

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):
- 15 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 16 High schools
 - 13 K-12 schools
- 49 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	68	58	126
1	61	63	124
2	59	66	125
3	61	68	129
4	59	67	126
5	74	56	130
6	66	64	130
7	68	62	130
8	76	51	127
9	91	49	140
10	57	62	119
11	60	54	114
12 or higher	53	32	85
Total Students	853	752	1605

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 17 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 74 % White
 - 4 % 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: 6%

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	48
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	52
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	100
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	1605
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

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

Dutch, Russian, Spanish, Gujarati

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 24%
Total number students who qualify: 389

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
162 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>11</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>2</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>26</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>6</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>85</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>29</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	6
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	73
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	9
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	9

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 22:1

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	98%	94%	96%	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	92
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	43%
Enrolled in a community college	45%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	2%
Found employment	7%
Joined the military or other public service	3%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

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.

YPA exists in order that its students possess the knowledge, skills, and determination necessary to excel in their chosen post-secondary pursuits and in life.

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

Charter school: Students are admitted through a random lottery held each spring for the upcoming school year and from a wait list as spots become available throughout the school year.

PART III – SUMMARY

York Preparatory Academy (YPA) is a public charter school located in Rock Hill, South Carolina that serves families with students in grades K-12. The school's charter was written and approved in 2009 as a school to serve families across York County and now includes over 1600 students, many of whom travel to the school from surrounding counties. Residents of these counties include both suburban and rural settings as well as many different levels of socio-economic status. Serving students from such a wide geographical area that spans several school districts in a single site school challenges us to recognize and adapt to the needs of students individually rather than focusing on the general needs endemic to a single area. It also adds the inevitable traffic problem as parents come to drop off and pick up each day. As we have grown into the school that we are today, so have our supports and programs grown to best support our student body. While the school's focus has consistently been on providing the preparation that students need for college, our mission has evolved to become more specific. Everything that we do now at York Prep exists so that our students possess the knowledge, skills, character, and determination necessary to excel in their chosen post-secondary pursuits and in life. This means that not only do our programs focus on college prep for motivated and gifted students but that our growing number of students with special needs, which now exceeds 10%, also have opportunities to prepare for and pursue their goals after high school.

In the early days of York Prep, classes had to be held on a temporary site while both funding for and access to a suitable site was prepared. The school now occupies a four building campus on forty three acres on the outskirts of the city. In order to help our families arrive each day, as well as to provide as much equitable access as we can, we have purchased and operate 3 buses that each have multiple pick up sites in various parts of the areas that our students come from. As with many charter schools, we suffered high turnover of teachers and administrators over the course of the first few years. A key milestone for the school was the receipt of strong policy governance training for the school board during the 2014-2015 school year. That was quickly followed by decisions that have stabilized school leadership and, in turn, teaching staff. As the focus was able to shift to student success and instructional quality, the school received recognition from the State Charter School District for the growth of individual and groups of students. This culminated in specific recognition as a School of Distinction during the 2016-2017 school year for meeting both student growth goals as well as student proficiency goals at the end of the year. The school also had its first group of 12th grade students during the 2014-2015 school year as well. Helping a high percentage of our students successfully graduate has been a tradition at our school ever since.

There have been many details and developments that have shaped the school's progress from struggling to successful but two cultural elements have played a key role in all of them. First was the idea of Core Commitments from our staff. These commitments are statements that center around the use of data as the basis for instructional decisions, partnering with parents, and a constant drive to better ourselves and our areas. The commitment to religiously observing these ideas gives us a compass and has helped us to navigate the difficulties that arise during each school year. Closely related to this, and central to our goals for students, is our Patriot DNA. The Patriot DNA is a 6 strand ideal of traits that we want each graduating student to possess. The inclusion of Critical Thinking, Character, Creativity, Communication, Collaboration, and Choices into our curriculum sequence helps us infuse students with the skills and determination that they will need to be successful in secondary education and in the workforce. Every teacher from Kindergarten to High School has opportunities to develop instructional skills around these ideals. Weaving them into the instructional day is helping us to better prepare students to be successful and demonstrate growth. Partnering with the deliberate design of instruction to include these skills is the rigorous review of student progress throughout the year. Instructional coaches train weekly on how to design effective ways to gather data, how to better analyze progress data, and how to adjust instruction to support students' needs as identified using the data. This approach to student progress allows us to keep our attention on the individual student all year long. The use of coaches also allows our teachers the benefit of strong support as they learn the skills that we need them to have.

