

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. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2018 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 33 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 10 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 10 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 54 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
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 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	158	172	330
7	151	148	299
8	148	156	304
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	457	476	933

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 87 % White
 - 3 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 school year: 5%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

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, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	21
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	40
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	874
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 8%
Total number students who qualify: 76

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
78 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.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>7</u> Autism | <u>7</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>37</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>2</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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	3
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	35
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	24
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 27:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
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 2017.

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.

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

To promote excellence in instruction and teaching for a community of life-long learners in the 21st Century.

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 combination of challenging curriculum implemented by deft practitioners, meaningful staff collaboration, and a supportive community are the foundation for success at Fallston Middle School. The vision of Fallston Middle School is create a learning community that is committed to excellence by providing rigorous, high quality instruction in a safe learning environment that fosters and encourages life-long learners. Our mission is to promote excellence in instruction and teaching for a community of life-long learners in the 21st century. Our mascot is a cougar cub and there are four principles that guide us in implementing our vision and mission. The four principles are as follows: Communication, Understanding 21st century learning, Building relationships, and Student achievement (CUBS).

Located in the western portion of Harford County, Fallston Middle School shares land with Fallston High School. In fact, we were actually part of the high school up until the construction of our school in 1993.

Given the close proximity of the two schools, it is only natural that there are times when one school plays host to an event sponsored by the other school. We enjoy a professional, yet cordial, relationship with our high school counterparts and are happy to lend a hand to support their events, as they are for us. While we technically have four elementary feeder schools, the majority of our students come from Youth's Benefit Elementary School.

We provide weekly announcements to our parents, via the Connect5 program, in order to keep our community informed of upcoming events at Fallston Middle School. We have employed a unique approach by having students record the messages whenever possible. In addition to providing a welcome break for the principal, it gives our students an opportunity to develop their public speaking skills.

Fallston Middle School has a strong tradition of community service, something reflected in many of the activities our students engage in. Our students are committed to environmental stewardship and engage in activities such as recycling, as well as identifying and marking storm drains that flow into the Chesapeake Bay. As a community that located within the Bay's watershed, we believe it is critical to maintain practices that support a healthy Chesapeake Bay.

Personal health and wellness are also important to the faculty and staff, at Fallston Middle School. As such, professional development activities always include time for wellness activities. Additionally, our Physical Education Department created a training module that facilitates teachers working out in the fitness lab, after duty hours. Teachers have the option of utilizing the exercise equipment or using the open floor space to engage in aerobic activities.

Fallston Middle School is a school that values diversity, we seek inclusiveness in our academic offerings, and we weave it into the cultural fabric of our school. Whenever possible, we populate classes with heterogeneous combinations of students. We actively promote Respect, Organization, Achievement, and Responsibility (ROAR) and our students embrace the message. Throughout the school years, there are follow-up activities, such as the Kindness Campaign, that reinforce the high expectations we have for our students. We provide much needed social-emotional support to our students through a counseling agency that also works with our largest elementary feeder school and the high school our students will attend.

A new initiative we have undertaken is the Best Buddies Program. The program is run as an afterschool club, with participates actively promoting access and opportunity for our most challenging population of students. The commitment of time, energy, and good will speak well of the staff and students who give freely of themselves to support this worthy effort. These people make Fallston Middle School a great environment for learning.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Fallston Middle School takes a rigorous approach to reading and writing. Teachers select texts that are of an appropriate reading level and interest for our middle school students. We incorporate a variety of text formats to enrich our students' ability to work with all forms of the written word. Students analyze the literary elements of a text and reflect on how the writer's craft contributes to the meaning and enjoyment of the work. Reading strategies emphasized in instruction include close reading, annotation of text, and written response to text-dependent questions. Beyond the reading of a variety of texts, students engage in critical thinking through both student-led class discussion and written response. In an effort to better prepare our students to be college and career ready, students frequently evaluate related texts through discussion and written expression. To meet the needs of struggling students, teachers select and chunk appropriate text, while pairing written text with audio recordings. The itslearning platform allows teachers to differentiate further their instruction by affording students the opportunity to learn/move at their own pace, while engaging interactively with their class/text. We use the new HMH Collections curriculum (both printed text and electronically published) adopted by the Harford County Public Schools English/Language Arts Office. The digital anthology allows students to engage actively with text: highlighting, annotating, and making margin notes. In addition, the digital text addresses the various learning styles and needs of students with differing abilities. This curriculum aligns with the Common Core State Standards and better prepares our students to be college and career ready.

