

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

---

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Jill W. Jett

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

Official School Name South Aiken High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 232 E. Pine Log Road

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

City Aiken State SC Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 29803-6158

County Aiken

Telephone 803-641-2600 Fax 803-641-2413

Web site/URL http://sahs.acps.schoolfusion.us E-mail jjett@acpsd.net

Twitter Handle \_\_\_\_\_ Facebook Page \_\_\_\_\_ Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_ Blog \_\_\_\_\_ Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Sean Alford E-mail salford@acpsd.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Aiken County Public School District Tel. 803-641-2430

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

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Ms. Rosemary English  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

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

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

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

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

---

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. 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

---

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

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

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

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	214	210	424
10	206	173	379
11	169	162	331
12 or higher	169	185	354
<b>Total Students</b>	758	730	1488

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2 % Asian
  - 28 % Black or African American
  - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 60 % White
  - 3 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 17%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	109
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	143
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	252
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	1442
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.175
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	17

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 7%  
97 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Amharic, Arabic, Cantonese, French, Gujarati, Greek, Japanese, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 35%  
Total number students who qualify: 535

8. Students receiving special education services: 9%  
137 Total number of students served

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

- 10 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 4 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 2 Orthopedic Impairment
- 35 Other Health Impaired
- 52 Specific Learning Disability
- 0 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	5
Classroom teachers	64
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals	13
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	7

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 23:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	94%	97%	97%	98%	97%
High school graduation rate	84%	82%	85%	75%	80%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**  
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	304
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	65%
Enrolled in a community college	30%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	2%
Joined the military or other public service	3%
Other	0%

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

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

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

Our mission is to create a passion for learning and achievement that will serve students as they compete and contribute in a global society.

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

## PART III – SUMMARY

---

South Aiken High School is a high-achieving school that stretches and supports all students to reach their full academic and personal potential through the collaborative efforts and shared vision of faculty, staff, parents, and the community to nurture and support them. South Aiken is one of seven high schools serving students in Aiken County, a culturally-rich and diverse area of central South Carolina.

The opening of the Savannah River Site, a Department of Energy Nuclear Facility, in the early 1950s created a substantial population increase of technology professionals from around the world and the need for an additional high school to serve the growing number of students; South Aiken High School was built to accommodate this influx of families in 1981.

With a focus on accelerated learning opportunities for every student and a commitment to continuous reflection and refinement of our curriculum and strategies, South Aiken equips students for tomorrow's opportunities. South Aiken consistently ranks in the top 20% of schools in the state and has received numerous awards, including overall excellent ratings in the SC Excellence Report, an honor we've proudly received since 2012, and a Gold Level School rating for five consecutive years. South Aiken students far exceed the average state passage rate in math and social studies End of Course (EOC) testing. Last year, 10 percent of our seniors earned the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, the state's highest scholarship level. The Class of 2015 amassed \$19.2 million in scholarship offerings, breaking the scholarship total earned for not only the school, but also the district. We have twice received the U.S. News and World Report Silver Award and have produced 12 National Merit Finalists since 2010.

South Aiken is staffed with a highly-trained faculty; 66.7 percent of our teachers hold advanced degrees, which, according to the U.S. Department of Education, ranks our high school's teacher quality among the top 30 percent in the United States. South Aiken's faculty is not only well-educated, but also a well-functioning team. Our departments meet regularly to plan, discuss implementation of strategies and practices, and share ideas. Highly-trained teachers coupled with relevant professional development, common planning and an emphasis on literacy and formative assessment, have created a student-focused collaborative culture.

Educational experiences extend beyond the classroom. Our students participate in numerous extracurricular activities, ranging from athletics to their involvement in clubs, organizations and community programs. We have state and national award-winning DECA and NJROTC programs, a renowned student-led literary magazine and a school-wide initiative which provides enriching activities for reading and character development, while fostering mentoring relationships among teachers and students and promoting anti-bullying.

The School Improvement Council (SIC), comprised of faculty, staff, parents, students, and community members, is instrumental in our visioning process and strategic plan, as well as the coordination of school beautification projects and communication to our parents and community. Involvement of parents and the community at South Aiken is pivotal to our success.