We are grateful for the families and staff who started our school, those of the community who have continued to work with us, and the people who have stepped up to create a place where school staff and parents can partner to help each child maximize their growth from year to year.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

We use the standards as adopted by the state as a starting point for planning instruction. The rest of what is taught is built upon the ideas from our Level 2 and Level 3 End Statements, which state: “Students will possess a rich and diverse knowledge base that extends beyond the requirements of the state core curriculum.” (Level 2A) and “Students will possess the reading and writing skills necessary to master a rich and diverse content base related to their post-graduation professional and personal goals, and to become self-directed over their own learning. They will also gain the ability to use numeracy skills in all areas of the curriculum, to understand how to practically apply them both within and outside of school, and be prepared to approach the numerical demands of further education, employment, and adult life with confidence and competence” (Level 3A). It is with these goals in mind that the Patriot DNA was designed and the reason for the close integration of all subjects.

In the area of English Language Arts (ELA), instruction begins with a strong focus on the 5 keys of literacy: Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension. While we don’t subscribe to a single commercial program to teach beginning readers we make available a wide variety of resources for teachers to pull from in the five areas to address the needs of their students. In the middle grades the focus of our curriculum flow shifts incrementally to specifically develop critical thinking and communication skills allowing students to not only read and write effectively but to begin using them as tools to analyze the writing of others and to synthesize ideas across subject areas. In High School our curriculum sequence takes another step up to start a path to fully develop the ability to effectively communicate on abstract and complex matters as well as thinking critically on in-depth connections between multiple subjects. At this point their skills will begin to take on more practical and technical applications as would be appropriate for college or career settings.

Math instruction at York Prep is carefully designed to help students reach the point in High School where they will be able to confidently and competently approach the demands of further education or employment. This means that our 9-12 grade math curriculum includes multiple opportunities for students to reach beyond the minimum requirement of a successful end of course test in Algebra I. In order to prepare students for these opportunities, students in middle grades work to integrate mathematical concepts as a key piece of learning in science and other subjects. In the early grades there is a driving focus on computation in numerical equations of all kinds. In addition, we begin early to incorporate writing into the math curriculum which allows students to be able to think critically about math and their ability to perform those operations.

Science is a connecting piece in our curriculum sequence. From a very early age and continuing up into the older grades we teach and use a combination of the scientific method/engineering process as the link to students thinking through and solving problems that are presented in other curricular areas such as ELA or Social Studies. Science and Mathematics are also closely aligned and integrated beginning in our primary and transitional grades as our students use mathematical and computational thinking to process pieces of their investigations into the world around them. While there is content knowledge specific to science that our curriculum sequence covers as students progress from grade to grade, the important skills of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration are specifically targeted as well.

We believe that valuable lessons can be learned from history and that our students should be both well informed on those lessons as well as being aware of and possessing the ability to be thoughtful in their participation in society. The use of classic literature supplements the curriculum from the state throughout our K-12 sequence. The overall guiding theme throughout the study of the social sciences revolves around recognizing character and conflict. This is followed by helping students to critically discuss how the handling of those two things affected history and how they affect current events. In later classes in the HS the same two ideas begin to be applied and how they will affect the students themselves as they become participants in the future.