Students at Fallston Middle School are engaged in a rigorous mathematics program rooted in the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards with a specific emphasis on the Standards of Mathematical Practice. We embed these practices in the instruction of each of the seven course offerings at Fallston Middle School: Math 6, Math 7, Integrated Math 7, Math 8, Pre-Algebra, Algebra I, and Geometry. The emphasis on the Mathematical Practices creates a cohesive program in grades six through eight that encourages students to be critical thinkers and builds proficient mathematicians. We help students in grades six and seven build a solid foundation of basic mathematical skills through the online program First in Math. Students who require remediation are enrolled in an intervention program during the school day through the programs of Front Row in sixth and seventh grades and Navigator in the eighth grade. Students are also encouraged to enroll in the before school peer tutoring or after school high school tutoring programs for additional support if needed. Purposeful placement of students in appropriately challenging courses allows students to find success and challenges them to meet their potential. Community involvement is encouraged through Fall and Spring Math Nights.

Our goal in the Science Department is to build students' proficiency and appreciation for science by focusing on having students figure out information instead of just learning about it. Our lessons build a solid conceptual understanding of science, so that students leave us with the ability to critically think and engage in discussions about scientific and technological information. Students are encouraged to ask questions, define problems, design investigations, and engage in critical thinking skills as they analyze and synthesize information using the Claims, Evidence, Reasoning structure applies across all content areas. Fallston Middle School focuses on using inquiry and integrating the three dimensions of the Next Generation Science Standards to teach students concepts in Earth, Life and Physical Sciences. FMS also offers a STEM club and a Science Fair where students can strengthen their inquiry skills and engineering practices. Working with local community organizations allows us to bring in scientists to conduct activities with the STEM club and judge the Science Fair.

Students at Fallston Middle School are engaged in a rigorous social studies program rooted in the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards with a specific emphasis on the C3 Framework and the Inquiry Arc. Teachers employ inquiry-based strategies that feature higher level questioning. Social Studies teachers at Fallston Middle aim to shape students that are aware of their changing cultural and physical environment; know the past; read, write and think deeply; and act in ways that promote the common good. We know these are all necessary skills for civic life in the 21st century. We strive to foster civil discourse and respectful debate despite varying political viewpoints and perspectives on all relevant social, political, and economic

issues discussed in the classroom. The goal of fostering knowledgeable and active future citizens who think critically is universal across all political perspectives. We engage students in lessons that require close reading of primary and secondary sources and provide Social Studies lessons that focus on content vocabulary, which also requires students to use such vocabulary. We hope to inspire student enthusiasm for the social studies, and foster a life-long love of learning after our students leave our classrooms. The social studies curriculum is split into three grade level concentrations, with World Cultures in sixth grade, World History in seventh grade, and United States History in eighth.

We support college and career readiness by offering a challenging curriculum that provides students with five accelerated learning opportunities to take high school level classes, for high school credit, during their middle school experience. Three of the accelerated classes are Level I language courses (French, German, and Spanish), while the other two classes are Geometry, and Trigonometry. Lastly, the daily use of multiple forms of technology has a lasting impact on our students and their abilities to incorporate technology into their academic and/or professional careers.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The Unified Arts Program at Fallston Middle School consists of Art, Health, Project Lead the Way, and General Music. Students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades are assigned to three of these four offerings each year. They attend class for one 45-minute period every day and switch to a new class every 12 weeks.

The Art program includes the Art process, history, aesthetics, and criticism. Students receive a wide range of Art experiences that encourage higher level thinking skills, further stimulate artistic growth and develop life-long Art appreciation.

