening to reading, writing based on open-ended ideas and response to reading, and word work involving phonemic and language awareness.

The cornerstone of the school's balanced-literacy program is assessment for learning. Teachers use the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) to guide their instruction. In addition, teachers consistently monitor student progress through observations, student work, performance assessments, interest inventory, and other measures of collecting student data. Using these tools enables teachers to determine students' strengths and specific needs; hence, instruction is tailored to maximize results.

2b. (Secondary Schools) English:

(This question is for secondary schools only)

Briarmeadow is a community of critical-thinkers who share a passion for reading and writing. Literacy activities extend beyond the language arts classes. For instance, after breakfast students are seen engrossed in books while waiting for their first class. Once a week, upper grades students are given the opportunity to visit their "book buddies" in the lower grades and share their excitement of reading. Even on field trips, students on the bus are spotted reading or writing in their notebooks. Students frequently race each other for books or swap books with each other. They take every opportunity to read and discuss books with other students and

adults. Not surprisingly, a seventh grade student is delighted when a fourth grade teacher asks him in the hall, “What are you reading now?” or “I’ve got a book for you to try.” Teachers recommend books to students; students share books with teachers; and parents run book fairs and read with students.

Though such a literate community appears to be a seamless part of Briar Meadow’s identity as a constructivist school, it is not a happenstance. The school’s language arts program was methodically crafted to foster students’ thirst for literature. Consistent with constructivist view that learning is contextual, Briar Meadow’s program of choice for middle school is Readers/Writers Workshop. This approach allows students to understand texts on multiple levels as a result of self-selection, self-pacing, and time spent reading, sharing, and responding to literature. Literacy strategies are taught in mini-lessons to provide students a large chunk of time to read and write. Teachers confer with individual or small group of students and encourage learners to lead the discussions by asking open-ended questions. Essentially, classroom libraries contain books from a variety of genres which mirrors the school’s diverse and multicultural student population. Briar Meadow’s approach to achieve its mission, highest level of achievement for all, is affirmed by Dr. Seuss, “The more you read; the more things you will know. The more that you learn; the more places you’ll go.”

3. Additional Curriculum Area:

Briar Meadow is a school of technology -- a place where students are groomed to lead the 21st Century workforce. The campus technology action plan was created as a shared vision of technology integration to support the school’s mission: high levels of achievement for all.

Briar Meadow’s technology program is designed to give all students and teachers equal access to multimedia devices when and where they need it. To illustrate this, classrooms are 100% connected to the Internet. There are three fully equipped computer labs and two mobile labs; every classroom teacher has access to a laptop, projector, and document camera; and interactive whiteboards are placed logistically to enhance student learning. To top it all, every eighth grader is given the opportunity to check out a laptop for full 24/7 access. This infrastructure for technology is vital in helping the teachers incorporate the state’s technology applications standards.

At Briar Meadow, technology is integrated across the curriculum. To respond to the needs of today’s digital natives, all core-content area teachers plan lessons where students manipulate multimedia devices and use the Internet. For example, students in all classes are required to identify the source, location, media type, relevancy, and content validity of available information for their research projects. They create PowerPoint presentations, videos, and podcasts. Recognizing that first-rate math skills are essential for success in the 21st Century, Reasoning Mind is available for students in third, fifth, and sixth grades. The Reasoning Mind classroom is a hybrid of online and face-to-face instruction where the teacher gives each child individual attention and support. Another important aspect of this program is that students can access the lessons from home; hence they have the opportunity to continue their learning in a systematic way.

Briar Meadow’s effort to improve its technology program is coherent with its constructivist philosophy and supportive of its mission. Replicating the nature of today’s society in the classrooms allows teachers to facilitate authentic project-based lessons and intensifies students’ motivation. Technology enhanced lessons definitely help increase student achievement.

4. Instructional Methods:

The belief that every child is gifted and can be successful, given the appropriate tools and support, is embodied through the school’s differentiated programs. Key to Briar Meadow’s success in providing customized education to every student on campus is the staff’s dedication to familiarize themselves with every learner’s unique socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic background. Correspondingly, systems in place like

grade-level looping and clustered classrooms facilitate strong teacher-student rapport. This supportive environment unleashes Briarmeadow students' innate potential.

