

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Dr. Kim Fisenne

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

Official School Name Central Academy of Technology and Arts

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 600 Brewer Drive

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

City Monroe State NC Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 28112-6111

County Union County

Telephone (704) 296-3088 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL http://cata.ucps.k12.nc.us/ E-mail kim.fisenne@ucps.k12.nc.us

Twitter Handle https://twitter.com/cata\_monroe Facebook Page https://www.facebook.com/CentralAcademyCATA/ 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.

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

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Andrew Houlihan E-mail andrew.houlihan@ucps.k12.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Union County Public Schools Tel. (704) 296-9898

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.

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. John Collins  
(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.

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

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

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

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. 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

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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):
- 30 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 9 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 11 High schools
  - 3 K-12 schools
- 53 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	102	109	211
10	99	104	203
11	107	84	191
12 or higher	103	85	188
<b>Total Students</b>	411	382	793

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2 % Asian
  - 11 % Black or African American
  - 11 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 74 % White
  - 2 % 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: 5%

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	18
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	20
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	38
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	791
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.048
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %  
0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 19 %  
Total number students who qualify: 152

8. Students receiving special education services: 2 %  
16 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.

- 1 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 1 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 8 Other Health Impaired
- 6 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: 3
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	4
Classroom teachers	46
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	1
Paraprofessionals	3
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 17:1

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	96%	97%	97%	98%	97%
High school graduation rate	100%	99%	99%	100%	100%

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	210
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	70%
Enrolled in a community college	21%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	3%
Found employment	2%
Joined the military or other public service	4%
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.

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

Central Academy of Technology and Arts' mission is to prepare students for informed decision-making, effective citizenship, personal achievement, higher education and rewarding careers.

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

Students choosing to apply to our magnet school complete an application during the spring of their eighth grade year. Information about our school is available on our website and at our school. Our school makes presentations at each of the middle schools in Union County Public Schools in order to educate students about our school. Our school has three evening Open House events where the public are invited in to tour and learn about our school and programs. Student applications are evaluated at the end of the school year to determine if students meet the general criteria for admission to Central Academy of Technology and Arts as well as the specific criteria for particular academies. Eligible students applying to the following academies gain entry through a lottery process: Medical Sciences Academy, Transportation Systems Academy, Information Systems Academy, Pre-Engineering Academy, and Music Production and Recording Arts Pathway in the Performing Arts Academy. The student body created through this lottery process is representative of all of Union County since the students are admitted through the lottery by filling seats allocated to their regularly-assigned high school. Eligible students applying to the Dance and Theatre Pathways of the Performing Arts Academy are admitted based on creativity and talent. Teachers work to create a diverse enrollment based on students that apply and are eligible.

Due to the rigor of the academy programs offered at Central Academy of Technology and Arts, the school requires all students to meet the following general criteria: completed application during the application window, student must meet attendance/tardy requirements throughout middle school, student may not have any long term suspension or evidence of chronic disruptive behavior resulting in three out of school suspensions during middle school, students must be eligible to attend Union County Public Schools during the application period, students must pass all courses attempted in the eighth grade and must earn a final course grade of 70 or better in English/Language Arts and math in the eighth grade, students must score at or above Level III on the eighth grade NC End Of Grade (EOG) Mathematics assessment and the NC EOG Reading assessment.

In addition to the above criteria students entering the Pre-Engineering Academy must score at or above a Level IV on the eighth grade NC EOG Mathematics assessment. Students entering the Medical Science Academy must score at or above a Level III on the eighth grade NC EOG Science assessment. Students entering Performing Arts Academy must successfully meet criteria on a musical assessment, dance audition, or theatre audition.

## PART III – SUMMARY

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Central Academy of Technology and Arts is a comprehensive magnet high school in the Union County Public School System (UCPS). The campus of Central Academy of Technology and Arts is located in Monroe, North Carolina, however the student body at the school is representative of all areas in Union County. Union County is located in the southern Piedmont of North Carolina and contains both suburban and rural areas. The county borders Mecklenburg County, home to the City of Charlotte. This proximity to Charlotte allows residents of Union County to enjoy a more suburban to rural community, while being close to a large urban area. Union County is a fast growing region of the state as shown by the increase in student population from 27,000 students in 2003 to over 41,000 students in 2013. Union County Public Schools currently serves 41,780 students. Central Academy of Technology and Arts mirror the diversity of Union County diversity with 74% white students, 11% African American students, 11% Hispanic students, and 4% of students of other ethnicities. Central Academy of Technology and Arts maintains an application process that results in the student body representing the ten different cluster high school areas of our school system. This ensures that the diversity of the school is close to the diversity makeup of students in the entire Union County Public School system.

