

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 Dr. Janet W Adams

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

Official School Name Falmouth Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 52 Woodville Road

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

City Falmouth State ME Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 04105-1106

County Cumberland County

Telephone (207) 781-3740 Fax _____

Web site/URL

http://www.falmouthschools.org/_/index.cfm?sidebarr=321¢er=322&rightnav=335

E-mail janet.adams@falmouthschools.org

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*Mr. Geoff Bruno E-mail gbruno@falmouthschools.org

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

District Name Falmouth Public Schools Tel. (207) 781-3200

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 Mrs. Lucy Tucker

(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	82	75	157
7	83	87	170
8	92	87	179
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	257	249	506

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 6 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 92 % White
 - 0 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 1%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	5
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	509
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.010
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
6 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Croatian, Cantonese, Farsi

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 5 %
Total number students who qualify: 27

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %
79 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.

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

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers	24
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	26
Paraprofessionals	11
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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 21:1

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	98%	95%	94%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

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

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

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2008

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

Within a supportive environment, we strive to provide every student who attends our school with knowledge and skills necessary for competence in lifelong pursuits of learning, self-reliance, personal fulfillment, productivity, and social responsibility.

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

The town of Falmouth, Maine is situated on the coast of Maine, just north of Portland, Maine's largest city. The town covers 32 square miles, stretching from the coastline to rural areas further inland to the west. Falmouth serves as a bedroom community to Portland, as many residents work in or around the greater Portland area. Our town boasts a local harbor, indoor and outdoor ice skating facilities, golf courses, a medical center, extensive hiking and biking trails, and a host of small shops and restaurants.

Falmouth was settled in the 1600s, originally covering an area that is now Portland, Cape Elizabeth, South Portland, and Westbrook. Total population of the town has grown from about 1,500 in 1900 to 6,000 in 1970, to approximately 12,000 at present. Approximately 25% of the town's population is over 55 years of age, and 19% of our town's population consists of school age children. Approximately 60% of the town's residents hold a college degree, with about 21% of the town's total population holding a graduate degree or professional certification. Falmouth's median household income is about \$67,000. We are primarily a white collar, suburban town. Our school district enrollment has grown from 1,600 in 1970 to approximately 2,200 at present.

Falmouth public schools are consistently ranked among the top schools in Maine. We are governed by a single municipality. Our school board is made up of seven members and three student representatives from Falmouth High School. The school district has three school buildings, all situated on one campus in the heart of the town's geographic boundary: Falmouth Elementary School, a K-5 elementary school with a student population of 930; Falmouth Middle School, a 6-8 school with a population of 510; and Falmouth High School, a 9-12 school with a student population of 700. Our district's graduation rate is consistently above 90%. Our proficiency rates on state assessments are consistently above 85%. Our district's mascot is the Falmouth Yachtsmen in reference to our proximity to the sea, and nautically themed names are prevalent throughout the district which lends strength to our school district's sense of community.

Falmouth Middle School is currently home to 510 students in grades six through eight. The school building was originally a high school serving students in grades 9 -12. Over the past several years, the composition of the school has changed, at times housing a junior high and high school, then a 5-8 middle school, and finally to our current configuration of a 6-8 middle school. We have 59 professional educators along with two secretaries, two lunch aides, and 11 educational technician positions. We have eight core teachers at each grade level, allowing us to have two teams, or "crews" of four teachers apiece at each grade level. In grade six we have split each of the four-teacher crews into two smaller teams comprised of approximately 42-48 students. We see an advantage to having 2-teacher teams in sixth grade as students transition from the elementary school into the middle school. Teachers are better able to build relationships, know and understand their students' learning needs, and differentiate instruction when they see only 45-48 students during the day. Students attend core academic classes and world language classes every day. Our unified arts program includes art, music, physical education, health, and technology education classes on a regular, rotating basis. Unified arts classes are approximately 55 minutes in length. We have an advisory program we call "Dock" in keeping with our district's nautical themed mascot. Dock groups are facilitated by a teacher or other professional, which allows us to keep these groups at about 10 students apiece. Dock groups meet for at least 10 minutes at the start of the day three times each week.