South Aiken provides a variety of course offerings to all students, preparing each individual for his or her unique post-secondary path to college or a career. Over the last five years, our school has increased access to Advanced Placement (AP) opportunities with 18 course offerings. All students are encouraged to pursue advanced coursework; a quarter of our students are enrolled in AP classes. Our high-achieving students are well-supported in their rigorous classes. On average, our AP students enroll in 2.2 advanced courses each year, with 68 percent earning a passing score on their AP exam and receiving college credit.

Many South Aiken students are dual-enrolled in high school and college at the University of South Carolina Aiken (USC Aiken) and Aiken Technical College (ATC). In partnership with USC Aiken and ATC, South Aiken issues an average of 90 dual-enrollment credits each year. These advanced opportunities, combined with the expectation of excellence within the school, have resulted in exceptional test scores on college and career-readiness indicators. In the last two years, 77 percent of our seniors have taken the Scholastic

Aptitude Test (SAT) and exceeded the state and national averages on both the reading and math portions. Similarly in the same time period, South Aiken had 55 percent of its seniors take the American College Test (ACT), with scores exceeding the state average and boasting a performance ranking of 35th of 221 South Carolina high schools. Additionally, an impressive 92 percent of our juniors are certified Work Ready, having earned national career readiness certificates on Work Keys assessments.

In closing, South Aiken represents six different ethnicities and twelve non-English languages. Thirty-five percent of our total population is eligible for free or reduced meals, and nine percent are receiving special education services. We are committed to the individual success of ALL students and work collaboratively and deliberately to ensure all students are prepared to live fulfilling, productive lives.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

---

### 1. Core Curriculum:

South Aiken High School has established a learning environment that cultivates future-ready students to serve our community and world. We provide rigorous personalized educational opportunities to ensure student acquisition of foundational skills and support for college and career readiness. To appropriately challenge all students, core curriculum courses are taught at three levels of rigor: college prep, honors, and Advanced Placement.

The English curriculum moves students through a spiraled series of exposures and mastery opportunities as they repeat skills and ideas in increasingly complex contexts from one course to the next. With a shared interdisciplinary belief that communication skills are fundamental to the future success of all students regardless of their post-secondary plans, literacy is the cornerstone of South Aiken’s instructional model. Our curriculum advances students from English I to English IV. Many students receive high school credit for English I in eighth grade; these high-achieving students are encouraged to continue their English studies on our campus with Advanced Placement Language and Composition, Creative Writing, Digital Visual Literacy or English V Advanced Composition; or, to begin their college education through dual-enrollment, dual-credit opportunities available through partnership with our local post-secondary institutions. Each English course requires demonstrated mastery in the standards of communication, inquiry, reading of informational and literacy texts, and writing.

The Math curriculum supports South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards and utilizes one-to-one technology, graphing calculators, and the flipped classroom approach to support students’ diverse learning styles. Algebra I and Algebra II skills are reviewed as students begin Pre-Calculus to establish a foundation for equation-solving and trigonometric processes. In Geometry, the algebraic concepts are incorporated through applied geometry. Algebra I and Geometry have been designed to accommodate the honors and college-preparation levels within the same class through differentiated instruction and assessment. Freshman Success Math builds skills of underperforming math students to prepare them for success in more advanced mathematics course offerings of Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Probability and Statistics, Pre-Calculus and Calculus. Advanced coursework through rigorous Advanced Placement curriculum is encouraged for students in Calculus as well as Statistics.

The Science Department provides a dynamic inquiry and standards-based curriculum in life and physical sciences that promotes an understanding of interconnections within the sciences and the correlations between science, technology, society, and the environment. Freshman are encouraged to study Physical Science as a foundational course in preparation for their sophomore year’s Biology requirement. Juniors may select courses based upon their interests, such as engineering or medical studies. Students follow Biology I with Chemistry I, or concurrently enroll in both courses to advance their pace towards other course offerings, including Anatomy/Physiology, Chemistry II, Environmental Science, Marine Science, or Physics. Advanced Placement courses are available for Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, and both Physics I and Physics C. Individual and small group tutoring, as well as specialized assistance via individually-tailored computer programs are utilized to address specific skill deficiencies for struggling students. Students in every science classroom, regardless of level, are actively engaged in observing, questioning, investigating, problem-solving, making predictions, evaluating and communicating ideas.