Students choosing to attend Central Academy of Technology and Arts do so because Central Academy incorporates rigorous academic and technical education using an innovative academy concept in a nurturing environment that emphasizes experiential learning, relevant internships, community involvement, and technical, artistic, and academic integration. Students choose to experience high school in an academy themed manner, completing not only the traditional course of study required for graduation in North Carolina, but also complete an intensive series of courses focused on their area of interest. Central Academy maintains entrance requirements so that students can meet the high level of rigor provided in our academy course load. Central Academy of Technology and Arts' academies include the Information Systems Academy (comprised of the following pathways: Computer Engineering, Software Development and Game Design, and Cyber Security), the Medical Sciences Academy (a Project Lead the Way-based curriculum), the Performing Arts Academy (comprised of the following pathways: Theater, Dance, and Music Production and Recording Arts), the Pre-Engineering Academy (a Project Lead the Way-based curriculum), and the Transportation Systems Academy (comprised of the following pathways: Auto Technology and Collision). Students choosing to attend Central Academy of Technology and Arts leave the familiarity of their home neighborhoods and schools for the opportunity to learn in this unique academy environment.

Prior to Central Academy of Technology and Arts opening its' doors as a magnet school, the building served as the Union County Career Center since 1976. The Career Center provided technical training for students throughout Union County Public Schools in areas such as automotive, HVAC, electronics, masonry, cosmetology, and health occupations. In September 2006 Central Academy of Technology and Arts was dedicated with a portion of the building being the former Career Center, and a new addition to accommodate the arts as well as the core areas of the high school curriculum. The tradition of offering STEM courses began with the Career Center, but certainly continues with the academy offerings at Central Academy. Additionally, with the inclusion of arts academies, Central Academy has the opportunity to focus on all areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math education. As the school system grew and built new high schools, Central Academy provided a county-wide experience each year where students from all over Union County could come together to produce a county-wide theatrical production. This initiative was called the Union County Performance Ensemble. As the individual high schools have cemented their own theatrical departments, this ensemble no longer performs, however, it was an integral part of Central Academy's history and was important to promoting the arts within all high schools in the school system.

Central Academy of Technology and Arts' mission is to prepare students for informed decision-making, effective citizenship, personal achievement, higher education and rewarding careers. We achieve this by developing students academically and physically through the curriculum utilized and the supports in place for students and staff, emotionally and socially through our advisory, counseling program, and extracurricular offerings, and culturally through the arts programs and initiatives offered at our school. Students at Central Academy participate in the school system 1:1 initiative which is fully embraced by the staff at the school. Use of the 1:1 devices is seen throughout the school in all classrooms and is supported

by teacher use of the learning management system to deliver instruction, provide resources, and accept submissions of work.

Central Academy of Technology and Arts strives to develop students emotionally and socially in order to meet our mission. As a school we develop our students in the following ways: intensive involvement in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, advisory period, and our character development program – Culture of Respect. Our Advisory program is school-based initiative that exists to provide teachers with the opportunity to mentor a set of students from across the academies and to interact with those students throughout their four years of high school. An Advisory committee, made up of experienced teachers and counselors, designs activities that promote the following ideals that are consistent with our school mission: decision-making, personal achievement (academic and community involvement), problem solving, study skills, communicating with peers and adults, resume writing, and effective citizenship through character development. Activities are differentiated based on grade level and all teachers participate in brainstorming ideas for the year at staff meetings. The Advisory committee focuses these ideas to produce monthly advisory activities that coincide with progress reports and report cards. Two to three times per year students meet in Academy-based advisories where they have the opportunity to work with different grade levels in their advisory, to learn about how their academy impacts other areas of study, and to think about how their everyday learning leads to the overall learning goals for their academy.

Our character development program was coined “Culture of Respect” by our student council. Its main tenets are awareness, kindness, acceptance, and respect. Stakeholders are encouraged to promote understanding of each individual’s special talents and abilities, work collaboratively, and respect one another’s belief systems and points of view. Included in this program is promotion of acts of kindness, promotion of healthful habits and living (alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and social media awareness), and leadership skills. Our guidance department, globalization committee, and student council promote guest speakers and programs that focus on our goals of treating all with respect.