As was mentioned in the opening narrative, there is a K12 emphasis on the six strands of the Patriot DNA

that will prepare them to be successful in higher education and the workforce: Critical Thinking, Character, Creativity, Communication, Collaboration, and Choice. By the time students begin high school classes, these are deeply embedded in each class they take. In keeping with our focus on the use of data we also look closely at both Pre-ACT and PSAT data to help students prepare to succeed in college placement tests. Our programs also seek to bring college and vocational schools on campus and to get our students on their campuses to help them understand their opportunities.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

We believe that instruction in our elementary grade levels provides the roots for further success and exploration as our students progress. To support this belief, we provide weekly classes by qualified teachers in the areas of visual art, music, PE, computer literacy, and library studies. This begins in Kindergarten and continues throughout the elementary grades. We agree with research showing that students involved in the arts and physical activity are able to learn and progress better in core curricular areas. In order to take full advantage of this asset, we help facilitate time for planning between related arts teachers and the grade level teams so that all can integrate the topics of study.

Middle school students at YPA experience a diverse assortment of elective class offerings throughout their fifth through eighth grade careers. Students in fifth grade take two middle school electives each nine weeks. They take classes in fine arts, physical education, technology, foreign language, and engineering. Students in sixth through eighth grade choose two elective classes each semester. Students must take a semester of physical education. They also have the option of taking band as a yearlong course. Students can also choose to take a semester course in cyber civics, which teaches students about using technology, character, and respect in the social media world.

Our elective courses offer students the opportunity to learn how to be physically active, express themselves musically, artistically and dramatically, explore different technology such as building robots, flying drones, creating algorithms, and speak a new language. Our technology class supports student learning in office applications, keyboarding, Internet and research skills, and computer ethics. The products that we see produced out of the classrooms support our school's positive culture. These products include student art exhibits, ceiling tile paintings, murals, band performances, theater productions, showcase of foreign language projects, and building of robots. The emphasis of our middle school electives is to grow the whole child, offering classes that will stimulate and challenge students' physical, mental, and social growth.

The goal for all students is to take all elective offerings at least one semester during their time in middle school. We feel this exposure to a variety of classes and disciplines will support the foundation students need as they prepare for college and career choices in high school. All of our elective courses tie back into our Patriot DNA Six C's. Students are given opportunities to learn and grow into critical thinkers, demonstrate great character, work on collaboration, communication, and creativity, while always striving to make good choices.

The high school related arts curriculum aims to build on top of the middle school offerings and to branch off of them. Classes include Business Education, Physical Education, Art, Drama, Essential Communication, Photography, Band, and Health. A key part of the curriculum for these courses focuses on ACT WorkKeys Standards as our main outlet to emphasize literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking in our classrooms. As a result the related arts team stays highly focused on career development through a variety of instructional strategies and the Career-Technology Education Standards as outlined by the National Board. WorkKeys standards such as Workplace Documents (formerly Reading for Information), Applied Mathematics, and Graphic Literacy (formerly Locating and Interpreting Information) lend themselves naturally to exposing students to numerous opportunities to engage in literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking in our classrooms.

Teachers in these classrooms utilize a variety of teaching methods as a part of their content as well. Specifically, using authentic assessments in a project based environment. These authentic assessments include research (literacy), solving a problem (critical thinking), peer reviews (critical thinking and reflection), and presentations. Debates, Socratic seminars, and reviews of current events all inform and make up part of the living curriculum that is included in these classes. Our foreign language instruction is a

good example of this. Students are introduced to beginning instruction in foreign language beginning in 5th grade with Spanish. Students have the opportunity to choose that elective every year during their middle school years before they take the required credit for high school graduation. Once in high school they begin to build on basic speech patterns and instruction to include literacy and critical thinking within the language. They are able to continue beyond the required credit to branch out in their development as desired up to and including the ability to take dual enrollment from our local higher education partners.

