

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Debra Tarantino

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

Official School Name Clarkstown High School South

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 31 Demarest Mill Road

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

West Nyack NY 10994-3430
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Rockland

Telephone (845) 624-3400

Fax (845) 623-5470

Web site/URL https://www.ccsd.edu/

E-mail dtarantino@ccsd.edu

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Martin Cox

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail mcox@ccsd.edu

District Name Clarkstown Central School District Tel. (845) 639-6400

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Ms Tamara Bierker

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

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

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. 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):
- 9 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 13 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	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	169	143	312
10	162	160	322
11	196	173	369
12 or higher	182	189	371
Total Students	709	665	1374

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 13 % Asian
 - 4 % Black or African American
 - 13 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 68 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 3%

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	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	24
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	37
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	1411
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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: 11 %
Total number students who qualify: 157

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
223 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>17</u> Autism | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>1</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>45</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>140</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>8</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>2</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>4</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>3</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
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	4
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	105
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	28
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	29
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	17

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 13:1

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%	96%	95%
High school graduation rate	97%	99%	99%	99%	98%

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	344
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	75%
Enrolled in a community college	22%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	1%
Found employment	1%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
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.

Prepare today's students to conquer tomorrow's challenges.

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

Clarkstown Senior High School South, educating 1,360 students in grades 9-12, is located in West Nyack, New York approximately twenty-five miles north of New York City in historic Rockland County. Clarkstown South, home of the Vikings, was established in 1971 as the second of two high schools in the Clarkstown Central School District that also includes one middle school (grades 6-8), nine elementary schools (grades K-5) and one K-12 special education school. With over 87,000 residents, the suburban area is diverse with predominately middle to upper class residents. Parents are highly involved in all aspects of the student's lives, which is evidenced in South's 97% graduation rate. This partnership, enhanced through South's Parent Teacher Student Association, creates a positive and academically-minded school community with an emphasis on preparation for higher education where 99.7% of South's seniors went on to colleges in 2017.

South's mission "to prepare today's students to conquer tomorrow's challenges" is the key driver for the school community. Every member of the community unitedly seeks to develop the academic, physical, social and emotional development of our students. This philosophy is systemic and facilitates South's award winning results. South is an accredited International Baccalaureate Diploma School, Middle States accredited high school as well as a New York State Rewards School for the past three years. As a Reward School, South has been among the top twenty percent of schools in the state. Other national recognitions include the Silver Award by U.S. News and World Report and "Best Communities for Music Education in America".

Faculty and staff are devoted to helping students reach their full potential. The faculty focuses on student interests and requests to shape curriculum and courses. With over 24 college, 18 AP, and 17 IB courses, there is a diverse offering of rigorous courses which meets the need of every student. Courses are designed with a strong emphasis on providing practical workplace experiences where students develop the skills, knowledge and expertise to succeed in work and life in the 21st century. We offer numerous career and technical courses that includes a school store run by students, communication and media courses housed in a television studio and editing lab, culinary courses with a fully functioning classroom kitchen, and engineering and robotics technology classes. In addition, South possesses a planetarium and a greenhouse, which are both utilized to provide experiences in astronomy and environmental science. Over forty students have the opportunity to study other career and technical education courses at Rockland's Board of Cooperative Educational Services. South provides universal access to all courses with special education programs, SPIRIT and STRIVE, that provide educational, life skills and job site instruction for developmentally disabled and autistic students.

All stakeholders believe that in addition to academics, a healthy lifestyle, active engagement in extra-curricular activities and community service, will develop the student as a whole. These guiding principles promote growth and opportunities for all students and are defined by their interests and ambitions. In 2017, South was one of 322 schools to receive the National Healthy School Award from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation for creating a healthier school environment for students and staff. In addition, the school community participates in county and school based events that promote physical fitness and healthy choices for life. After school, students have the opportunity to participate in 28 different sports activities at both the varsity and junior varsity level, including unique sports such as crew, fencing and skiing. Students also choose among 77 clubs with opportunities to participate in academic and musical competitions, to perform in drama and musical theater and to focus their attention on community service.