In all that we do, Central Academy tries to exemplify our motto of “Leading the Way”. Through our innovative, hands-on instruction and academy pathways, our students are leading the way toward success today and in the future. Through our rigorous coursework and dedicated staff, our students are leading the way in academic achievement. Through our PTSO involvement, we are leading the way in forming collaborative relationships with our stakeholders. At Central Academy, “Leading the Way” is our mission.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

Central Academy believes that a strong foundation in the core area subjects is essential to success in student's academy classes during high school and for life-long learning. Students are required to meet North Carolina diploma requirements in English/Language Arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students that are struggling in any of these content areas are provided with in-school remediation through Cougar Time, a remediation and enrichment program that is run during the school day twice per week. In addition to course specific remediation, all students can attend a writing lab during Cougar Time to improve their writing skills to be college ready. Every teacher at Central Academy also provides tutoring outside of the school day for students struggling with course material, this includes all core, elective, and academy areas. In addition to regular math tutoring, Central Academy also has a math lab that operates after school two days per week to allow students to meet with a veteran math teacher to support their learning. This math teacher is not a staff member at the school and works with students to build mathematical flexibility in problem solving. Students that struggle in math foundational skills are able to use a computer-based math learning program more frequently to facilitate personalized improvement in specific foundational skills. All students in foundational math courses have access to and use this computer-based program for some of their math learning.

Students that excel in the core areas are encouraged to extend their learning within their classes and to challenge themselves by taking Honors and Advanced Placement level required and elective courses in all core and elective areas. In addition to face to face instruction at Central Academy, students have online courses through both Union County Virtual School and North Carolina Virtual Public School. An additional way for students to challenge themselves is through taking Career and College Promise (CCP) courses in the core content area. These community college level courses provide the opportunity for students to take courses with college level professors to better prepare for learning beyond high school.

The English/Language Arts curriculum incorporates the goals and objectives of the state adopted common core. Starting in English I, students engage in meaningful communication for expressive, expository, argumentative and literary purposes. Students participate in conversations about and written analysis of literary genres, elements, and traditions in order to form a firm literary foundation for higher level courses. Students in English II begin to focus on analyzing increasingly complex text through world literature and students begin to write critically through analysis, synthesis and evaluation of text. Through both foundational English courses, and continued through upper level courses, there is a definite focus on grammar in order to prepare students for college and workplace expectations. Upper level English courses utilize United States and British literature to explore social perspectives, culture, and historical significance through the use of language for expressive, expository, argumentative, and literary purposes.

English/Language Arts teachers work in professional learning communities to vertically align courses so that students are prepared for reading and writing in all core areas as well as in their academy classes, and so that when students graduate from high school they are prepared for reading to learn in college and writing at a college level. Some of the learning strategies implemented in the English/Language Arts courses are: close reading strategies; discussion (both listening and speaking during think-pair-share and Socratic Seminars); narrative, expository, and descriptive writing; daybooks or journals (create reader responses to text, write to prompts, and capture pieces of writing for future development).

The mathematics curriculum incorporates the goals and objectives of the state adopted common core. Students are expected to complete four mathematics courses in high school at a minimum and at Central Academy, students are encouraged to complete more courses in order to best prepare themselves for their further study at college. The foundational learning objectives for all math classes at Central Academy are the following mathematical practices: make sense of problems in persevere in solving them, reason abstractly and quantitatively, model with mathematics, look for and make use of structure, create an environment where students can collaborate, use appropriate tools strategically, and attend to precision. Teachers met in professional learning communities over the past few years to make sure that they were

embracing these mathematical practices for the purpose of supporting all students learning in math. Courses taught present material in an integrated fashion from algebra, geometry, and statistics. All courses focus on functions, their relationships to each other and applications to the real world. As students increase in math levels the number of functions, and the level of abstract math increases. Many of the students at Central Academy take higher level math courses, such as pre-calculus, calculus, discrete math, and statistics to prepare for college mathematics.

The science curriculum is focused on hands-on learning through labs, simulations, activities, and problem solving in order to meet all state expectations of learning in environmental, biological, and physical sciences. Particularly in the Honors and Advanced Placement level courses, a large portion of learning is based on experimentation. Focused attention is given to writing appropriate lab reports so that as a student moves through the various science courses, they move closer to the college expectations for scientific reading, writing, and thinking. Learning strategies to advance scientific learning include: project-based learning, problem solving, lab analysis, creating presentations of new material, discussions of scientific issues and processes, using scientific language, and cooperative learning.

The history curriculum allows students to examine history as a way to gain political, social, cultural, and economic insight into the world in which they currently live. All students are required to successfully complete four history courses: civics and economics, world, and two courses in American history. Some learning strategies include effective reading and note-taking, independent research and analysis into historical events, journals, discussions, debates on opposing views and policies, writing to defend point of view, problem-solving activities, and evaluation of events for cause-effect impact. Students are prepared not only for college level argumentation and research in history courses, but also to be solid civic minded citizens as well.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The curriculum at Central Academy provides a rigorous preparation for students in their Academy studies as well as in the core areas. We offer and continue to add Honors and Advanced Placement offerings to Academy and elective offerings. In addition to students completing all coursework necessary for a traditional high school diploma all students complete between six to nine classes in their chosen academy. It is the belief of the school that focusing on advanced courses in a specific area promotes deep learning and better prepares students for college and career in all areas. Students at Central Academy outperform the district on the ACT WorkKeys assessment to gauge Career Readiness, in addition to showing high levels of proficiency on other state and nationally normed assessments.