Falmouth Middle School is known by its high student achievement along with strong sports and music programs. Our basketball team, for instance, has remained undefeated for many years. Our middle school jazz band, affectionately named the "Iron Twinkies" by the band's first members, has earned state recognition for 15 years straight.

Our students participate in a wide variety of extracurricular activities. Offerings change from year to year as student interests change. Currently we offer intramural basketball for students twice a week before school. Students often join in a game of ping pong between the time buses arrive and the start of the school day. After school students can choose from Civil Rights Team, Theater/Drama, Math Team, Select Chorus, Jazz Band, Math Counts, Science Club, Student Council, Team Green/Ecology Club, Debate, Science Olympiad, and working on our arts magazine Motley.

At Falmouth Middle School students earn good grades and achieve high scores on state assessments, but what makes us special is the unprecedented commitment by staff to provide the highest quality education for students. We have high expectations of our students, both academically and behaviorally. Our staff members genuinely like middle school age students, and we celebrate the quirki-ness that defines the adolescent. We approach learning with a business-like attitude and a sense of humor equally. We maintain a strong Student Centered Team (SCT) approach to identifying and addressing students' needs. We employ proficiency based practices, not because they are the newest trend in education but because they make sense for our students. Our school environment embodies integrity.

Since receiving the Blue Ribbon Award in 2008, Falmouth Middle School has continued to refine the practices that have made us an outstanding middle school. Changes to our school are made only after thorough consideration of how they impact students. Research about adolescent development guides our choices. We continue to support teacher leadership through our professional development program, and teachers' voices are heard and considered throughout decision-making. We continue to foster strong relationships with families through clear and frequent communication. Falmouth Middle School is a thoughtfully evolving community of learners of all ages. Our core values of respect, responsibility, honesty, kindness, and safety drive all we do.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At Falmouth Middle School all students meet daily for all core classes. Each core class is approximately 55 minutes in length. Teachers use commonly planned units for instruction, based on the Maine Learning Results. Assessments are designed by teachers, and are also based on the Maine Learning Results. We have eight core teachers at each grade level, allowing us to have two teams, or “crews” of four teachers apiece in each grade. Our teaming approach allows all teachers to build strong relationships and easily differentiate instruction for students’ learning needs. Although we have two teaching teams at each grade level, teachers plan together and pace instruction similarly to ensure continuity of instruction between the teaching teams. Writing is a focus in all content areas, including mathematics. We also offer additional reading and mathematics support for students who need it through our Response to Intervention (RtI) program. Identified students meet several times per week in small groups with the RtI literacy or mathematics teacher in addition to their daily reading and mathematics core instruction.

In sixth grade the instructional focus evolves from learning to read and write, to reading and writing to learn. Students acquire foundational skills through a focus on analysis of plot, setting, characterization, point of view, conflict, and theme via a variety of genres. Students study short stories, novels, and informational pieces at all levels. To deepen content reading, strategies for reading informational text and expository writing are integrated with science and social studies. Students refine comprehension and response skills through the use of graphic organizers, questioning techniques, and vocabulary development. Students who qualify for our Gifted and Talented program receive daily English Language Arts (ELA) instruction at their academic level in a pull-out program. The curriculum in our Gifted and Talented program parallels that of our general education classrooms.

We believe all students should be able to reason and communicate proficiently in mathematics. In light of this core belief, our students spend significant portions of their time in mathematics classes solving problems that require thinking, planning, reasoning, computing, evaluating, and communicating. The goal is for students is to become confident in their ability to do mathematics and to become mathematical problem solvers. Group work is an integral part of all mathematics learning, and students are expected to share their thinking with others. As part of our math program, we offer a honors mathematics class which is an accelerated program designed to meet the educational needs of students who consistently demonstrate superior performance in mathematics as determined by scores on the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), and Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) mathematics tests, as well as teacher recommendations. Students who meet the learning expectations of the Falmouth Middle School Honors Mathematics program will have met the learning goals of middle school mathematics and the equivalent of Honors Algebra I, and they are eligible to begin the high school mathematics sequence with Honors Geometry.