Co-curricular activities during and after school commit to teaching leadership skills, kindness, and tolerance. Activities that promote diversity and acceptance, including the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) Club, the Cultural Club, Strive for Spirit (where mainstream students work with our developmentally and intellectually challenged students) and the Open to Change Committee that has led to South's recognition as a "No Place For Hate" school by the Anti-Defamation League. Our Assets Leadership course and club built on the foundation of the 40 Developmental Assets researched by the Search Institute, focuses on anti-bullying and leadership initiatives and fundraising activities for non-profit causes. Upperclassmen volunteer their time to the school community and hone their leadership skills

through practical experiences by educating underclassmen and middle school students about the dangers of substance abuse and promoting anti-bullying messages. South's Freshmen Orientation is organized by the members of Assets, National Honor Society and Viking Connection who present workshops to the freshmen in the summer and continue with regular meetings to educate students on organizational and communication skills, tolerance, and self-advocacy.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Clarkstown South readies our students for higher education, work, and responsible citizenship through engaging and lively curricula that help students to be well-informed decision-makers and leaders in the global community. The curricula, based on the New York State Common Core, Next Generation learning standards, weaves 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration into student centered lessons, and project based learning in all units of study.

In Social Studies, students are required to complete Global History and Geography I & II; United States History; Participation in Government (where seniors are required to compete eight hours of community service) and Economics. Electives include College Sociology, Personal Origins and Pathways (a course on genealogy and immigration), Social Psychology and Facing History and Ourselves. These courses require students to make connections between history and the moral choices they debate in their own experiences. At all levels of instruction, students are expected to read critically from multiple perspectives, analyze critically original sources and historical documents, write critically for multiple audiences, and conduct in-class dialogue in which students engage respectfully with other students. Collaboration occurs on an ongoing basis in the Social Studies department and across curricula through our I.B. Diploma Programme and our A.P. Recurring Themes program. Experiences for students to extend and enhance their learning outside the classroom are included in Model United Nations, Junior Statesmen of America and participation in National History Day competitions.

The English Language Arts content is focused on building 21st century skills in reading, writing and speaking, with units focusing instruction around core texts, supplementary texts, enduring understandings, essential questions, and a unit assessment. There are several electives including Public Speaking, Literature with a Difference, Journalism, Creative Writing, Research Strategies, Mythic Journeys, Short Fiction, and Writer's Workshop. The core texts are a collection of works that have been selected through committee and incorporate supplemental texts for the purpose of rendering supportive and challenging perspectives. Teachers plan for differentiation and real life application of life skills to enhance student engagement. The English Department prepares seniors for college and career readiness with the following options: A.P. Literature, A.P. Language, I.B. English Years 1 & 2, Introduction to College English, and Woodlands Individualized Senior Experience (WISE) English. As part of the WISE English curriculum, students develop their communication skills while participating in internships and project based learning experiences. At the conclusion of the course, students are evaluated authentically as they plan and present a 45 minute presentation describing their internship experiences through data collection.

The first three years of South's math curriculum, Algebra, Geometry and Algebra II, develop students' problem solving and analytical skills and provides the foundation for students to progress into more abstract mathematical concepts offered in Pre-Calculus and Calculus classes as well as A.P. Calculus AB and BC. Students are encouraged to challenge themselves in elective Advanced Placement Courses, such as A.P. Statistics, A.P. Computer Science Principles and both College and A.P. Computer Science (Java) preparing students for college programs that focus on advanced mathematical concepts. The math curricula develops students' problem solving and analytical skills by infusing student developed questions and real world applications. Furthermore, students participate and place in mathematical competitions and regularly publish an award winning interdisciplinary math publication Mad About Mu.

The majority of students enroll in Science for four years. Biology, Earth Science, Chemistry and Physics are the standard continuum; however, other science electives are available. These include Marine Science, College Marine Science, College Astronomy, Forensics, Systems and Sustainability, Human Impact in Science, Conceptual Chemistry and Conceptual Physics. Our science educators foster responsible citizenship by expecting students to use new/y-gained scientific knowledge to draw conclusions about their world and to continually revise those conclusions as more knowledge is gained. In this constructivist approach, civic responsibility is developed through the rigor of the various courses that expect student contemplation about the human impact of scientific decision-making. The inquisitiveness of our students is

harnessed for solutions to world issues in extracurricular opportunities such as Intel Science competitions facilitated through years of science research at South.