This partnership with our higher education partners makes up the last part of unique curriculum offerings at our school. Students are prepared to take the Accuplacer assessment, which when passed, gives them access to take dual enrollment and/or college credit courses in their area of interest. Students are able to pursue both vocational interest courses as well as early college credit courses to better prepare them to succeed in the workplace or at their higher education school of choice.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

As mentioned in the summary, all of our instruction, assessments, and interventions are focused around maximizing individual student growth and developing students to be able to successfully pursue their goals. The school's connected action map revolves around the analysis of student performance against set objectives to design instruction that helps each child to learn from their base starting point each year. We then continue to check in at different points throughout the year to ensure that this growth is taking place for all students. When it isn't happening, we can identify it early and do what is necessary to get it back on track.

The process to achieve individual student growth in grades K-8 begins over the summer. End of the year data from both state mandated assessments as well as the school selected self-adjusting tests based on norm referenced data are reviewed. Discussions take place to try and build optimal learning environments for all students. Learning levels that fall within each student's zone of proximal development are identified and passed on to the teachers that they will have in the fall. Based on this data, students are also identified to participate in our summer camps which are staffed by highly effective teachers each year. When students arrive in the fall our norm referenced tests are given again to verify each student's instructional level. We then use part of our 90 minutes set aside for language arts instruction to put students in smaller groups where students have similar needs. We accomplish this by bringing in an additional highly qualified teacher to lower the number of students per teacher. This allows for specific planning around student needs and for more specific instruction during this time. Other data begins to be compiled during this time such as common formative assessments and student fluency assessments that inform our teachers on their individual needs. Students who need additional help or additional challenge are identified and can be assigned to another group, given additional intervention throughout the day, or offered free after-school tutoring sessions in small groups to facilitate individual growth. The same process and level of care is followed with mathematics instruction, keeping in line with the schools focus on literacy and numeracy. In both instances a number of instructional resources can be made available during classroom time, intervention, or after school tutoring. These methods include the use of technology and online resources as well as traditional modeling.

The way we help our high school students show growth begins during their 8th grade year when students have the option of participating in the PSAT. In the spring, all students will participate in individual meetings with our 9th grade guidance counselor to review their goals, data, and to talk about how things will go in high school. The PSAT and Pre-ACT allows us, in a similar way to K-8 students, to identify student needs for instruction. Teacher and class assignments are made based on these needs. The goal is to be able to get students to qualify through passing a test in 10th grade which will then give them access to dual enrollment classes with our higher-ed partners. They can then choose an individual pathway to graduation that can end with anything from a professional certificate in the trades all the way up to the equivalent of a two-year degree along with their high school diploma.

Because the effective use of this variety of data and the focus on individual student growth requires a good amount of time we have had to build in additional time that allows for our teachers to look at it. This goes beyond the normal practice of common planning time, which we arrange for weekly. Each Friday, we let the students out early so that teachers can use the time to have discussions around student progress, review

formative assessment results, and to make adjustments to lesson plans as needed. As mentioned, all of our methods, interventions, and assessments are leveraged every week in order to help our teachers have the information to create specific instruction that will allow our students to maximize their individual growth.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

York Preparatory Academy strives to develop the full potential of each student by cultivating the skills, attributes, and characteristics that will prep each student to be better individuals and powers for good in the world. It's our Patriot DNA! YPA maintains an ongoing agenda of keeping students engaged and motivated by creating limitless opportunities for students to develop these traits. The combination of academic and personal growth achieved by high school graduation will create well-rounded students with choices to pursue their dreams. Our classes are outfitted with an abundance of technological learning resources and software to enhance the academic setting while giving our students a unique experience and advantage with exposure to these resources.

Part of YPA's culture and mission entails instilling in our students "the intrinsic motivation to continue to improve themselves throughout their lives." In our ongoing efforts to keep students engaged and motivated, students have opportunities to participate in our growing list of extracurricular activities and athletics. These provide chances to strengthen their socialization skills in addition to the rewards of working with peers to achieve common goals and pursue personal interests. Students' special achievements, both academic and athletic, are recognized routinely through our school-wide electronic publications and digital signage.