Our science curriculum is based on inquiry and exploration. Metric measurement is taught and expected to be used by students in grades 6-12. In sixth grade students learn how to conduct controlled experiments and write lab reports. These skills are further developed in grades seven and eight. As students learn content specific information they are expected to participate actively in class discussions, take notes, read for information, record data, analyze information, and write conclusions. Students often create models and compare them to actual systems to deepen their understanding of complex ideas. Our students apply their science learning in authentic settings. For instance, our eighth grade students gather data annually from tide pools along the shore and submit it to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute as part of a study about the impacts of native and invasive species.

The social studies curriculum is based on the themes of government, history, culture, economics, and geography. Students in grade six explore these themes in ancient civilizations. Seventh grade students study these themes as they apply to the middle ages, and eighth grade students study them through the lens of United States history, civics, and economics. Skills emphasized include research, writing, and public speaking. Students engage in role-play, note taking, small group projects, presentations, and independent

topic choice. Students at all levels analyze and compare content information to modern social issues or current events. Expository and argumentative writing are emphasized at all grade levels in social studies.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Falmouth Middle School students choose Spanish or French as a world language to study prior to entering sixth grade. World language classes meet daily for 45 minutes in seventh and eighth grade and for 30 minutes in grade six. The focus of the world language curriculum is to build proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing the language. Teachers strive for at least 90% of instruction to be in the target language in all classes. By the end of eighth grade, students will have completed the expectations for level I coursework in the language and are eligible to enter level II courses in Spanish or French in high school. Students engage in role-play, games, songs, storytelling, drawing, writing, and dialogue to develop their skills. There is a strong focus on vocabulary-building and "real-world" language, and students are encouraged to develop varied strategies for communication.

Our visual arts curriculum is based on the Maine Learning Results. Projects allow students to demonstrate higher levels of thinking in their expression of visual concepts, skills, terminology, and processes. Students study established artists, art history, and art as a cultural component. As with the other unified arts courses, the curriculum builds upon skills established in earlier years and becomes more challenging as students mature. We work to teach techniques that allow students to better express themselves with different tools and materials. Students also build a vocabulary that helps them give voice to their ideas. Sixth graders have art classes twice a week for a quarter, seventh graders twice a week for semester, and eighth graders twice a week for a trimester.

Our performing arts curriculum includes general music instruction as well as band and chorus offerings for interested students. Students attend band, chorus, or general music classes twice per week. The curriculum is based on the Maine Learning Results and focuses on building and applying basic skills through brass, wind, percussion, and voice. The general music curriculum exposes students to different genres, develops basic skills through exploration of a variety of instruments, and provides background on music history and culture. Our band and chorus groups, which attract more than 50% of the student body, evolve from attainment of basic skills to performance of complex material. These groups perform several times each year, and participate in community events such as parades and concerts at nursing homes. We offer opportunities such as jazz band and specialized chorus groups outside of the school day for students who wish to broaden their music experiences.

The Physical Education (PE) curriculum is designed to be fun. It exposes students to activities that promote personal wellness and physical well-being. The curriculum, based on the Maine Learning Results, focuses on non-competitive activities such as jumping rope, rollerblading, and snowshoeing. Although some introduction to team sports is included so that the skills learned in grades K-4 can be used, active participation and making every child feel successful are our primary goals. All students have PE classes yearlong, once a week for 55 minutes. Adaptive PE classes are offered for students who need it.

Our health program is a comprehensive approach that addresses topics of physical, mental, social, and emotional health. All curriculum is based on the Maine Learning Results. Lessons are designed to build self confidence and positive self image. Students are introduced to wellness concepts in a spiraling fashion from grade six to eight, moving from the concrete to the abstract as students mature. Topics range from safety and personal health to issues that teens are concerned about such as adolescence and sexuality, drug and alcohol abuse, and careers. As support to the curriculum, we offer students hands-on work such as cooking, yoga, gardening, and first aid. Our sixth graders attend classes twice per week for a semester, our seventh graders have class twice per week for a quarter, and our eighth graders have class twice per week for a trimester.