As a minimum, there are five required state assessments (Regents exams) for graduation that also serve to create accountability. Many of our students take additional state assessments as well as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate assessments. College courses offered through Syracuse University, the State University of New York at Albany, and St. Thomas Aquinas College have required college-approved final exams. New York State allows a Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Pathway for students to replace one of the two required state assessments in Social Studies. Our CDOS program, that promotes workplace experience and internships as well as business and STEM pathways, accommodates over 100 students, many of whom are also taking multiple assessments and are choosing to enhance their Regents diploma with this accreditation.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Clarkstown South, students have the opportunity to explore and discover various academic interests outside of the standard core curriculum. Students are encouraged to strengthen their depth of knowledge across and among all curriculum areas.

The Art Department offers a comprehensive approach to visual arts education for all grade levels from a foundation in Studio and Media Arts to A.P., I.B. and college level studio and art history offerings. Most students complete their fine arts requirement in ninth grade and have the opportunity to take art electives including Design and Illustration, Painting and Drawing, Basic and Digital Photography and Animation and Gaming Design. Over one-third of students are actively engaged in the core standards of creating, producing, responding and connecting artistic work and ideas with personal meaning and cultural and historical context. Technology is infused throughout lessons and provide additional avenues for students to collaborate, extending the learning environment beyond the classroom. Additionally, students have access to mobile labs of iPad Pros and Macbook Pros, a Mac lab equipped with drawing tablets, 3D printers and the latest Adobe Creative Cloud Suite.

The Music department offers foundational performance-based music classes including Chorus, Band, Guitar and Orchestra. A.P. Music Theory, I.B. Music and I.B. Theater Arts courses are designed to provide an in-depth understanding of music and its connection to all subjects. Students enrolled in music participate in seasonal concerts, theatrical productions, and special events throughout the district and the county.

South's Physical and Health Education courses promotes a healthy lifestyle. The Physical Education program instructs students in important life skills such as good sportsmanship and life-long fitness. It is unique in that it allows students to choose a new activity every five weeks. Every year, students are evaluated and receive a personal physical fitness assessment. All seniors receive CPR certification. Health education is a skills based curriculum that promotes advocacy, communication, decision making, goal setting and stress management through varying topics that include violence prevention, substance use, mental health, physical activity and nutrition and violence prevention to name a few. Student centered project based learning empowers students to facilitate the ever-changing needs with respect to health education.

The District provides the 21st century learner with Spanish as a world language offering in Kindergarten providing the opportunity for students to become multi-lingual upon graduation from South. Students can choose to develop fluency and mastery through the multiple world language offerings: Spanish, Italian, Latin, Japanese, French, and American Sign Language. South's World Language classes are cross-curricular and cross-cultural and give students an enriching global experience. In addition to the progression of language being offered through different levels, advanced students will take honors, college level, A.P. and I.B. courses. More than 65% of students are enrolled in a World Language class.

South's Library Media Center provides a print and non-print resource collection that supports our students in researching all areas of curriculum. In addition, students have access to 52 databases supporting multiple levels of learning. Resources are brought to the students' attention through in class lessons provided by the

library media specialist and the subject area teachers. The Library Media Center is open on a daily basis to all students who utilize it during lunch periods and study halls, and it is equipped with numerous computers and Chromebooks for student use.

South's Career and Technical Education Department is one of the most comprehensive programs in the State offering 32 courses in business and marketing, finance, entrepreneurship, culinary arts, fashion and interior design, engineering, drawing and design production, computer-aided design, and digital and studio radio and television production. Students take introductory courses in the 9th and 10th grades and can earn college credit in their junior and senior years through honors level programs. Based in career readiness, these classes provide practical school internships that include student produced videos for the school community, district and local cable; managing and operating a school store that takes in approximately \$200,000 yearly; and designing and beautifying spaces in the school including a classroom turned apartment for South's special needs students to practice their life skills. Extra-curricular experiences are also available for South's business students who compete in the Distributive Education Clubs of America and who find success regionally, statewide and nationally. Currently, over 78% of the student population are enrolled in at least one Career and Technical Education class.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Clarkstown South utilizes various instructional methods, interventions and assessments to personalize the student learning experience. Classroom instruction includes tiered activities that promote rigor, encourage persistence and generate a positive learning mindset. Faculty apply research-based instructional techniques that recognize the diversity of student learning needs. Differentiated instruction that considers the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is widely embraced. In addition, depending on the subject area, student centered instructional methods may include: explicit instruction, problem based learning, Socratic seminars, discussion, debate, presentation, blended learning with a flipped classroom, demonstration, re-teaching, feedback conferences, scaffolded practice, integrated co-teaching strategies (e.g. station teaching, parallel teaching, one teach-one assist) etc. Teachers facilitate customized learning experiences that provide students with the ability to develop transferable critical thinking skills.