As one of YPA's Core Commitments states, "We will constantly seek to better ourselves, our team, our building, and our school." Our team of educators is a dynamic one, and we strive to stay true to our commitment to support their personal and professional growth. Teachers at all grade levels receive the support of Instructional Coaches, who lead professional development sessions, complete classroom visits, and offer teachers valuable feedback and leadership. Through weekly professional learning communities, teachers are empowered to collaborate with their peers and share best teaching practices. By listening to our teachers and involving them in decision-making that drives positive changes within our schools, we aim to continue iterating the magnitude of their roles in our school community. YPA's school culture is all-inclusive- We invite any student or staff member to "Come To Better Yourself, Set Out To Better The World"!

2. Engaging Families and Community:

One of our Core Commitments is that we are committed to working together with our students' families and the community as partners in the education process. In order for our students to reach their full potential we must collaborate with all stakeholders to ensure success. This is displayed through our interactions and our communication. Parent involvement is integral to our student success and engagement. We welcome each parent or guardian to be an active participant in the educational endeavors of their children. Our parents volunteer their services in a number of ways—from chaperoning and coordinating events to helping with the facilitation and proctoring of state testing.

Our parents' assistance, patience, and enthusiasm help students and teachers to feel supported. We pride ourselves in creating an environment that welcomes our families and the community to take an active role in each child's educational journey. In order to create this environment we must spend time building relationships with one another. As a result, we provide different forums for frequent interactions to take place such as being visible for day-to-day conversations, hosting quarterly coffee talks with our parents (centered around relevant issues facing our children), providing Scholar Academy information sessions, proactively setting up student success meetings, participating in school Spirit Nights, and by holding monthly meetings open to all called Donuts with the Directors. Through these forums, we are constantly brainstorming different ways for more of these interactions to take place to ensure each child is not only growing academically, but also growing in his or her own pursuits. During July, we host a Summer Social for our families and staff to gather together to enjoy each other's company, eat a meal together, learn about the school year ahead, and play yard games with one another. This event sets the stage for the school year and is the first of many interactions we have with our families. In October, we host a Family Education

Night that provides an opportunity for our families and community members to come together to grow in their knowledge and understanding of how to help their child as a reader, a mathematician, and a community activist. In the spring, a campus-wide Science Night is held to provide the students, families, staff, and community members a medium to engage in hands-on learning through interactive science experiments facilitated by the teachers, parents, and the community.

The cornerstone of our engagement with our families and the community stems from our strong communication. School-wide we have one learning management platform that enables our teachers, parents, and our students to access class information, teacher presentations, study guides, calendar of classroom deadlines, assessments, and grades. Through this informative system our parents are updated on a regular basis of how their child is doing in each class. Furthermore, through this system we communicate frequently with the students and parents, enabling us to proactively discuss students' strengths and areas for growth based on the ease of access to pertinent information.

3. Professional Development:

As is mentioned in the opening narrative, at York Prep we believe having certain organizational keystones in place enables the establishment of a culture that is driven by each member's constant desire to improve their effect on the students. Our framework for staff support and development mutually supports and relies on that culture.

The establishment of a culture that is focused on individual student growth begins from the first contact that you have with teachers. In order to cement that culture and to give new teachers a leg up we get them involved immediately in our Teacher Head Start program. This gets them in classrooms with highly effective teachers to team teach, begin planning, and get used to our data sources and analysis before the end of the school year that precedes their employment. Going into summer they have already experienced our programs, Professional Learning Communities, and have made relationships with teachers, students, and parents.

Rounding out summer, we utilize a portion of our teacher work days leading up to the first day of school as an opportunity to break teachers out of the "cubicle syndrome". In many ways a teacher can feel trapped by the walls of their own classroom during the year. The problems and pressures, along with the successes, can live and die within those four walls. We aim to develop strong relationships across our K12 campus through fun team building exercises mixed with relevant instruction around our culture. We have seen specific examples where teachers felt that they could walk down the hall or reach out to teachers in another building because of the relationships formed during these times.