Technology Education at Falmouth Middle School is a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) based program where students are engaged in hands on learning. Students design, create, and test solutions to real problems, based on engineering concepts. All students are encouraged to understand and apply the Engineering Design Process. Units of study include airfoils and magnetic levitation, rocketry, cranes, sumo-cars, and hot air balloons. All units of study are based around scientific laws and principles

such as Bernoulli's, Archimedes' and Newton's Laws of Motion. Sixth and seventh grade classes meet sixteen times per year, and eighth grade classes for twelve classes per year.

Additionally, through our library media specialist we provide instruction in research skills and online safety. Our library includes a green screen and maker space for students, and our library media specialist offers instruction in digital photography for students once per week. Teachers collaborate with the library staff to integrate materials in thematic units. Our two school counselors see almost all seventh and eighth graders in a quarterly, once a week class. In seventh grade, we invite Junior Achievement volunteers from the business community to teach economic and business literacy that engages students in actively learning about how business functions and introduces the idea of entrepreneurship and individual career paths. In eighth grade, students learn what goes into making successful career decisions and how to plan backwards to high school & college choices.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Supporting the needs of all learners is a primary focus at Falmouth Middle School. We have a strong three tier RtI system for math, literacy, and behavior. Our Student Centered Team (SCT) is the mechanism by which our general education supports and strategies are generated. SCT meetings are held at each grade level where teachers refer students for myriad concerns to a team of teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and specialists in instruction, behavior, and special education. The team uses a think-tank problem solving approach to support individual learners. All core teachers are part of the RtI team where instructional strategies and the need for supplemental instruction at the tier 2 or tier 3 level is discussed. Tier 2 double dose instruction is largely done by teachers in the classroom, during study time, or after school. Our tier 3 students receive additional supplemental instruction for skill gaps from a highly qualified math RtI teacher and a RtI literacy specialist. A unique resource that we offer to support learners is a study skills teacher/coach for students who require significant support for weak executive functioning skills. These students are scheduled with a teacher for study skills instruction and academic support or consultation.

The core curriculum (tier 1) at Falmouth Middle School is carefully crafted with the needs of all learners in mind. For example, the writers' workshop model focuses on taking students from their current academic levels and supports individual growth. Pre and post unit writing samples allow teachers to review strengths and identify areas of continuous growth for targeted instruction.

The bulk of student reading in ELA is independent reading, which allows students to select texts of interest with appropriate reading level in mind to maximize comprehension and literary analysis. Students are provided significant choice for book projects to demonstrate their learning. Class novels are provided in audio format for struggling learners, and the materials are scaffolded and differentiated for various levels of learners.

Our math program focuses on group and individual problem solving and conceptual math learning. Teachers consistently use careful, flexible grouping and regrouping to maximize learning opportunities. Our RtI math teacher provides intensification for tier 2 math students to fill gaps within math units. At the sixth grade level, we offer a small group math class with a focus on algebraic thinking, while solidifying basic foundational skills through customized learning software. As the students' skills are built up, they are taught the salient units of our core math program in order to enter seventh grade math the following year, with continued RtI support.

At the seventh and eighth grade level, we offer Humanities, a block taught by a teacher and an educational technician for a small group of students who require fewer teachers, more direct adult support, and a small learning environment. Themed units integrate social studies and ELA standards that are paced appropriately for the learners. The students are scheduled in the Humanities program for three periods a day in order to maximize learning and limit the homework required of them.

Our middle school promotes technology in all classrooms, as we are a 1:1 device school. Our teachers use technology as an integral part of instruction in all areas. Teachers widely use Google Classroom.