Social Studies programs prepare our students to be engaged and informed citizens. South Aiken’s courses are selected and sequenced to not only meet state requirements, but also to ensure our students acquire a broad knowledge of our globalized world and an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and complexities. For students below grade level, teachers provide tutoring and utilize benchmarking to track progress, and multiple forms of assessment allowing students to demonstrate their understanding through traditional tests, maps, writing and projects. Students above grade level may select from five Advanced Placement courses, including Human Geography, U.S. History, Government and Politics, Microeconomics, and Psychology. Most freshman begin with World Geography. Modern World History is the core curriculum for 10th-grade students and Gifted and Talented 9th-grade students. United States History is a

required diploma course and is taken in the junior year; the End-of-Course Examination in this subject accounts for 20 percent of the final grade. Senior year offerings include Economics, United States Government, Civics and Sociology. All senior-year coursework is designed to guide students' understanding of the globalized world and to help them attain the skills necessary to contribute to its future.

South Aiken ensures college and career readiness through collaboration with our District's Career and Technology Center, partnerships with area businesses, as well as opportunities arranged by our school's guidance and career counselors, including career fairs and college information events. We utilize data from a future-readiness course titled Career Ready 101 to develop the student skills necessary for post-secondary success. Through workshops, presentations, internships, surveys and assessments, our guidance department helps students identify their interests and facilitates opportunities to explore them. We offer four career clusters on our campus and extended offerings are available at our Career and Technology Center.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

South Aiken High School offers students numerous opportunities for artistic expression, world-language mastery, career exploration, and life-skill development through various curricular opportunities and courses.

More than 500 students are enrolled and engaged in arts curriculum each year, including Art I, II and III, Chorus I through IV, Music Appreciation, Guitar, Band I through IV, and Theatre. South Aiken's renowned theatre program and Drama Club exposes students to literary works, theater terminology, artistic process, and experiential design, while producing two plays each year and participating in theatre competitions state-wide. The choral and music programs have demonstrated success in competitions and provide students with progressive years of study 1 through 4. Student interest in the marching band is on the rise, with an increase of 75 talented students participating in the last three years. Music appreciation and guitar round out available courses and opportunities in this area.

All freshman are required to enroll in physical education or Navy ROTC. These courses instruct students in a variety of movement skills, and have an embedded comprehensive health education program aimed to reinforce and enhance the health, health skills, and health attitudes of students, while promoting wellness and disease prevention. Following successful completion of 9th-grade physical education requirements, students may select to continue with additional classes aimed to increase strength, endurance, cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, and sport-specific skill development. Naval cadets may advance their Naval Science studies beyond the first year with maritime geography, oceanography, meteorology, astronomy, sea power, and national security, while leading and managing a unit within the school.

We believe that we must educate our students to be linguistically and culturally equipped in order to be true world citizens. Students at South Aiken High School may choose to learn French, German, or Spanish and achieve fluency by continuing their pursuit of a world language throughout four levels. Students learn their selected language by simulating real-life situations utilizing various techniques to develop their language skills, including a study of current events and music, literature, newscasts, podcasts, computer apps and letter exchanges with students abroad. South Aiken offers language clubs allowing students the opportunity to earn membership into the national high school honor society associated with their selected language of study.

The Career and Technology programs at South Aiken High School provide students from all grade levels the opportunity to enhance their college and career readiness skills. The Business Cluster offers courses in Integrated Business Applications, Desktop Publishing, Personal Finance, Accounting, Entrepreneurship, Marketing and Advertising. Future Business Leaders of America and DECA provide our students with real-world applications to apply their knowledge and skills. Our marketing students travel throughout the state and nation to study careers in fashion, sports and hospitality marketing, while participating in conferences and competitions. The school's DECA chapter operates a school-based enterprise managed and maintained as a hands-on laboratory. The Culinary program at South Aiken provides students with practical and theoretical experiences in preparation for entry-level food service positions. South Aiken's Welding Program and the iron-work of our students was featured in The Welding Journal, an international welding publication, during the 2014-15 school year. South Aiken's student welders may gain technical school

credit for their classes and must pass the same professional competencies as workers in the field. Our Teacher Cadet program is offered through the Center for Education Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement. The innovative, dual-credit college level course provides insight into the art, science and nature of teaching and explores the critical issues impacting education. More than 100 students each year learn conflict resolution skills through the Peer Mediation courses at South Aiken. These students are trained as Peer Mediators and Peer Leaders and are well-prepared upon course-completion to manage conflict and mediate resolutions.