During the school year, our coaching program aims to build individual capacity and spread excellent practice from one room to another. We work to help our teachers become expert diagnosticians of the effect that they have on students and to pinpoint areas that they can improve. The process of improvement includes low pressure conversations with instructional coaches, analysis of student performance data, and video review of practice. Teachers are guided through the process of learning by relying on attendance at professional learning events, remote peer observation, individual study of research, and collaboration. Once that area of practice has been upgraded they are encouraged to share it to a central hub where it can be accessed by other teachers in their own learning process and the cycle continues.

4. School Leadership:

York Preparatory Academy's school leadership philosophy can be described as collaborative. The leadership team has built a transparent relationship with all students, staff, parents, and community stakeholders. This relationship provides the York Preparatory Academy student the ability to choose an appropriate pathway to aide in their pursuit of post-secondary education. The leadership team has outlined core commitments that each leadership member and staff member of YPA has committed to following for betterment of the culture and climate at YPA. The core commitments focus around a positive, supportive culture at YPA, working with students' families as partners in the educational process, and using data as a basis of all instructional decisions.

York Preparatory Academy's school leadership team is comprised of the Managing Director, Chief Finance Officer, Director of Operations, High School Principal, Middle School Principal, Elementary Principal, and Special Services Director. Each member of the team provides unique leadership in their disciplined area of expertise. This allows for a clear presence of leadership throughout each building and campus wide at York Prep. The Managing Director is leader of the school and works directly with the school board, state charter district, state department of education, and the community. The Chief Finance Officer prepares all financial forecasts, budget reports, purchasing, and inventory. The Director of Operations is in charge of athletics, school safety, facilities, and food preparation. The Principal in each building handles the internal workings of discipline, curriculum, teacher evaluation, student activities, and building level scheduling. The Director of Special Services ensures that all state and federal regulations are compliant and implemented for IDEA, 504, GT, and ESOL students. The team is a cohesive unit that collaborates on a weekly basis with the primary focus of all decisions based on positive student outcomes.

The YPA school leadership team has established a clear sense of urgency and a relentless focus on data to improve instruction, student achievement, and school climate. The collaborative approach is seen throughout each building on campus. Professional development opportunities and weekly faculty meetings provide the staff valuable time to share expertise to help each other with professional growth and positive student outcomes. The school also affords students the opportunities to contribute in various leadership roles via organizations, clubs, and activities.

York Preparatory Academy exists in order that its students possess the knowledge, skills, character, and determination necessary to excel in their chosen post-secondary pursuits and in life. Our primary focus is to prepare students to become productive global citizens.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The practice that has had the biggest effect on overall student success at York Prep is our focus on individual student growth. School growth measured by itself does not always equal success, in fact it can even give a false sense of security. Individual student growth that is greater than the average or projected annual growth for the grade that they are in and which is sustained over multiple years always yields student success in the end.

Ensuring this growth takes place for as many students as possible requires multiple set measurement points throughout the school year as well as a culture that is focused and excited about the analysis of that data and who knows how to translate that into meaningful, mid-year adjustments for students. The first of these is accomplished through the use of assessments which are norm referenced and self-adjusting. Those are given in the fall, winter, and spring and serve as overall checkpoints on the growth as well as springboards for student grouping and the planning of units and lessons. Next, those units and lessons will have common formative assessments along our curriculum timeline. After the administration of the assessments time must be created in the schedule to allow for discussion and collaboration focused on the needs that were identified. At York Prep this means more than just common daily planning time for the teachers by department or grade. Each Friday students are sent home one and a half hours early. During that time teams of teachers collaborate and review student progress as well as plan how to adjust instruction. Twice a month there is also building level professional development around agreed upon best practice for meeting the needs of individual students. A few times a year there are also vertical curriculum discussions to see if any adjustments need to be made.

Many schools use common formative assessments and many schools interpret and use data. What stands out as uniquely critical to our success is how we have been able to tie this data to our relentless focus on maximizing individual student growth.