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

Our school currently uses two different standardized assessments to evaluate students; the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) to measure student growth in math and reading, and the Maine Education Assessment (MEA) to evaluate student learning in math, reading, writing (grades 6-8) and science (grade 8). Grade levels are also using common assessments within the content areas to monitor teaching and learning.

In the fall content teams are provided the individual student and grade level data for the NWEA MAP and the MEA. Time is provided for content teams to examine and manipulate the data as a group in order for teachers to address student needs as well as evaluate their instruction across grade levels. These results are also used as a part of determining support services (RtI, special education needs, etc) for students who may need it.

Teachers are provided common planning time daily at each grade level in order to coordinate instruction with their content partners, as well as design and score common assessments. These planning periods vary from 55 to 80 minutes per day. Content teams are provided seven hours of paid time after school to meet throughout the year. In this way teachers are able to provide a guaranteed viable curriculum for all students, and ensure that the high academic expectations that our community expects are met.

Assessment results are shared with students, parents, and the community in various ways. All parents and students have access to current classroom academic performance through the online Power School Portal. Student-led conferences are held twice a year so that students may present and discuss their progress. Standardized test results are sent home to parents and students each year. Overall school results on standardized testing are presented to the School Board each year with comparisons to other neighboring high performance school districts.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Falmouth Middle School students are personally invested in learning. They frequently reflect on their work and set their own goals for improvement. Teachers emphasize the value of learning by encouraging students to try many approaches to solving problems, and providing multiple attempts for students to learn concepts and skills. Students have a good deal of choice about how they present their learning. Our eighth grade students select a problem to research and present each week, a process we call “Fab Friday.” Our seventh graders enact medieval lifestyles in an extensive integrated unit. Our sixth grade students demonstrate their knowledge of Newton’s Laws by building model roller coasters. The principal holds a student discussion forum several times per year when all interested students are invited to talk about topics of importance to the student body. Our schedule includes study/support time for students to meet with teachers. Additionally, we offer activities before and after school designed to meet students’ interests. These include clubs for technology, student council, gardening, science, math, and supervised online gaming groups. We keep our library open for homework help daily, and teachers stay after school to help students several days per week. To make these activities accessible to all students, we provide bus transportation home for all students who stay after school and we open the building for students half an hour before the start of the school day.

We have an advisory program that ensures at least one adult knows and is connected to every student. This relationship building increases personal connection to school and aids academic success. The size of advisory groups is purposely kept small by including staff other than classroom teachers. Twice yearly student-led conferences are arranged through the advisory group, which gives parents and students more time to communicate around academic and personal goals.

We have two school counselors who follow the same groups of students throughout middle school. This allows counselors to establish strong relationships with students and families. Students see their counselors in varied roles and functions. The counselors develop class lessons and host weekly small lunch groups. They coordinate transition activities for incoming sixth graders as they enter middle school, and for eighth graders as they prepare for high school. They provide ongoing support to students and parents throughout the school year, and provide referrals and coordination with outside supports and agencies.

Teachers are supported in all aspects of their work. Through participation in professional learning teams and shared leadership, teachers are empowered to be part of solutions, where all sides are heard and there is autonomy in professional decision making. Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and the Falmouth Education Foundation recognize teachers’ efforts through monetary grants for classroom use. Perhaps the most important factor in teachers feeling supported is the unusually respectful atmosphere in the school. Adults model the expectations for interpersonal interactions, and students respond by showing respect to teachers, peers, and the school in general. Students are often heard saying “thank you” to teachers as they leave the room at the end of class.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

In general parent involvement is high. Falmouth Middle School views families and the community as partners in our children’s education. The relationships between school and parents is supportive, and parents have a voice in how we are meeting student needs. Specific strategies the school has found most successful in working with family and community members for student success and school improvement include communicating clearly and frequently, and deliberately making families part of the school community.

The school communicates with families about student learning and school events through a variety of means. We hold open house events at the start of each school year. These highly attended events provide information about the curriculum, address transitions for each grade, and give important information to parents about social and emotional topics for middle school students. We hold student-led conferences

twice yearly through our advisory program. The structure of these conferences allow parents, teachers, and students to work as a team, focused solely on the child's learning. Our teachers email parents weekly with information about upcoming content, special events, and everyday matters. The principal writes a newsletter each week for families.