Health Education assists students in developing an optimistic attitude towards a healthy lifestyle and the ability to make positive decisions regarding their health and wellness. Students will gain knowledge in the ten health content areas: community health, consumer health, environmental health, family life, injury prevention and safety, personal health, nutrition, substance use and abuse, and control of disease.

Additionally, we have Project Lead the Way, a STEM-related course that gives students invaluable exposure to basic design and engineering principals, coupled with myriad opportunities to develop interpersonal planning and working skills. All students are eligible for enrollment to Project Lead the Way, however, staffing limitations restrict class size to a maximum of 35 students per class. The Design and Modeling curriculum has students apply the design process to solve problems and understand the influence of creativity and innovation in their lives. In Automation & Robotics, students trace the history, development, and influence of automation and robotics as they learn about mechanical systems, energy transfer, machine automation and computer control systems using VEX Robotics. The Energy & the Environment curriculum guides students to think toward the future as they explore sustainable solutions to our energy needs and investigate the impact of energy on our lives and the world.

In General Music, students learn to read and interpret musical notation. They apply that knowledge to performing on the piano and the guitar. Students also learn about music from various cultures, American music, and the eras of classical music. Students learn the skills they need to compose and to improvise music. The goal is to give students the foundation they need to continue to grow musically in high school, college, and beyond.

In addition to unified arts, Fallston Middle School has a thriving performing arts program. Students can choose to be in band, chorus, or orchestra in all three years of middle school. Currently, more than half of our students are members of a performance ensemble. Students attend their performing class every other day, alternating with physical education. In these groups, students learn proper technique, how to interpret musical notation, and essential music vocabulary. Students in all three ensembles perform two concerts each year. Preparation for these events teaches students work ethic and teamwork. Students that excel in their performing group are able to pursue additional musical opportunities, such as participating in honor ensembles, performing in Solo and Ensemble festivals, or performing the National Anthem at sporting events.

The physical education program at Fallston Middle School encourages students to seek a healthy and active lifestyle. Through cognitive, affective and psychomotor development, students gain the tools necessary to be physically active for a lifetime. Our physical education staff seeks to tailor instruction to meet the needs of all learners through lesson and activity enhancement, extensions and modifications. Our program centers on five general movement themes, including throwing and catching, striking, integrated movement, group initiatives and fitness. Through a sequential and developmentally appropriate instructional approach, students are able to learn and apply the skills necessary to engage in a variety of individual, team, competitive and cooperative activities. We believe that participation in a wide variety of activities enhances the students' ability to identify activities that they can pursue for their own personal wellness. Students are encouraged to take an active role in their learning through a variety of student-centered practice, problem solving and skill application activities. We continually assess student performances in order to provide feedback to the students and guide teachers in developing future activities. In addition to our general curriculum, students have the opportunity to engage in a school-wide fitness run, the renowned Hoops for Heart program, a low ropes adventure program and FitnessGram, a personal fitness assessment.

For almost twenty-five years, Fallston Middle School has offered a robust, foreign language curriculum to the majority of eighth grade students. With a focus on meaningful communication and critical thinking, teachers prepare students for the rigors of sequential, upper level studies. Level I French, German, and Spanish classes meet daily and engage students linguistically in real-life contexts, exploring current topics and themes through interdisciplinary projects and activities. In addition to the full year, Level I courses, Fallston Middle School was instrumental in pioneering the Spanish Discovery Program, an introductory trimester language program now offered at various middle schools throughout Harford County Public Schools. It should be noted that our students actually earn high school credit for successfully completing a full year of Level I French, German, or Spanish.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

When it comes to instruction, the increase in the availability of classroom technology, used on a daily basis, has led to the formation of a blended learning approach. At Fallston Middle School, the blended approach to instruction has led teachers to strike a balance between tradition pedagogical practices and the inclusion of digital platforms. In core content classrooms, it has become increasing commonplace to use digital textbooks and hardcover textbooks and novels. The emergence of the digital platform, as an option, created opportunities for teachers to extend classroom experiences into the students' homes.