Instructional coherence is also emphasized at Briarmeadow. Using district curriculum documents -- HAPG (Horizontal Alignment Planning Guide), VAM (Vertical Alignment Matrix), Year-At-A-Glance, and TEKS/TAKS Correlations -- teachers work in collaborative teams to plan lessons that incorporate research-based strategies. This concerted effort to align the written, the taught, and the tested curriculum allows teachers to set benchmarks used in identifying specific student needs crucial to differentiating instruction.

What does differentiated instruction look like at Briarmeadow? Teachers modify instruction by matching the content, the process, and the product with students' readiness, interest, and learning profile. Workstations, compacting, tiered assignments, and cooperative grouping are some strategies typically observed across the disciplines. Accommodating multiple intelligences, students are given the opportunity to express their learning through non-traditional assessments like independent projects, oral presentations, videos, and poster-making. For example, in an eighth grade Social Studies class, some students expressed their understanding of mercantilism through a debate; one group role played its effects while others used PowerPoint presentations to showcase their mastery of the standard.

Technology essentially supports the school's endeavor to cater to the distinct needs of its special population. Aside from accommodations provided by general education teachers and support given by the inclusion specialist, students with special needs have access to a first-rate computer-based program: Voyager, Ticket to Read. Meanwhile, Gifted and Talented (GT) students enjoy a plethora of challenging activities in the web-based GT program: Renzulli.

5. Professional Development:

Briarmeadow is in agreement with Charlotte Danielson when she noted in her book *Framework for Professional Practice* that "high-level learning by students requires high-level instruction by their teachers." For this reason, building teachers' capacity to increase student achievement is a fundamental part of the School Improvement Plan.

To stay ahead of the trends and educational transformations, Briarmeadow teachers and administrators proactively participate in professional development inside and outside the district. They select high-quality training that relates to the specific needs of their students. For example, middle school teachers attend professional training in Laying the Foundation® (LTF) to enhance the quality of mathematics, science, and English instruction in the Pre-AP classrooms. This series of LTF training helps teachers increase their knowledge of the content, learn research-based strategies, and obtain vertically aligned instructional and assessment materials.

Readers and Writers Workshop teachers attend a week-long summer mini-conference to strengthen their knowledge of this approach to literacy instruction. Teachers new to Guided Reading and the Daily 5 model are expected to participate in professional training that address these areas prior to the beginning of classes. In addition, teachers network with other professionals to share best practices and resources.

Consistent with current research that the best way to build teacher capacity is through job-embedded professional development, Briarmeadow's schedule was strategically developed to provide teachers teaching the same grade level a common planning time to meet in learning communities. Early-release Fridays are dedicated for vertical team planning and/or focused presentation led by master teachers. Aside from two content specialists and a literacy coach who work alongside teachers, Briarmeadow teachers mentor and support each other. Peer observing peer, book study, and journal article review using text rendering protocols are some of the components of Briarmeadow's job-embedded professional training. This approach compels teachers to become reflective of their teaching practice; thus improve the quality of instruction and learning.

6. School Leadership:

Briar Meadow concurs that school improvement is a process, not an event. Thus, the school strives to create an internally coherent campus where everyone works in unison to achieve academic excellence for all in a highly diverse community.

In a nutshell, the leadership structure and the principal's role at Briar Meadow impact student achievement at all levels. Granting that communication is imperative to the success of the school, Briar Meadow designed a systematic way of disseminating information and policies to all stakeholders. The process begins with a weekly Monday morning administrative leadership team meeting which establishes the focus for each week. The team (i.e. the principal, principal intern, literacy coach, reading content specialist, Dean of Instruction, and special education coordinator) discusses student progress and instructional concerns as well as reviews articles on best practices and leading educational topics. This instructional focus is continued throughout the school by creating a shared calendar which highlights important events happening during the week. Furthermore, the administrative team meets with grade level and department chairpersons every Wednesday after school. During the meeting, the principal acts as a facilitator who encourages discussion through journal articles and insightful use of student data. Each grade level and department chairperson is expected to facilitate her/his respective team meetings every Thursday. Aside from this effort to align all school leaders, Briar Meadow has an open door policy which empowers teachers, staff, and parents to take an active part in the school's endeavor to provide a first-class education for all students.