Deliberately making families part of the school community is another strategy we employ to enhance student success. In general, our school maintains a welcoming environment. Visitors are greeted warmly when they call or visit the building. We rely on volunteers and parent participation to carry out many of our programs. For instance, volunteers work in our library and accompany students on field trips. Our sports and music boosters heavily support our extra curricular programs. Teachers invite guests from the community to speak or assist with projects. Our district's strategic planning process, which includes specific actions for each school, involves community dialogue in goal setting. When we host a Wellness Day in the spring, parents and community business members facilitate a variety of workshops for students. Our PTO sponsors or supports several school-wide events throughout the year, including school dances, a cookout in the spring, and teacher appreciation luncheons. This group also maintains a Facebook page to advertise school events. Parents participate in special days, such as the sixth grade holiday breakfast, a festival that culminates our sixth grade's ancient cultures learning known as Greek Week, our seventh graders' celebration of Medieval culture, and our eighth graders' end of school service learning project known as Discovery Week.

3. Professional Development:

Falmouth Middle School is committed to the district's goal of building professional learning communities. Professional learning is designed to focus on student achievement or improving the social, emotional, or mental health of students. Professional learning is differentiated to meet individual teachers' needs as well as the needs of the school and district as a whole. Teachers each write goals, one related to student learning and another related to an area of professional growth, that serve as the focus for their individual professional development throughout the year. Additionally, teachers collaborate in professional learning. We accomplish this through a variety of means.

All teachers participate in Professional Learning Teams (PLTs). These are groups of teachers who have a common desire to learn more about a professional topic. Most are composed of teachers from the same grade level or content teaching area, but others are a mix of teachers from different areas of the school. PLTs meet approximately once a month. Although there is a designated facilitator of each PLT group, each group member shares responsibility for carrying out goals and contributing ideas to discussions. Teachers submit proposals for PLT work they would like to undertake during the year. All PLT proposals align to the goals in the district's 24 month plan and/or school-wide focus areas. PLT topics include Stress Reduction Techniques for Use in the Classroom, The "Flipped Classroom", The Middle School Brain, Writer's Workshop, Collaborative and Proactive Solutions to Behavior, Technology-related Learning, and Lesson Study in Mathematics.

In addition to PLT work, all teachers are members of content area teams. We have content teams for English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, world language, special education, and the unified arts. Content teams also meet once a month. Their focus is on the structures of proficiency based learning, including identification of standards to be taught, assessed and reported, as well as the development of common assessments. In content teams teachers share student work and develop cohesive scope and sequences of instruction to ensure continuity for students from grade to grade. Teachers also meet as grade level teams approximately once a week and with teaching partners almost daily during common planning time. Faculty meeting time is often used for whole school professional development on topics such as a proficiency based learning, social and emotional issues important to teens, or safety.

In addition to in-house professional development, teachers are given three professional leave days to pursue learning outside the school. Some of our teachers attend or present at conferences at the regional or national level and share their learning with colleagues in Falmouth through PLT, content meetings, grade level meetings, and/or school wide forums.

4. School Leadership:

At Falmouth Middle School leadership for student growth and safety is a shared responsibility. We believe that no single person has the best answer to a problem, and everyone involved in a decision is accountable to carrying it out. We view all stakeholders—administrators, teachers, parents, students—as valuable members of the groups they serve. We carry out our duties with integrity; respect is modeled in all we do. This attitude is pervasive throughout the school, as an expectation from the district leadership, the principal, and the community. We are here, collectively, to serve students.

We have one principal, one assistant principal, two school counselors, one social worker, one behavior strategist, and an instructional strategist and a school psychologist who both work with the middle school and the high school. In addition teachers also share the leadership in some way. Among these people, the responsibilities for ensuring the safety of students, the integrity of the instructional program, and the relationships with parents and the community are carried out.