In mathematics, we offer our sixth and seventh grade students access to First in Math, a program that helps students build a strong foundation of fundamental math skills. The digital platform allows students to access First in Math at their convenience, when school is not in session. The program is actively promoted throughout the school year and in June, we formally recognize the two 30 First in Math performers for each grade.

In language arts, the use of digital platforms provides students with options to interact with text electronically when they are using laptops. Students can digitally mark the text as they read, which could be something as simple as highlighting facts in green and opinions in yellow. Additionally, students rapidly move through the text by creating digital books. The use of a blended approach to instruction allows for differentiation of instruction as teachers can quickly identify students to work in one medium (textbooks), while others use laptops. An added benefit is the option for teachers to post digital work on their web pages, allowing students to access the material from home. This is a tremendous option for students who were absent from school. The Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) is widely used by teachers, as reading is such an integral part of the culture at Fallston Middle School. Students take the SRI in the fall, winter, and spring of each school. We monitor results to assess progress, as well as identify areas of concern.

The digital platform has made its way into special areas too. It is now commonplace to walk into a physical education classroom and see iPods or iPads being used by students as they pause to reflect on their level of mastery relative to the lesson objectives. An example of this might involve a lesson that focuses on the development of striking skills. The teachers can use the iPads to provide visual feedback to students,

allowing them to highlight examples of students mastering the objectives, as well as spotlight areas that need more work. Students often analyze themselves using footage recorded on their iPads. Additionally, physical education teachers have converted some of their assessments into digital form, shortening the time it takes to grade assessments and provide feedback. The results are one of several factors used to inform placement and instruction.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our school is a learning community that is committed to providing rigorous, high quality instruction in a safe and welcoming environment that fosters and encourages life-long learners. Students start their day with a warm welcome from their enthusiastic administration and teachers. The staff create and deliver meaningful, engaging and differentiated lessons that encourages real-life application. We motivate students through the PBIS program, which we have proudly participated in for over a decade. The program inspires students to act responsibly, demonstrate organization, achieve with a high-level of success and exhibit responsibility. We recognize and celebrate our students on a daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly basis with activities that make students feel important. One of our students' favorite celebrations is our annual school wide fair that has many activities including a teacher dunk booth. We also offer a variety of extracurricular activities, such as STEM, SGA, STARS, art club, and sports intramurals. These along with many other activities stimulate and enrich students' mental and physical wellness.

Our students receive recognition in several different ways during each school day. We start our morning with announcements that acknowledge student achievement in all content areas. For example, the Math Counts leaders and the Outstanding Physical Education Students. Teachers and staff acknowledge students' positive behavior and accomplishments with ROAR coupons. Students use these coupons for participation in special school activities (i.e., crazy sock day) and prizes throughout the year. Grade-level teams have created individualized programs and activities to applaud their students' success. In addition, the administration hosts a quarterly Honors Awards Ceremony that recognizes students and their high grade point averages. Parents and grandparents join us for this remarkable celebration. To end an incredible school year, students and staff participate in a fun-filled spirit week.

Our students' success is a direct reflection of our dedicated staff. Our administration does not let a day go by without making the staff feel appreciated and valued. Each week, three staff members receive recognition as "Staff Member of the Week". They enjoy a special parking spot and a free lunch. At our monthly faculty meetings, staff have the opportunity to write a kudos note to a coworker. During observation conferences, staff members receive praise for their continuous enthusiasm and devotion to the students. The staff also share a strong comradery, which is evident day-to-day as we celebrate and support one another.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Fallston Middle school is the cornerstone of the Fallston Community whether it is school-sponsored activities, Parks and Recreation activities or PTA events; the numbers truly speak for themselves. The FMS PTA has a total of 546 paid memberships, which include 69 teacher/faculty and staff members. The PTA has raised over \$15,700 dollars in Pay it Forward donations for use in improving resources and providing support to the FMS community. FMS and the PTA hosts parent seminars to provide additional information or resources for families including internet safety, adolescent mental health issues, brain development, Maryland 529 planning and transitioning of students between the various Fallston schools. FMS often collaborates with the high school in presenting valuable information related to drugs, safety and transition through a joint collaboration of speakers and activities.