Opportunities for student growth and success extend beyond the traditional high school coursework. Through the creation of engaging out-of-classroom experiences, South Aiken has created an environment in which all students are encouraged to discover their unique interests. Whether a student's heart leads them to the stage, the welding shop, the Navy, or elsewhere, South Aiken encourages and facilitates opportunities for all students to experience and follow their dreams.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

South Aiken High School is committed to providing diverse, data-driven interventions designed to help remediate and accelerate student progress and growth. These strategies include interventions to support students in improving their attendance, behavior and academics. Each strategy stems from a close review of school-wide data patterns and trends as well as individual student needs, and reflect the school's commitment to implement interventions rather than remove students through in-school and out-of-school-suspensions.

The South Aiken High School SIT (Student Intervention Team) accepts recommendations from teachers, parents, and guidance counselors and utilizes disaggregated school-wide data to identify students who are in need of interventions. With a goal to create student-specific intervention plans that will allow at-risk students to be successful and remain in school, interventions that are commonly utilized are Saturday School and academic recovery sessions, which allow students to earn back instruction hours missed and recover units failed. Students also have access to virtual course offerings; our virtual lab is accessible to students during the school day, as well as during summer school programs.

Our Freshman Academy model has been successfully implemented to assist students as they transition into the high school environment. Freshman schedules are purposefully focused to ensure small class sizes and placement of 9th-grade students in core classes at the beginning of the day. Freshman success courses in math and English are a part of course offerings and teachers within the Academy work in cross-curricular committees to target specific areas of concern.

Students are placed in support classes based on increased vertical articulation between the 8th- and 9th-grade teams, lower standardized test scores, as well as attendance and behavior patterns. All teachers have common planning by content area and collaborate weekly to design common lessons and assessments. All students participate in advisory classes. Some focus on reading and character education, while others address remediation needs specific to district and state assessment results.

An on-site Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health counselor, guidance counselors, and programs for at-risk youth, such as Positive Men, Positive Choices, support students who exhibit behavior issues. All school-wide interventions are designed to promote academic excellence and enhance students' cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. South Aiken's efforts to redirect behavior are rehabilitative, not punitive, in nature and are designed to increase student access to direct instruction.

#### 4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

South Aiken High School has a history of high academic achievement. The organization, replication, and utilization of sound instructional practices is the sturdy foundation upon which our success is based. Providing our students with precise and relevant instruction starts with assessing our students' fundamental learning skills, as well as their baseline abilities in all content areas.

Reading is the language of all learning and an individual's ability to read and communicate is often a reliable measure of their aptitude for success. We administer the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) to our students in the fall, winter, and spring to determine their Lexile Reading score. With this data, we identify students needing reading intervention through our credit-bearing Reading Intervention class. This assessment and intervention tactic has helped students increase their reading skills, bringing them up to grade level.

In all courses, our teacher Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) determine what course standard is the most significant in predicting successful course performance. This standard has now become the focus of Student Learning Objectives (SLO), which are designed to measure student growth. As part of the SLO process the PLC-created benchmark tests assess standards at the beginning and end of the year. Embedded in instruction throughout the year are various methods of formative assessment which are constantly modified and adjusted by the PLCs in their common planning periods. Using the data collected through formative assessments, the PLCs meet to discuss strengths and weaknesses and make determinations on how to best support student growth. The PLC process ensures students are taught using best practices. The PLCs also foster an environment where committed teachers analyze relevant data to monitor and adjust instruction resulting in individualized attention and greater student achievement.

In 2015, the state of SC required that all high schools administer the ACT to 3rd year students. The detailed analysis of student performance was instrumental in the development of the SLO for our core teachers. These detailed reports generated school-wide collaboration, helped teachers determine areas of focus, and established short-range and long-range student growth targets.