The principal's focus is instructional leadership, in addition to ensuring overall safety and a positive school climate. The principal and assistant principal meet daily to discuss student issues, plan classroom observations, and keep each other abreast of any ongoing concerns or initiatives. The assistant principal and the principal are both involved in teacher supervision and student discipline.

Teacher leaders are an important part of our leadership model. Teachers lead our professional learning teams, keeping notes and communicating with the principal about progress. Our content leaders plan and facilitate monthly meetings with other teachers in their content teaching areas. They also meet with the principal monthly to share progress, plan the budget, and contribute to school-wide instructional initiatives. Grade level team leaders meet monthly with the principal, and the principal often attends weekly grade level meetings. This maintains fluid communication between the classroom teachers and the administration.

Our instructional strategist meets with teaching teams approximately once a month to discuss students in need, whether academic or emotional. Teachers use this opportunity to brainstorm solutions for struggling students and contribute to the planning of their success. The school counselors and principal are part of these monthly meetings as well.

The school counselors, the assistant principal, and the principal meet weekly to share ideas about school-wide assessment, scheduling, school climate, and specific student concerns. The social worker, behavior strategist, and school psychologist, along with all special education and 504 case workers are empowered to make decision about student well-being. Each of these people communicates ideas and solutions clearly and frequently with others who are involved with their students.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One aspect of Falmouth Middle School that makes us so successful is the authenticity of professional learning. Our professional development program is varied and differentiated to meet teachers' individual goals for student achievement as well as the school's and district's goals. All professional learning is aimed at improving academic achievement and/or students' physical, social, emotional, and mental health. Most activities are planned and facilitated by teachers themselves. Because our professional development is embedded in many different ways, it is meaningful for teachers and impactful for students.

One unique practice within our professional development program is our Professional Learning Teams (PLTs), groups of fewer than ten teachers who are interested in learning about a topic related to their area of expertise. At the start of the school year teachers submit ideas they want to pursue. We require that PLT proposals support the school's or the district's goals, all of which focus on students. Most PLTs are composed of teachers from the same grade level or content teaching area, but others are a mix of teachers from different areas of the school. Although there is a designated facilitator who keeps notes and updates the principal on progress, each group member shares responsibility for carrying out goals and contributing ideas to discussions. These groups meet approximately once a month. PLT topics include Stress Reduction Techniques for Use in the Classroom, The "Flipped Classroom", The Middle School Brain, Writer's Workshop, Collaborative and Proactive Solutions to Behavior, and Technology-related Learning. A group of seventh and eighth grade math teachers created a PLT known as Lesson Study in Mathematics. As part of this professional learning activity, teachers identify an area of focus, collaborate to plan lessons, observe each other teach the lessons, confer afterwards to improve the lesson, and reteach it. They have observed in each other's classrooms, and they are also partnering with a school in another state to collaborate virtually. This learning is directly beneficial to student learning and empowering to the professionals who participate. Another, the Farm to School Initiative, involves professionals from across the district to implement the Farm to School initiative that is part of the district's two year strategic plan. These teachers integrate "farm to school" hands-on activities into our art, science, health, and special education curricula at Falmouth Middle School through authentic projects such as a Junior Chef Challenge, a Victory Garden-like advertising campaign, and seed starting in our greenhouse. Through the PLT process teachers are able to make choices about the types of activities that are meaningful to them and their students. Accountability comes through meeting notes, activities implemented in the school, and presentations to colleagues at full staff meetings.

PLTs are only one component of our professional development program; other components are equally meaningful to teachers. Teachers set individual goals for student achievement and professional growth each year, all teachers utilize common planning time with colleagues to plan lessons consistently, and all teachers meet by content area groups monthly to discuss proficiency based instruction, design common assessments, and examine student work together. School-wide in-service sessions are designed to be active, with lively discussion. District-wide we have brought together teachers from the middle school and high school to participate in choice driven, teacher led discussions based on interest. Our authentic, relevant professional learning is a powerful influence on our students' success.