Technology is used to provide students access to learning tools while providing an excellent platform to build differentiated activities and accommodations. All students have access to technology and teachers utilize a variety of tools such as Chromebooks, Smartboards, iPads, graphing calculators, document cameras, cell phones and individualized learning tools and apps. Students are encouraged to explore technology tools, software, coding and programming to communicate their learning. Advanced assistive technology is used with South's Special Education and 504 population to enable students to participate in the least restrictive environment. In addition, students have access to over 20 mobile computer carts (30 each) and labs set up throughout the school.

A variety of assessment data is used to analyze and improve student performance. Students are given an opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the content in multiple ways; they can create videos, portfolios, and presentations while they also take standard multiple choice and constructed response assessments. Faculty also allow peer feedback as an assessment strategy. Undoubtedly, South's staff proactively evaluates student learning needs based on varied assessments. Yearly, department chairs analyze questions and student responses on state tests to inform instruction and revise curriculum to continue to meet the standards. Department chairs facilitate similar conversations with A.P. and I.B. teachers based on the results of formal tests. Furthermore, teachers collaborate throughout the year to evaluate school developed assessments, such as unit exams and writing prompts, and use this information to revise instruction. In order to establish building goals based on academics, the Site-Based Strategic Planning Committee uses various data points, such as State tests as well as teacher and student surveys, to develop building-wide goals that include detailed action plans.

Students who are performing below grade level receive a myriad of supports. If a student is struggling in their current program, an Instructional Support Team meeting is scheduled to develop an action plan aimed at the student's needs. The team may advise that the student receive extra help sessions, be placed on progress monitoring, placed in smaller classes, or co-taught classes with two teachers, or Achievement

Center. In the Achievement Center, students are assigned to work in small groups with a teaching assistant who is able to assist with organizational skills, test preparation, homework completion and content support. A computer program is also used in the Achievement Center to provide additional instructional support. Students also have access to pre-vocational BOCES, CDOS and worksite programs. High performing students are challenged to access college level courses such as A.P. and I.B. courses. Students can also take accelerated courses in their early high school years. Some seniors seize the opportunity to attend a local college for their final year.

When there is the need to evaluate significant achievement gaps, the administrative team works with all department chairpersons to develop a plan of action. This will include a review of course offerings to ensure that students are placed appropriately based on their needs. This may include the addition of smaller, intensive classes for general education students or co-taught classes for special education students. Additionally, support services in the form of extra help and review sessions are offered after school and a Homework Center is available for all students.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

South engages and motivates students by providing a challenging and rigorous program within a culture of care and trust. Each student is able to experience deeper learning into a specific area of academic interest, with breadth and depth, over the course of four years. However, students know they are not alone in this learning journey; their teachers advocate and fully support their academic, social and emotional growth. Students are taught mindfulness strategies to manage stress and anxiety and are encouraged to enjoy extracurricular activities. Teachers are often seen before and after school providing extra support to their students. Students and teachers share a rapport where students feel free to communicate and ask for assistance.

Supporting and raising the “whole” child takes intentionality. South executes a strategic guidance plan that helps parents and students know clear objectives for graduation, extracurricular offerings, and the social-emotional supports available. There is a Viking Connection mentor program that provide freshmen with upper classmen mentors who meet monthly with freshmen to promote extra-curricular opportunities, character development and strategies for success in high school. In addition, school counselors meet regularly with students to provide career and college readiness lessons so students are well prepared for their post high school experience. Student Assistance Counselors also provide students with individual and group counseling, conflict resolution services, and referrals to outside therapists and programs. Presentations are also provided ranging from teen issues to mental health to substance abuse.

Student success is valued. Recognizing and rewarding service and achievement occurs both in and out of the classroom. Volunteer service is acknowledged through recognition in the principal’s monthly newsletter, South’s website and in the daily announcements. Moreover, students who might not normally be recognized are recommended for a Southern Lights awards and their picture is posted in a display case in the lobby. Academic achievement is recognized quarterly through an honor roll that is posted in South’s lobby and on student report cards. Other award ceremonies for academic achievement include the National Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta and World Language Honor Society inductions, and an Academic Excellence dinner. Athletic achievement is celebrated through South’s pep rallies and daily announcements.