Each year FMS hosts a PBIS ROAR fair as a reward for students demonstrating the qualities of Respect, Organization, Achievement and Responsibility. Over 50 parent volunteers, from all three-grade levels, come to work the various booths for the daylong fair. In addition, the Fallston Volunteer Fire Company brings their emergency vehicles, Fallston High School Art Students do caricatures, students have an opportunity to dunk some Fallston Middle School teachers, and the School Resource Officer uses his radar gun to measure fast pitch speeds. Parents are constantly present in the school whether they are hosting special treats for the teachers, making copies, helping with American Education week or assisting with our nationally recognized Hoops for Heart Program. For the last ten years, FMS consistently raised over \$20,000 funds for the American Heart Association with consistent recognition/placing in the top 10 of all

schools nationally for our fund raising efforts. FMS has raised over \$200,000 in the last ten years and we are only one of a few schools that can make that claim. Eighty percent of all FMS students participate in this program.

FMs partners with various local churches to provide food and gifts for our school's needy families during Christmas and Thanksgiving so that all students can have a good meal and a happy holiday. Students in the National Honor Society make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for a local church to help feed the homeless and they collect Pennies for Patients for those suffering in our local hospitals. Our student government does an annual food drive for the Harvest for the Hungry in MD. Students in our school participate in a multitude of service learning projects that help people worldwide as well as making community changing donations to the Fallston Humane Society and contributing to the local Sheriff's Office Toy Drive. Students at FMS learn to be good citizens of the world and feel the value and the impact of their philanthropic participation in helping their local community.

3. Professional Development:

Fallston Middle School was an early adapter of the Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) movement. The infusion of technology, which was usually in the form of a cell phone or small tablet, gave teachers another platform to use for instruction. Suddenly, lessons that once required teachers to reserve a computer lab could now be conducted in a traditional classroom environment. This gave teachers greater flexibility when planning lessons, as well as giving students a safe platform for using their electronic devices. Over time, teachers developed a number of ways to communicate when it was necessary to use an electronic device in their respective classes. Some of the different strategies used to alert students when a BYOT Day was approaching include posting colored signs on classroom doors, posting signs near lockers, posting information on teacher web pages, and sending messages to students via the Remind app. Soon, students know precisely where to look in a classroom, door, or hallway, to determine if it was a BYOT Day for a specific class.

A healthy, productive relationship already existed between content teachers and the media specialist, making it seamless to incorporate research techniques taught in the Media Center with BYOT strategies now used in classrooms. Additionally, content specialists, from central office, routinely collaborate with our school to deliver updated approaches for incorporating lessons from the curriculum guides. Harford County Public Schools introduced an online platform called itslearning. Many of the classroom-based lessons found on itslearning contain enhanced approaches to instruction, allowing teachers to take full advantage of the different options a digital lesson offers. Additionally, teachers received professional development on the itslearning platform. Some of the sessions were offered during the summer, with teachers receiving stipends to attend the sessions. The district also supported teachers by providing learning modules of the district's homepage. We provided professional development at our school by utilizing the skillsets of teachers who took advantage of opportunities to explore the itslearning platform during the summer sessions, as well as inviting teacher specialists from the Central Office, to provide content specific professional development during teachers' planning periods.

A school-based professional development team used surveys to collect teacher input regarding the types of learning activities they were interested in completing. Acting on the feedback from teachers, the professional development team created sessions that allowed for teacher differentiation based on individual preferences. Research has shown that teachers place a greater value on professional development when they view the offerings as relevant. One of the early professional development days centered on Special Education. Working closely with personnel from the Office of Special Education, we were able to offer a variety of sessions that gave teachers several options from which to choose. Feedback garnered from teachers on the session critiques confirmed that they valued the sessions and the autonomy to select the sessions they felt they would most benefit from attending.