The Pre-Engineering Program and Medical Science Program use the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) curriculum. Project Lead the Way is a comprehensive curriculum that provides students with opportunities to not only learn in-depth about their coursework, but also to develop transferable skills, such as collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills that are relevant for any course or career. PLTW courses engage and challenge our students with open-ended problem solving and hands-on activities that prepare students for the future. The courses are rigorous and purposefully immerse students in their field of study. In addition, our other academies incorporate job skills, literacy, public speaking, and team building skills in their courses of student, in order to prepare students for the twenty-first century. PLTW courses also prepare students for college study. Pre-engineering PLTW courses are all given AP credit by the State of North Carolina and all Medical Sciences PLTW courses are given Honors level credit for their level of rigor. Both Pre-Engineering and Medical Sciences Academies also allow for students to take additional non-PLTW courses such as drafting and electronics in Pre-engineering, and Health Sciences and Sports Medicine in Medical Sciences.

The curriculum utilized in our Transportation Systems is a hands-on curriculum that allows for students to learn by doing and to acquire important certifications that will give them an advantage in obtaining work, or additional education, in this career. Our automotive programs are certified by the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF), which is the industry standard. Students utilize the knowledge and skills learned through their academy classes in Skills USA competition and in internships that many students participate in. The curriculum utilized in Information Systems provides multiple levels

of increasingly more rigorous Career and Technical Education courses. Students have the opportunity to take entry level courses in their academy and progress to Honors, and some Advanced Placement, level courses in their area of specialization – Cyber Security, Software and Game Design, or Computer Engineering. Not only are the courses rigorous, but they are highly kinesthetic and creative which increases student engagement. Students have the opportunity to achieve industry standard certifications in Information Systems Academy as well, including A+ Hardware/Software, Network +, SAS programming, and Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator.

The curriculum in the Performing Arts Academy is focused on performance in the areas of Theatre, Dance, and Music. Students take numerous performance classes, participate in show production in each area, create new works through writing scripts, choreography, and learn about the history of their art as well. Learning is active and creative and fuels the students' passion for the arts. In the Theatre curriculum students are exposed to a variety of theatrical styles and disciplines in order to prepare individuals as actors or technicians. In the Dance curriculum, learning is sequential and discipline based that emphasizes training the body as an instrument of communication and expression. Students explore problem-recognition and problem-solving processes through the technical skills acquired from a movement-based approach to learning. In the Music Production and Recording Arts curriculum, the curriculum explores music, technology, and the intersection of the two areas. Musicianship and technology with coursework on music theory, aural skills, applied music performance, music technology, recording techniques, and music production are areas of focus.

Staff in the Performing Arts Academy specialize in preparing students for college level auditions, interviews, and portfolio submissions in order to extend their learning after high school. Through all of the academies at Central Academy, student internships are promoted in order for our students to experience careers in their chosen field of study. Students can participate in internships during the school year or over the summer.

Students are also encouraged to take courses of interest as electives, with a focus on students completing world language, art, and technology courses. Central Academy offers world language courses in Spanish and German, and offers a Medical Spanish course specifically targeted at students in the Medical Sciences Academy. World Language courses focus not only on reading, but on writing and speaking as well so that students can communicate in a more global fashion. Additionally, there is a definite focus on culture in order to foster a sense of global understanding. While many students do not complete high levels of world language classes (due to the heavy load of academy courses) virtually all student complete at least two levels of a world language and are prepared to enter college level introductory courses. Students seeking upper level classes are encouraged to participate in online learning during or outside of the school day. The majority of Central Academy students participate in at least one technology course during their time at the school and experience the hands-on learning that students within the Information Systems Academy are exposed to. Staff encourage technology course participation because of the strong analytical skills that are developed. Visual art, chorus, and band courses are a popular elective at our school with some students from all academies electing to take the courses. All students participate in health and physical education courses and many students elect to take an additional course, such as weightlifting, during their high school career.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Student support is an area of focus at Central Academy for both struggling and advanced students. Initially our focus on a remediation program was due to the difficulty for many students to attend tutoring before and after school since many of our students live great distances from our county-wide magnet school. The school staff designed and instituted a "Cougar Time," for thirty minutes two days per week, during the school day, as a program to enrich and/or remediate students. Students who are struggling attend remediation sessions, students who are doing well tutor, attend a study hall or attend enrichment classes such as resume building, college applications, ACT prep, music, dance, team sports, coding, and reading. Cougar Time offers struggling students a chance to build understanding and improve, offers students who are not struggling needed time to complete assignments or spend time being physically active, and allows students to volunteer to help peers or to learn a life skill that will help them in the future. Cougar Time has