Faculty go the extra mile for students because they feel valued and supported. They are provided with the opportunity for professional development, time for collaboration, and access to the administration who is approachable and amenable to suggestions. The school environment allows teachers to be lifelong learners. Every year teachers are invited to take part in a professional book study and attend national conferences. New teachers are encouraged to participate in monthly new teacher meetings. Teachers are invited to participate on building and district committees where they are active members of decision making processes.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Clarkstown South has several successful strategies for engaging families and community members for student success and school improvement. South regularly hosts meetings for parents, including two orientations for the parents of incoming freshman, a college financial aid night presented by a local college financial aid representative, a senior parent college presentation, a junior parent college presentation, a meet the teacher night, and two parent/teacher conferences per year. Parents are also members of committees developed to enhance the student experience and to share their input in strategic goals, awards and athletic traditions, such as pep rally and dances, extra-curricular activities and yearly events. Families are invited to our numerous award ceremonies and athletic events. They are also engaged through the principal’s newsletter, website announcements, Naviance (a college and career readiness program), email and post mail. Parents and staff communicate via email and receive updates about class activities via the Remind app. As a partner in students’ success, parents have access to an electronic portal that displays student grades attendance and teacher comments.

Students collaborate with agencies to assist local families in need as well as not-for-profit organizations mobilizing aid. This partnership develops community minded citizens. During the holidays, students participate in several food and toy drives and adopt local families through the United Way's holiday program. South's music group the, Ambassadors, sings at community fundraisers and entertains adults at nursing homes throughout the year. Students assist the local Rotary by volunteering at their Pancake Breakfast to raise money for Meals on Wheels and the entire South school community participates in "Vikings Wear Pink" every October to raise money for cancer research and local families dealing with the illness. In April, the school community that includes two programs for students with developmental and intellectual disabilities partners with a local organization that educates adults with disabilities to organize a walk for Autism Awareness.

Students have been provided with numerous opportunities to interact with representatives from higher education. The school counseling office hosts three college fairs every October. Each fair has twenty to thirty college representatives in attendance. Additionally, throughout the year, individual college representatives visit South to meet with students.

Regarding school improvement, families are surveyed to gather their opinions and all staff, students, parents and community members have the opportunity to join the PTSA and/or sit on any number of committees. Yearly, the PTSA provides over ten scholarships to seniors. Recently, there was a concern with safety issues at the annual Homecoming Pep Rally. Rather than cancelling the event, staff members, students and parents from the "Touchdown Club" collaborated to update the event and improve safety.

3. Professional Development:

Clarkstown South's approach to professional development aims to encompass the values in the District's mission statement, which is devoted to meeting "the individual academic and social emotional needs of all students within a safe environment while empowering them to reach their full potential in a complex society." Specifically, Clarkstown South's Professional Development Team plans professional development experiences for the staff with the goals of advancing learning for students, supporting the social-emotional and ethical development of students, investing in the skills, knowledge and expertise of the community and maintaining and promoting safe and respectful environments.

South's team, comprised of administrators, teachers, teaching assistants and psychologists, utilizes the district's goals for professional development as the impetus for designing learning experiences for teachers to promote the building's goals as well. These include cross-curricular writing instruction, co-teaching, and providing differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners. As a common practice, teachers who attend out of district workshops often turnkey their learning at faculty and department meetings and "Viking Institutes," which are half day workshops during the school year designed to enhance the staff's professional practice. This year, our English Department presented a workshop on argumentative writing which was recognized as an interdisciplinary theme that benefited all other departments. Other recent Viking Institutes include technology use in instruction, curriculum development to meet changing math standards, innovative teaching strategies to develop student centered learning practices and methods for developing effective behavior intervention plans.

Formally, South's Professional Development Team is responsible for the planning and implementation of professional development activities during two full Superintendent Conference days and three half days designed to support district and building level goals. The team uses information from teacher surveys to prepare meaningful adult learning experiences. Teachers lead one another and open their practice to their colleagues with strategies that will improve student achievement. Workshops focus on technology, curriculum, developing growth mindsets, emotional needs for students, co-teaching, best practices, school safety and health and well-being for teachers and students. In addition, professional guest speakers share their expertise pertaining to pertinent educational practices. At the conclusion of professional development days, the team uses data retained through surveys to develop future professional development experiences. Moreover, members of South's team communicate with the District's Professional Development Team through regularly scheduled meetings to inform future professional development experiences as well.