Briar Meadow has a collaborative, reflective, and transparent culture which is needed to improve student learning. Teachers are eager to take on leadership roles and share the school's vision -- create a community of life-long learners. This does not happen by accident. Briar Meadow's principal sets the tone of collegiality and leads by example. He is a true instructional leader who teaches a class; covers a class when a teacher has an emergency; and attends professional training with teachers. An active member of the Houston A+ Challenge since 2003, he has participated in Harvard University's "The Principals' Center Institutes" such as *New and Aspiring School Leaders (2008)* and *National Institute for Urban School Leaders (2009)*. He definitely heeds Dr. Phillip Schlechty's advice, "The primary function of a leader is to inspire others to do things they might otherwise not do."

PART VI - PRIVATE SCHOOL ADDENDUM

This section is for private schools only

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 3

Test: TAKS

Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	78	82	77	88	88
Commended	38	20	26	26	25
Number of students tested	55	40	46	42	36
Percent of total students tested	98	98	98	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	76	81	65	87	87
Commended	32	14	9	17	12
Number of students tested	37	21	23	24	25
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	73	80	53	83	
Commended	18	10	20	14	
Number of students tested	11	10	15	24	
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	76	78		88	88
Commended	36	11		18	7
Number of students tested	25	18		17	14
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard	85	82	81	87	87
Commended	62	24	31	33	30
Number of students tested	13	17	16	15	20

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data are due to a small number of testing participants.

Other subgroup = white

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Grade: 3 Test: TAKS
Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	91	98	96	93	90
Commended	53	49	35	60	35
Number of students tested	56	51	46	42	40
Percent of total students tested	98	99	99	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	92	100	91	91	83
Commended	49	48	22	50	25
Number of students tested	37	21	23	24	24
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	91	100	100		
Commended	45	50	22		
Number of students tested	11	10	14		
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	96	100	80	88	100
Commended	52	32	30	47	23
Number of students tested	25	19	10	17	13
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard	85	100	100	93	95
Commended	62	71	38	73	42
Number of students tested	13	17	16	15	19

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data are due to a small number of testing participants. Other subgroup = white

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Grade: 4 Test: TAKS
Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	98	89	97	84	72
Commended	55	27	24	28	36
Number of students tested	40	44	29	32	33
Percent of total students tested	98	98	98	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	94	81	100	80	58
Commended	47	5	0	12	11
Number of students tested	17	22	17	26	19
2. African American Students					
Met Standard		82			
Commended		25			
Number of students tested		12			
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	94	91	100	75	58
Commended	50	9	7	8	25
Number of students tested	16	11	15	13	12
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard	100	87	92	87	83
Commended	85	27	39	33	44
Number of students tested	13	15	13	15	18

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data are due to a small number of testing participants. Other subgroup = white

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Grade: 4 Test: TAKS
Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	93	93	83	84	87
Commended	41	36	31	36	38
Number of students tested	41	44	35	19	32
Percent of total students tested	98	98	98	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	82	90	82	75	78
Commended	35	14	12	8	17
Number of students tested	17	22	17	25	18
2. African American Students					
Met Standard		91			
Commended		17			
Number of students tested		12			
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	82	82	81	73	82
Commended	29	27	13		18
Number of students tested	17	11	16	12	11
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard	100	100	85	93	100
Commended	54	47	39	40	50
Number of students tested	13	15	13	15	18

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data is due to a small number of testing participants. Other subgroup = white

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Grade: 5 Test: TAKS
Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	98	90	80	100	100
Commended	51	39	37	57	17
Number of students tested	45	33	27	42	29
Percent of total students tested	98	98	98	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	100	88	81	100	100
Commended	29	29	19	39	8
Number of students tested	17	17	21	18	13
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	100				
Commended	45				
Number of students tested	11				
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	100	75	90	100	
Commended	27	8	18	40	
Number of students tested	11	12	11	10	
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard	94	100	100	100	100
Commended	53	57	42	73	19
Number of students tested	17	14	12	22	21

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data are due to a small number of testing participants. Other subgroup = white