been shown to both increase academic preparedness, and also build self-confidence in students that have traditionally struggled in school. After our first year of providing all juniors the opportunity to focus on ACT preparation, our percentage of students meeting the UNC System minimum composite score for college readiness went from 87% to 92.6%.

Teachers in the math department determined a need for differentiated learning on foundational math skills. The math department approached the site-based management team to research a tiered online math program that would calibrate to meet a student's need in foundational skills. We are in the third year of implementing IXL throughout our first three levels of math courses and teachers see an improvement in foundational skills, as well as a decrease in class time on these skills that can now be used for more advanced learning. Both math and English departments have highlighted the need for more intensive instruction in specific areas of the curriculum and the school is now operating a math lab after school for students to work on flexibility in math problem solving, as well as a writing lab during Cougar Time to meet student needs on research papers. Teachers and students at Central Academy have embraced technology as an important instructional tool and take advantage of collaborative learning via google docs and presentations, as well as use of our learning management system to conduct virtual discussions in the evenings.

In conducting classroom visits, administrators have highlighted the following instructional strategies to staff: collaborative learning, project based learning, problem solving flexibility in math and science, tiered questions in science labs, formative assessments to realign learning, flexible learning groups, and videos and resources available on the learning management system to serve as additional resources and differentiated learning. In the performing arts courses administrators have highlighted instructional differentiation through the challenge of roles or play material assigned, the challenge of musical piece or arrangement, the challenge of complexity of choreography or level of skill required in dance. This year teachers are also highlighting the difference in Honors, College Preparatory, and Advanced Placement courses to both students and parents through statements in their syllabi.

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

Central Academy has received the rating of an A+ school for 2014-2015 school year by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. In the 2014-2015 school year 94.6% of our students met Grade Level Proficiency on State End of Course assessments and 90.2% of our students met College and Career Ready Proficiency on State End of Course assessments. Our school earned the distinction of an A+ school rating by minimizing gaps in learning between tested subgroups. Strategies that the school utilized to reduce gaps between subgroups was to focus on reading and writing in the content area, and focusing on content and non-content vocabulary. Over 93% of students at Central Academy of Technology and Arts exceeded expected academic growth. Student college readiness is measured by meeting the minimum required ACT composite score for the University of North Carolina. Central Academy had 92.6% of juniors meet this ACT composite score in 2014-2015. Central Academy of Technology and Arts has a focus on graduation and has consistently earned over a 99% graduation rate for the past several years with the graduation rate in 2014-2015 being 100%. Students entering Central Academy are on grade level and our faculty goal is to support student growth with higher levels of rigor. Achievement information is shared with parents and the community via the NC School Report Card as well as through presentations to the PTSO, site-based management team, and other parent events. In our performance-based classes teachers analyze student work for growth. Additionally, we have external assessments that provide invaluable feedback to both teachers and students: the North Carolina Theatre Conference, the Blumey Awards for High School Theatre, and Musical Performance Assessments in both chorus and band courses. CATA students perform at high levels in all of these external measures.

The School Improvement Team at Central Academy uses data from state and national assessments to create school goals for the upcoming school year. The team has specifically focused on ensuring that all subgroups meet expected proficiency, increasing student growth, and increasing college readiness as assessed by the ACT. Departments have met with each other and administration to use historical data to identify students that may need additional support early on in a course. Teachers consistently utilize formal and informal formative assessment in order to gauge learning on specific skills or knowledge. Teachers then adjust lesson

plans in order to increase learning. Teachers use school system benchmarks in all content areas to assess learning during the semester. These benchmarks allow teachers to see student growth and to compare to other classes, and other semester classes. This aids teachers to refine instruction. Administration has worked with teachers at the school to develop an ACT preparation course to review important concepts and to ready students for the format of the ACT. All students in their junior year of high school are enrolled in an ACT preparation course during our enrichment period, Cougar Time, where they are exposed to each of the assessments in the ACT. In Advisory, teachers review students PLAN scores with them and look at the areas that students are strong in and where they may need help. Scores are also shared with English and math teachers so that they are aware of student needs. After implementing this program of providing all juniors the opportunity to focus on ACT preparation, our percentage of students meeting the UNC System minimum composite score for college readiness went from 87% to 92.6% over two years.