The district releases a professional development calendar at the start of each school year. The calendar details dates when professional development will occur in regional locations and when it will be school based. Throughout the school year, teachers meet weekly with their grade level content peers, and monthly as departments, to review classroom data collected from common assessments. The discussions that follow

those sessions often lead to adjustments in instructional practice. This process is called a Classroom-Focused Improvement Process (CFIP) and the district has used it for nearly a decade. Common planning time for grade level peers is a necessary component, without which the process would be difficult to implement.

4. School Leadership:

The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) at Fallston Middle School consists of a principal, two assistant principals, and a part-time teacher mentor. The Instructional Leadership Team has many responsibilities, including the implementation of the teacher observation and evaluation process, planning and delivering meaningful professional development, supporting a vibrant Parent Teacher Association, and managing the physical plant. A key principle for the leadership team is to encourage and support the teachers as they form close working relationships with each other and the community they serve.

Last year, the impact of those efforts, collectively viewed through the lens of the entire eighth grade body of students, revealed to the principal during a series of interactions with those students. The principal asked every eighth grade student two simple prompts: Tell me something you like about the school and Tell me something you dislike about the school. The results were astounding, as the majority of responses, regarding what they liked centered on their teachers. Many commented on how they felt supported, challenged, and cared for by their teachers. Others referenced their teachers' willingness to offer extra help, often before school, during lunch, and after school. The students made it clear that they appreciated the teachers going extending themselves in an effort to help students. Most of the comments regarding what students did not like about the school centered on the cafeteria. They either complained about the food or about not being able to sit wherever they wanted. The results were shared with students during a subsequent session, with the teachers during a faculty meeting, and with the superintendent and her leadership team during a school visit.

Empowering teachers to make decisions that serve the best interests of the students, is just one example of the important roles teachers have at this school. Additionally, teachers have a tremendous voice as members of the School Performance and Achievement (SPA) Team. Charges for the team include ensuring that all students achieve at high standards or make significant academic growth in all content areas, as well as creating an environment that is safe, caring, and conducive to learning. Several teachers, who are also parents, serve on this committee. The SPA Team creates a school improvement plan, which includes instructional goals for the school year. The SPA Team meets monthly, updates the goals quarterly, and acts as a sounding board for other school initiatives.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One practice that stands out in terms of creating success is our process for placing students in the correct classes and on the right teams. At Fallston Middle School, we give students what they need to be successful and in turn, FMS succeeds. FMS has consistently scored in the top three middle schools in Harford on all PAARC and MSA test results for more than 10 years. We use extensive data analysis to guide us in the accurate placement of students. Vertical teaming between elementary schools and FMS as well as FMS and our neighboring high school ensures that we place students where they will be successful from the very first day of school. We place students in environments that encourage them to work hard and stretch without being in over their head.

We designed the school schedule in such a way that allows for further individual accommodations for differentiated needs. FMS has a Cougar period in which students are re-grouped to receive remediation and/or intervention in Math and Language Arts as well as enrichment or extension for all core content areas. The interventions that students receive are nationally recognized and research based.

Students that need additional skill reinforcement or tutoring in Math or Reading, participate in a middle school peer-to-peer morning Math tutoring program hosted by our National Junior Honor Society and supervised by a Math teacher. Students can also choose to participate in afterschool Reading/Math tutoring program with students from the high school that are members of the Future Teachers of America program. This joint collaboration provides FMS students with the tutoring assistance necessary to help support them academically and it provides the high school students with practical real life exposure to the teaching career.

Technology is a tool that closes gaps. FMS and Harford County are working to achieve a one to one ratio for students and laptops. By next year, all students in FMS will have daily access to a laptop computer. We are a BYOT (Bring your own technology) school and we were on the forefront of modeling this program for all middle schools in Harford County.

Our students not only achieve in school but they excel out of school by voluntary participation in the First in Math program. FMS consistently performs top in the nation and state for student access and participation in this outside of the school day Math program. In the last two years, our students have solved 2.2 million math problems correctly. FMS sixth and seventh grade students are currently ranked number one in the State of MD and last year FMS, grades 6-8, was ranked 34th in the Nation in the First in Math competition.