South Aiken stakeholders are well-informed on both individual and school-wide student achievements through distribution of report cards, progress reports, mailers and required teacher contacts. Our faculty and students perform at an extraordinarily high level daily. We document success with a definite starting point, a clear path forward and progress-monitoring throughout the process.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

South Aiken High School encourages a quality school culture and positive environment through various academic, social, and emotional services. Students are immersed daily in Reading and Character Education (R.A.C.E.). This program fosters a love of reading, provides weekly lessons on positive character attributes, and improves student-teacher relationships through engaging activities. South Aiken offers students a comprehensive high school experience with a variety of extra-curricular activities. Calliope, South Aiken's award-winning, student-led literary magazine, highlights the outstanding abilities of our students in the arts and creative writing. Our drama department exposes students to the elements of theater through the study of literary works, theater terminology, artistic processes, and experiential design. These students learn to utilize terminology in reference to theater job positions, improvisation, and historical background. They read plays and analyze the authors' intentions by creating publicity posters, casting a production, and designing a set using drawings or dioramas. South Aiken's championship-level athletic teams give students the opportunity to compete in swimming, track, basketball, football, baseball, soccer, cross country, volleyball, and softball. Many clubs and organizations available to our students include the National Honor Society, Student Government, DECA, Serteens, FCA, GSA, and Buddy Club (special needs students and peer mentors/friends). Through participation in these activities, our students learn compassion, the importance of community service, competitive skills, and a greater sense of self-confidence.

We engage, support and value our educators for "Teaching Like Your Hair is on Fire." The Teaching Like Your Hair is on Fire award recognizes five teachers each month who have been observed implementing exemplary teaching practices and actively engaging students in the learning process. To encourage relationship-building and demonstrate appreciation to our valued educators, the school organizes monthly luncheons and PTA breakfasts for teachers. During our monthly early release Wednesdays, team-building teacher competitions are employed to bolster camaraderie, collaboration, and laughter. Also, the school provides on-campus health screenings for our teachers and staff to provide a convenient, stress-free opportunity for our busy educators to monitor and maintain their health and well-being.

To motivate and encourage students, we regularly celebrate their success. Our students' college acceptance letters and scholarship awards decorate the high school's entrance. Students are granted free admission to athletic events and pizza parties for making the A/B honor roll and for positive behavior. We work collaboratively with our district's communications department to highlight achievements and successes with news stories and school board recognitions.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

One of the many ways South Aiken High School engages the community is through the Boys to Men at-risk group mentorship breakfast. South Aiken is well-aware of the trends and data showing our minority males are in the greatest danger of failing to finish their high school education. To combat this in our school community, we created a program to address the needs of this populace. This group meets weekly with students to discuss real-world issues and the skills and strategies necessary to become successful, productive members of the community.

South Aiken has successfully developed faith-based partnerships by inviting area religious leaders for breakfast with our principal and a discussion of potential solutions to problems facing our student population; these partners have been instrumental in providing support services for students and enhancing school-community relations. We have active booster clubs which provide financial and fan-based support for our band and athletics. Another manner in which we engage the community is through business-shadowing opportunities to prepare our students for the workforce.

A freshman orientation is held before the start of each year to provide incoming freshmen and their parents hands-on opportunities to learn more about our school, including how to access and use our online student records system, the layout of the building and location of student classes, expectations for dress code and student identification badges, as well as a discussion of safety and security from law enforcement. Each session is designed to empower parents to help their student be successful.

The community and our families are well-informed about our school through our school's website, the utilization of social media, as well as print and television media coverage of various events, awards and activities. South Aiken High School maintains a Facebook page, additional accounts for the school include pages for the PTO, Freshman Academy, DECA, and multiple athletic organizations. Our media center also promotes the school and literacy via Twitter. Lastly, through our partnership with retired educators, our education foundation (Public Education Partners) and our local hospital (Aiken Regional Medical Centers), retired educators visit new mothers during their hospital stay to provide books, resources and information on the importance of reading to children early-on through our Baby's First Teacher Early Literacy Initiative.

### 3. Professional Development:

Teachers at South Aiken High School actively pursue opportunities to enhance their instructional practices. With an interest in professional growth, our teachers have created The Supper Club, their own professional development team. The group earned its nickname by staying late one school night each week and helps steer school-based professional development. Based on teacher feedback through a survey which identified areas of greatest need, the Supper Club provides support on instructional strategies and a great time of fellowship and support for other educators.

Teachers at South Aiken also participate in staff development through Early Release Days which occur on the first Wednesday of each month. During this time, teachers participate in district and school-led professional development or work within their PLC to collaborate on lessons and assessments.

Our district professional development days this year have included the Leaders in Literacy Conference - literacy-focused sessions for all content areas and all grade levels; and, TECHfest - presentations and workshops for integrating technology to improve student learning. South Aiken teachers are a tremendous asset to their colleagues school-wide and district-wide. They are our greatest resource and were recruited to facilitate presentations for both conference days.