Teachers frequently measure learning through non-formal testing, such as projects, presentations, Socratic seminars, and task-completion. Additionally, the school has made a concerted effort to increase the number of certifications earned through Career and Technical Education courses and has worked with teachers to stress the importance of the certification exams as well as with students by celebrating those students earning certifications. The guidance counselors and administrators work as a team to review student progress each six weeks to support intervention when needed and to look for patterns in achievement across subjects that an individual teacher may not recognize.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Intensive extracurricular activities is a tradition at Central Academy. Students in all academies are encouraged to participate outside of the classroom through internships, extracurricular and co-curricular activities, athletics, and student life organizations. Through these organizations students are able to meet and form relationships with students that are outside of their own academy of study. The Central Academy mascot is the Cougar and students at CATA refer to the CATA Cougars with pride. Students continue to have strong ties to their home high schools through friendships with students there, but make the transition to support the CATA Cougars in all areas. Faculty at the school pride themselves on supporting students to make a successful transition from a known home high school to an unfamiliar magnet school. Faculty members feel that this is exceptional practice for what students may experience when transitioning to higher education or into a new career.

Students in all academies have at least one academy specific co-curricular or extra-curricular organization that they can belong to. In addition, there are many general organizations that students can participate in from student council to honor societies to guitar club to art club or Science Olympiad. Academy-specific organizations exist to provide students with the opportunity to put their learning into action and to participate in a competitive atmosphere. Organizations at our school include: HOSA for Medical Sciences, theatre, dance and music productions for the Performing Arts, Robotics and Women in Engineering for Pre-Engineering, Skills-USA competition for Transportation, Robotics and Gaming Club for Information Systems.

Both in school experiences and extra-curricular and co-curricular experiences are highlighted and celebrated through the weekly newsletter, the Cougar Chronicle, and online platforms. Additionally, when Central Academy plans a pep rally academies are a focus in addition to the traditional athletic focus. In the past we have incorporated a remote-controlled t-shirt firing robot and cannon as well as theatre musical numbers. This year our basketball tournament teams were academy based and the tournament was highly successful in raising academy spirit, and supporting a great fundraising cause.

Students and staff are celebrated frequently by use of handwritten “notes about an awesome cougar”, Facebook postings about student and staff accomplishments, highlighting learning in and out of the classroom at the start of every staff meeting and to parents during open houses, through the “Cougar Pride” section of the weekly Cougar Chronicle, through academy and department awards for all grade levels at the spring awards day, academic letters, and A/B honor roll. Additionally Central Academy’s PTSO supports our students’ academic and personal development by sponsoring a program called Student Academic Recognition – or STAR- where teachers recognize one student from each class to receive special recognition. Teachers have the opportunity to recognize students for high achievement, most progress, creativity, or any recognition appropriate to their class. In this way each semester we have students recognized for their work that may not typically be recognized in honor societies. Recognition builds relationships between staff and students and leads to higher engagement of our students at school.

Teachers are celebrated by administration and the PTSO through numerous events each year – including welcome back luncheon, holiday celebrations, thanksgiving meal, “pi” day, and teacher appreciation week. Additionally, teachers take a lead role in determining the Teacher of the Year annually. Students also celebrate their teachers by writing notes to teachers for the PTSO events, and by student council providing one special surprise for all staff each month. Student feedback to teachers has proven to be a morale booster for our staff. Our staff also participates in CATA Summer Read program where teachers choose a book that they and students would be interested in reading. Students get to select their top three book choices and are assigned to a Summer Read book to read over the summer. When students and staff return in the fall, each book group meets three to four times to discuss the book and engage in activities to promote reading and the relationship formed when reading creates a shared experience.

## 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Central Academy believes that communication with all stakeholders is essential to the mission of our school. All teachers have contact information and course syllabi available for parents on our learning systems platform and website. Parents and students have the ability to view the online gradebook at any time to see progress. We are very proud that our students frequently visit the online gradebook. Parents and students are provided with progress reports every three weeks and students can open their online learning management system course so that parents can review the syllabus and see resources or assignments. Both parents and students can set meetings with teacher and/or counselors, and our teachers and counselors have increased proactivity by inviting parents in early on when issues are seen. Central Academy has an intervention team to help students and struggling family with academic, social, or behavioral issues when initial conferences do not result in improvement. Counselors and administrators team together to review student progress each six weeks and this is led by the academy-specific counselors on staff. Central Academy also has a Career Development Coordinator (CDC) to outreach to our community and to support teachers in the Career and Technical Education courses. The CDC also serves as a resource to students and parents about career opportunities for students and completes classroom visits to talk about academy-based careers. The CDC has worked with the local Education Foundation to fulfill a community-school partnership where members of the community come in to talk to students about career fields. Guidance counselor host two to three college information nights each year to provide parents the opportunity to hear about the application and financial aid process.