Teachers also have the opportunity to attend national and local conferences to deepen their pedagogical knowledge. The myriad of opportunities for professional development positively influences students as teachers implement new and innovative techniques.

4. School Leadership:

Clarkstown South's leadership philosophy is that all stakeholders are responsible for developing students educationally, emotionally, socially and physically in a safe environment while promoting a growth mindset. The leadership team includes a principal, three assistant principals, nine department chairs, and an athletic coordinator. The decision-making process is collaborative. The team promotes a positive and productive work environment focused on student learning; therefore, focused committees ensure all stakeholders contribute to this goal. The leadership team meets monthly. In addition, South's Shared Decision Making Site-Based Team, consisting of administrators, teachers, a social worker, parents and students plans activities and events that include community presentations, changes in school protocols and contributes to the development of South's beliefs, mission statement and goals. These goals, coupled with the district's goals, guide South's Professional Development Team.

South's Open to Change committee and Health and Wellness committees also include representatives from all stakeholders; however, each committee maintains a different leadership focus. The Open to Change committee's goal is to develop the emotional and social needs of the students by creating activities that promote anti-bullying initiatives, respect, tolerance and acceptance. South's Health and Wellness Committee, responsible for South's national health awards, initiates building activities such as the yearly Health and Wellness Fair and "brain break" activities promoting physical fitness.

School safety is facilitated by South's Emergency Response and Safety Team that includes administrators, staff members, security personnel, and a school resource officer. This team works with the district and the local police department to develop South's safety plan, ensure building maintenance, practice safety drills, and communicate safety measures with the staff and students.

The best example of how leadership decisions promote student learning is demonstrated through South's Instructional Support Team (I.S.T.). When a student is having difficulty finding success at South, members of South's staff are encouraged to recommend that student and his or her parent to participate in the I.S.T process. The principal initiates the process by assigning an administrator to invite parents and the student to attend the meeting that includes the school counselor, a psychologist, a student assistance counselor, and teachers. The administrator works with the team to collect academic and emotional data concerning the student so that the focus of the meeting is to identify the barriers to student learning and to develop, through brainstorming and discussion, individualized interventions with the goal of providing opportunities for the student to learn and flourish holistically as well as academically.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Clarkstown South strives to develop caring students that seek personal and academic success while advocating for a kind and productive world. We believe that a student's academic success is inextricably linked to his/her social-emotional health. South's support services that include four full time psychologists and two student assistance counselors partner with stakeholders to help students develop from the inside out. They provide varied supports that meet the socio-emotional needs of the student. Psychological Services provides individual and group counseling, mediation, conflict resolution and bullying prevention, classroom presentations on mental health, substance abuse and referral services to community therapists and programs.

The Psychologist's Department is proactive in promoting socio-emotional educational programs. Developed by a social worker and students, the Assets Leadership class and club is unique to South. Based on the philosophy of the 40 Developmental Assets researched by the Search Institute, the Assets curriculum includes student centered activities aimed at promoting organizational, communication and leadership skills while promoting kindness and respect towards others. The final project for the semester course includes an advocacy project in which the students identify a need or a cause to teach the school community about the importance of helping others. The Assets Leadership Club provides the opportunity for students who cannot fit the class into their schedule to participate in and develop their own advocacy projects. South's principal and a student assistance counselor who brought the Assets curriculum and club to South have presented this character and leadership philosophy and practice at state and national conferences.

Another program facilitated by one of South's student assistance counselors is the Peer Leaders group trained by the Anti-Defamation League. The Peer Leaders consists of 10th and 11th graders who teach a series of topics including violence prevention, stereotyping, bias, gossip, bullying, and values to all ninth graders. As role models, the upperclassmen prepare by examining their own feelings and concerns around issues of public humiliation and social media bias as well. The conversations and activities are geared towards changing students' negative beliefs and promote acceptance and respect.

South's Psychological Services advises a variety of clubs that meet the socio-emotional needs of the students. They educate students and their parents through their Tolerance Team's intervention services, New Student meetings and Substance Abuse Assessment Team services. Psychological Services works collaboratively and proactively to teach students to embrace struggles as opportunities, helping them to persevere in challenging, rigorous academic courses and extracurricular activities.