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Grade: 5 Test: TAKS
Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	89	93	88	97	82
Commended	33	30	30	38	24
Number of students tested	46	33	33	34	34
Percent of total students tested	98	98	98	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	89	94	80	100	67
Commended	11	12	20	22	23
Number of students tested	18	17	20	18	13
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	82				
Commended	27				
Number of students tested	11				
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	82	10	67	100	
Commended	9	8	10	30	
Number of students tested	11	12	10	10	
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard	94	91	100	100	84
Commended	35	50	58	41	24
Number of students tested	17	14	12	22	21

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data are due to a small number of testing participants. Other subgroup = white

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Grade: 6 Test: TAKS
Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	100	95	89	95	97
Commended	55	64	26	30	53
Number of students tested	49	44	39	40	34
Percent of total students tested	98	98	98	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	100	100	89	95	95
Commended	56	58	11	23	45
Number of students tested	34	26	19	22	20
2. African American Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	100	100	91	93	100
Commended	56	70	8	20	47
Number of students tested	25	23	12	15	19
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard	100	82	85	94	92
Commended	55	64	40	41	63
Number of students tested	11	11	20	17	11

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data are due to a small number of testing participants. Other subgroup = white

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Grade: 6 Test: TAKS
Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	100	100	97	98	94
Commended	61	64	61	40	49
Number of students tested	49	44	38	42	35
Percent of total students tested	98	98	98	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	100	100	95	95	95
Commended	56	62	42	32	35
Number of students tested	34	26	19	22	20
2. African American Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	100	100	100	93	95
Commended	52	61	50	7	26
Number of students tested	25	23	12	15	19
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard	100	100	95	100	91
Commended	73	55	75	53	83
Number of students tested	11	11	20	17	12

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data are due to a small number of testing participants. Other subgroup = white

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Grade: 7 Test: TAKS
Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	98	100	87	94	89
Commended	35	31	19	24	28
Number of students tested	48	39	36	34	29
Percent of total students tested	98	98	98	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	97	100	90	92	84
Commended	31	9	18	16	21
Number of students tested	35	22	22	25	19
2. African American Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	96	100	87	90	
Commended	38	14	7	14	
Number of students tested	26	14	15	21	
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard	100	100	87		94
Commended	27	43	27		35
Number of students tested	11	21	15		17

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data are due to a small number of testing participants. Other subgroup = white

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Grade: 7 Test: TAKS
Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	96	94	97	94	97
Commended	66	46	32	24	38
Number of students tested	48	39	38	29	34
Percent of total students tested	98	98	98	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	94	100	95	92	95
Commended	57	41	27	16	32
Number of students tested	35	22	22	25	19
2. African American Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	92	100	93	95	
Commended	58	43	13	14	
Number of students tested	26	14	15	21	
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard	100	100	100		100
Commended	73	48	53		47
Number of students tested	11	21	15		17

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data are due to a small number of testing participants. Other subgroup = white

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Grade: 8 Test: TAKS
Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met standard	100	100	79	89	83
Commended	39	34	22	46	48
Number of students tested	38	38	32	37	21
Percent of total students tested	98	98	98	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met standard	100	100	78	88	
Commended	29	25	13	28	
Number of students tested	21	20	23	18	
2. African American Students					
Met standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met standard	100	100	86	82	
Commended	21	31	10	27	
Number of students tested	14	16	21	11	
4. Special Education Students					
Met standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met standard	100	100		88	94
Commended	53	40		53	53
Number of students tested	19	15		17	17

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data are due to a small number of testing participants. Other subgroup = white

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Grade: 8 Test: TAKS
Publisher: TEA/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	100	100	97	94	100
Commended	79	76	53	55	52
Number of students tested	38	37	34	38	21
Percent of total students tested	98	98	98	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed					
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	100	100	96	88	
Commended	76	65	43	33	
Number of students tested	21	20	23	18	
2. African American Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	100	100	100	91	
Commended	86	63	38	36	
Number of students tested	14	16	21	11	
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard	100	100		100	100
Commended	74	80		76	59
Number of students tested	19	15		17	17

Notes:

The subgroups that do not have data are due to a small number of testing participants. Other subgroup = white