Parents and community stakeholders receive a weekly electronic newsletter, the Cougar Chronicle, that highlights important guidance and college information, extra-curricular and co-curricular events, stories about learning in and out of the classroom, recognition of student achievement, PTSO communication, reminds parents of communication avenues, and community events. The principal also sends the Cougar Chronicle to every student's school email account as well. Teachers, parents, students, and student organizations can submit information to the Cougar Chronicle. Students can download the chronicle onto their Chromebook so that parents can view it even if they don't have the internet or students can get a hard copy from the office. The principal also makes a weekly phone call with several important pieces of information for parents.

Our PTSO has started a new event this year at their meetings, called the Academy Spotlight, where parents can come in for the PTSO meeting and can then stay to hear from students and teachers in a specific academy about what students are learning. Our PTSO has also collaborated with the school to bring a speaker to school to present on students being cyber safe and taking care of their online profile, as well as a parent session on cyber safety and what parents should look for. CATA PTSO invited parents from other area schools to attend as well. Finally, our CATA PTSO launches an Invest in Success campaign to support instructional programs and raised over \$4000 this year. The PTSO then listed all of the instructional items purchased with the money in the Cougar Chronicle.

CATA also engages the community through our student organizations. Our students are highly involved in numerous student life organizations, which promote helping others in our community. Activities such as blood drives, canned food drives, annual car show, programs to help those in need of clothes and children's books, raising money for cancer research, raising money for children with chronic illnesses to go to special camps are all a part of our mission here at Central Academy and continue to empower students to build a "culture of respect". All of our student life organizations have started a new CATA tradition of providing a safe Halloween event for neighborhood children by hosting the CATA Trunk or Treat, where student life groups decorate their car and volunteer to hand out treats to elementary students after school for a few hours each year. Our Performing Arts Academy has collaborated with the Union County Community Arts Council and Actor's music guild on projects. CATA has invited the community in to see theatre, dance shows, chorus, and our annual jazz café.

## 3. Professional Development:

Professional Development at Central Academy is ongoing and focused on the strategic goals of Union County Public Schools as well as the School Improvement Plan for Central Academy. The school system

provides both principal and assistant principal professional development on a monthly basis. Principal meetings consist of collaborative meeting time to review overall school system goals and to hear from central services personnel, as well as leveled meetings to discuss strategies and procedures for high schools to ensure consistency throughout the school system. Principals then in turn train school staff on important topics, such as religious diversity or sexual harassment training. Instructional professional development on best practices is also offered for all principals and assistant principals. In previous years much of our professional development was on new system level initiatives, such as professional learning communities, or crucial conversations. As initiatives are engrained in school culture, the professional development is available for administrators that are new to the district. The Assistant Principal Academy is ongoing as well and is facilitated by central office directors and current principals. Some topics covered are leadership, procedures, due process, financial and instructional management. Assistant Principals have projects assigned in between sessions where they have the opportunity to work in areas that they may not normally supervise. Assistant Principals also have the opportunity to visit other school levels and meet with other principals to see different leadership styles. This level of ongoing professional development for both principals and assistant principals ensures more effective leadership at the school level. The development of relationships among administrators throughout the district also empowers administrators to collaborate with other leaders to best lead their school.

Teachers at Central Academy participate in both district and school-based professional development. Each school has the resource of an Instructional Technology Facilitator to support staff learning in the area of technology. This year Central Academy fully embraced our new learning management system by completing a full implementation among administrators and staff. Teachers are supported in this transition by our Instructional Technology Facilitator (ITF). Our ITF also provides professional development sessions during teacher planning periods twice per month. These sessions support both the learning management system, as well as web tools to increase effectiveness of technology use in classroom by both students and teachers. Teachers attend county wide meetings for all content areas at start of school year and multiple times during the year to focus on content knowledge and pedagogy. Finally, our teachers receive in-house professional development from experienced teachers on our staff. Some of the topics covered this year include: lesson planning, formative assessment, writing to learn, write it right (creating writing rubrics), and analyzing data from formative and summative assessments. Our in-house professional development has been so successful that we have had staff ask to present PD that they created to the rest of the staff. The topics chosen each year are based on staff feedback from an end of the year survey, as well as administrative observations.