Also, the core content areas have common planning to effectively allow them to use professional learning communities to plan lessons through the analysis of student data. Our teachers strive to increase rigor and enhance their classroom effectiveness by not only actively participating in district and school continued learning sessions, but also professional development opportunities offered throughout the state and nation. Mastery Connect is a new tool that's been introduced at South Aiken just this year. It allows teachers to connect to other educators in the district and across the nation to access and share best practices.

The district and school administration work collaboratively with teachers to research and financially support attendance at conferences and workshops supporting our district's mission to be the premier district in South Carolina. We are a committed High Schools That Work faculty who thrives on a shared nationwide vision to prepare our students for a college or career pathway. Our commitment to challenging our teachers and our students continues to be a priority as the district and our school work toward a partnership with the National Math and Science Initiative in the next school year. Our plan is to expose our students to a wider variety of Advanced Placement opportunities through this effort.

### 4. School Leadership:

Graduates of South Aiken High School are prepared to meet every post-secondary challenge and are recruited by higher education institutions, business owners, and job creators. Our goal is to empower our students to develop the skills necessary to compete and contribute in a global society. As we partner together in this very important undertaking, we seek to provide the very best solution-driven environment

possible. Each person at South Aiken is viewed as a leader in the school. The faculty and staff operate under a shared vision that “All Means All.” South Aiken’s administration consists of one principal and four assistant principals. The administration meets as a team each week to discuss ways to improve the school. The principal believes in developing educational leaders throughout the school. This is done in part by the creation of teacher-led groups. The largest group is the School Leadership Team. This team meets once each month to discuss innovative solutions to problems such as the student tardy policy, scheduling issues, and the implementation of new instructional initiatives. The Supper Club also leads through the offering of instructional strategies that can be modeled and used by the teachers at South Aiken to improve student learning. Among the instructional strategies this group has introduced is the Workshop Model, emphasizing the role of students in learning. South Aiken teachers and Administrators were requested presenters for the HSTW 2015 national conference. Teachers also collaborate in their content-specific professional learning communities to discuss student data in an effort to make data-driven decisions about curriculum and instruction. The school also receives feedback from the Parent Teacher Organization and School Improvement Committee. These two committees are comprised of leaders from the area and help South Aiken High School stay connected to the community it serves.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

---

South Aiken holds to rigorous expectations across all content areas and academic levels. The high level of academic achievement we strive for is directly attributable to the positive expectations applied to all students. This is a purposeful effort to push students over the bar, beyond expectations and their academic comfort zones while also providing opportunities for success.

The process for creating such rigor starts with removing student tracking labels and enrolling all students in heterogeneous courses. All students receive access to challenging instruction their freshman and sophomore years ensuring they are well-prepared to confidently enroll in Advanced Placement and Honors-level courses their 11th- and 12th- grade years.

The emphasis on a rigorous and challenging curriculum has allowed 79 percent of South Aiken's student body to participate in SAT testing. An average composite score of 1489 testifies to the talent and level of preparation among our students. In 2015, South Carolina mandated that all third-year high school students take the ACT and ACT WorkKeys. These test scores further demonstrated the elevated academic ability of our student body. South Aiken's third-year students' ACT composite score of 19.5 surpassed district and state averages. Our students also outperformed both the district and state average on the ACT WorkKeys assessment, with nine students receiving Platinum Level certifications.

As part of our mandate to meet federal accountability standards, South Aiken also conducts the EOC Examination Program. This program assesses student knowledge in Algebra I, English I, Biology, and United States History and Constitution and accounts for 20 percent of a student's final grade. Our students and instructional program also demonstrated excellence through students' 80 percent overall passage rate and a 90 percent passage rate in Algebra I.

A rigorous and challenging curriculum at South Aiken has produced a culture of academic success. This level of success has been demonstrated on both South Carolina and nationally norm- and criterion-referenced assessments. Individual South Aiken High School students have demonstrated a level of performance unequalled by most others across the nation. South Aiken High School's celebrated Class of 2015 Valedictorian was a part of the team who represented the United States in the 56th International Mathematical Olympiad, earning a gold medal for Team USA for the first time in 21 years. Enrolling students in heterogeneous courses where high expectations of performance for all is the embodiment of our belief that all students can be successful and "ALL MEANS ALL."