#### 4. School Leadership:

At Central Academy the leadership style is Instructional Leadership. High expectations are held for all teachers and staff and the leadership works to support staff in meeting expectations. It is the intent of the principal that this same expectation be set in all classrooms. Instructional problems are a main focus of attention and the administration works to empower teachers to solve instructional problems through collaboration and professional learning. The school leadership spends a great deal of time affecting the culture of the school to support learning in all areas. Assistant Principals are assigned to specific departments to participate in professional learning communities and all administrators are expected to model effective practices for teacher and staff development: observe, assess, provide feedback, and support change. In order to maintain high expectations and a learning conducive environment the principal facilitates communication to and from community and teachers including: daily announcements, common staff calendar, virtual faculty page that uses the same learning platform as teachers use with classes, all staff meetings run from the learning platforms. School leadership teams use data to focus school initiatives and programs focus on student achievement in academic, social, and personal areas. Leadership constructs include: use of leadership team (department and academy chairpersons), globalization committee, teachers as leaders (one teacher instructional facilitator and one developing teacher facilitator), advisory committee, and site-based management team (with both staff and parent leaders on the team). Assistant Principals are tasked with implementing the organizational procedures of the school by overseeing specific programs, such as athletics, arts, facilities, student-support initiatives, observation schedule, safety, and transportation.

Parents are involved in school leadership through the PTSO, site-based management, band boosters,

performing arts committee and volunteers for athletic events and field trips. Additionally, all parents provide important feedback through informal discussions and formal surveys that lead to school improvement.

Each department or academy chairperson facilitates the professional learning community meetings at least two times per month. All teachers are a part of a Professional Learning Community focused on student learning within the classroom. Additionally all PLCs have the opportunity each year to focus on the overall goals of their academy or department and to envision what qualities a graduate from that academy has as well as to determine if they are fostering the needed learning in order for the students to embody the academy qualities. All heads of departments and academies are members of the Leadership Team that meets monthly in order to review programs and procedures at the school, to provide feedback to the school leadership, and to discuss upcoming activities. Members of the leadership team serve as the representative for their department and communicate information to the rest of their department. Other leadership opportunities for teachers and staff include the Advisory Committee who design the school's Advisory sessions, the Globalization Committee who organize global learning and promote learning about diversity, and the Site-based Management Team who meet, along with parent members, to discuss the overarching goals of the school and to make decisions about whether proposed programs are aligned to the school's mission. Central Academy has found that through offering multiple leadership roles to teachers that communication among teachers in different departments has increased. This, in combination with in-house Professional Development led by Central Academy teachers has also proven to increase collaboration both within academies and departments and between academies and departments. Some examples of collaboration include Pre-engineering students working with Transportation systems to design and build a car, Dance students collaborating with Medical Science students to study the muscles in the body and the effect of exercise on the body, Pre-engineering students supporting Environmental Science classes in adapting garbage cans for recycling projects, Information Systems students working with Theatre students to film footage for sections of computer game design, Music students working with English to produce an show for elementary students about how music can tell stories, Art students working with Dance students to create artwork inspired by dance choreography, and Dance, Music, and Theatre students working together to produce a Winter Collaborative Program for the community.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Central Academy is centered on academy based learning. Students choose to come to the school system magnet school to participate in deep learning in a particular area of interest and this learning drives our school. While most high school students strive to complete a set of state required courses, our students have to accomplish that and six to nine academy courses that are very rigorous course offerings. Students coming to our school expect to be challenged academically. Academy learning is seen through collaborative learning experiences within and between the academies and core areas. This is a purposeful collaboration with the purpose of students seeing the importance of their learning. Professional development is provided to teachers to expose academy and content teachers to reading and writing strategies and to focus core area teachers on academy learning so that they can make direct links with students about their academy learning. Teachers from both core and academy courses collaborate on Academy Advisories together so that students can more easily see broad learning connections. The majority of field trip experiences that students at CATA have are academy-based field trips. This correlation between field trips and academy content improves instruction as it creates real world experiences.

Academy learning is heavily project and performance based and students gain confidence in this area and become accustomed to career and, increasingly, college-based assessments. This heavy reliance on project and performance based assessment in the academy areas has diffused to the core content areas as well and teachers from all areas collaborate on best practices for assessing students in alternative ways.

One challenge that some students do not expect transitioning to high school in an essentially new school. Faculty, staff, and current students realize this challenge and coordinate efforts to support student acclimation to our school. This is accomplished through freshman and new student orientations held the week prior to the start of school, as well as through a common shared experience of all freshman reading the same book over the summer. Teachers working with the freshman on the book discussion facilitate discussions about how to transition into a new environment successfully. Freshman advisories at the start of the year focus on problem solving and communication with other students and teachers.