

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)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 16 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	295	297	592
10	294	280	574
11	280	259	539
12 or higher	262	255	517
Total Students	1131	1091	2222

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 9 % Black or African American
 - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 78 % 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: 4%

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	55
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	43
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	98
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	2222
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
53 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Afrikaans, Arabic, Chinese, German, Hindi, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Turkish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 13 %
Total number students who qualify: 292

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %
144 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>10</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>45</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>75</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>7</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>2</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>3</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</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: 12
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.	117
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	10

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 19:1

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	96%	96%	95%	94%	95%
High school graduation rate	96%	93%	93%	95%	93%

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	503
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	61%
Enrolled in a community college	24%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	2%
Found employment	3%
Joined the military or other public service	2%
Other	8%

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. 2004

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

To provide each student with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to become a lifelong learner and a responsible, productive citizen in a democratic society.

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

Located in the northernmost part of the midlands region of South Carolina, Fort Mill High School (FMHS) is a comprehensive public high school in a town that borders to its north the sprawling metropolitan city of Charlotte, North Carolina. Over the past two and a half decades, Fort Mill has progressively transformed from a small mill town dominated by lifelong residents to a more suburban township comprised of both Fort Mill natives and new families from around the country. Fort Mill High School serves approximately 2,220 students in grades nine through 12. The student population is 78 percent white, 9 percent black, 6 percent Hispanic and 3 percent Asian. The remaining 4 percent is comprised of American Indian, Alaskan, Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and students of two or more races.

Fort Mill's excellent schools, along with the steady job market offered by the town's proximity to Charlotte, have been a big lure to families looking to settle in this region of the Carolinas. Over the past decade, FMHS has perennially been among the highest achieving schools in South Carolina in terms of graduation rates, percentages of graduating class attending two- or four-year colleges, percentages of students passing state accountability end of course (EOC) exams, percentages of students passing Advanced Placement (AP) exams, and several other indicators of academic achievement.

This history of academic excellence has been rooted in a culture of high expectations for all learners. Our teachers work beyond meeting the minimal expectations of addressing state standards to foster world-class skills and knowledge among our students. Regardless of content area our teachers infuse their lessons with opportunities to develop students' abilities to think critically, problem solve, collaborate, and effectively use technology. Our aim is not only to convey a tried-and-true curriculum founded on state and national standards but to foster creativity, innovation, and other 21st century skills that prepare students for college and the workforce.

Our teachers also establish unique and powerful connections with their students and are often our students' biggest cheerleaders and advocates. They freely give up their precious personal time to support their students at athletic and extracurricular events all year long. Our teachers hold extra help sessions before, during, and after the school day to meet the needs of their busy learners. They display genuine care and empathy for their students by considering each student and each scenario individually. This creates a positive and powerful unifying force among all stakeholder groups that we affectionately refer to as the Fort Mill Family.

Research based strategies and programs also set a firm foundation for student success. Our ninth grade transition model, High School 101 curriculum, career clusters, and academic support block are all essential to facilitating our goal of establishing a rigorous curriculum that prepares students for life after high school while maintaining a positive and supportive school environment. We place a great deal of emphasis on supporting students during the difficult transition from middle school to high school.

Fort Mill High School dedicates one assistant principal and two guidance counselors to working solely with ninth grade students. They address the social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment of students during a time that research reveals is crucial for ensuring students graduate high school. Additionally, we require that all ninth grade students enroll in High School 101, a course which covers study habits, learning styles, time management, career exploration, financial planning, personal growth, and a great deal more. This helps equip students with the skills and support needed to be successful during their first year of high school. Fort Mill High School builds off of this foundation by challenging students to be not only high school graduates but also career cluster program completers.

The school's entire curriculum is organized into four schools of study — Art and Humanities, Business and Information Technology, Engineering and Integrated Technologies, and Health and Human Services. Within each of these schools of study are 15 career clusters, and these clusters are further subdivided into 35 individual majors.

In order to better support students to achieve in their academic and career cluster pursuits, an academic

support block was established to provide additional access to teachers during the school day. Twice a week our school runs on a Focused Learning Experience (FLEX) schedule that gives students an hour long block during which they are to eat lunch and see their teachers for academic support in a self-structured environment. This has taken away excuses of transportation or after school conflicts for students and opened up dynamic opportunities for more individualized assistance for our teachers. These strategies have been key in helping students reach their full academic potential.

Fort Mill High School has received many awards and accolades, but in 2004 we were especially honored to receive the National Blue Ribbon School award. This award brought recognition not only to the successes of the faculty of Fort Mill High School but also to the outstanding commitment to education of our students, parents, and community members. Since receiving this distinct honor, we have continued to seek growth and refinement despite the challenges of unprecedented growth facing our community. Now, 14 years later, our town has grown so much that we added a second high school and are set to open a third in August of 2019. Our enrollment is nearly at the projected maximum capacity for the building, yet we strive to focus on the personal investment and attention that were the fundamentals of our school's successfulness. We believe we have honored that commitment to individualized attention with fidelity and seek to validate that claim with this year's National Blue Ribbon School application.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The core curriculum of Fort Mill High School focuses on coursework that emphasizes rigorous standards based instruction in English, mathematics, science and social studies with a focus on preparing students for career and college readiness. The state of South Carolina requires that high school graduates earn at least four units of English, four units of math, three units of science, and three units of social studies in route to attaining the 24 total credits needed for a high school diploma. The vast majority of Fort Mill High School graduates will exceed these requirements. This is the direct result of intentional efforts on the part of the school. Our teachers and administration believe that students are best prepared when they have been exposed to coursework in the academic core on a yearly basis. To that end, we have instituted policies, such as the Rigorous Senior Year Requirement, which mandates that all seniors are expected to take an English and math course during their 12th grade year. This ensures that gifted and talented students that took English 1 and Algebra 1 prior to the ninth grade do not rest on their academic laurels and avoid courses in the academic core during their final year of high school. Additionally, Fort Mill High School offers a Diploma of Distinction to those students that finish with four credits in each of the core academic areas. Through yearly academic advisement and intentionally designed policies, such as the Diploma of Distinction and the aforementioned Rigorous Senior Year Requirement, Fort Mill High School students are pushed to enroll in an English, math, science and social studies course each year of high school.

The typical progression of English courses for a Fort Mill High School student includes a literary genre course--English 1, an introduction to world literature--English 2, a course on American Literature --English 3 and a course on British literature-- English 4--with complimentary coursework offerings available in English 5, AP English Literature, AP English Language, Public Speaking, and Film and Fiction. Each course incorporates the integrated study of vocabulary, grammar, analysis and composition skills, and each course will require students to read key anchor texts that are covered regardless of level--college preparatory and honors. Composition and research are also focuses throughout the English curriculum as students write research papers and practice narrative, expository and persuasive styles across all levels. Our school finds that while various learners require different approaches to the teaching and learning of these concepts, the content is crucial for success in college and the workplace.

Our typical course progression for mathematics includes Algebra 1 during the ninth grade year, Geometry during the 10th grade year, Algebra 2 during the 11th grade year, and a unit of Pre-calculus, Statistics, or Algebra 3 during the 12th grade year. Advanced pathways are available for students that enter high school with at least an Algebra 1 credit or for those students that choose to double up on math classes during a given year. This pathway makes it possible for students to pursue complimentary coursework in AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, and AP Statistics. For students that struggle to master algebra, the state offers a differentiated pathway of taking two courses--Foundations in Algebra and Intermediate Algebra--in order to obtain an algebra credit that satisfies the requirement of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (SC CHE). These two courses are typically taken during the ninth and 10th grade year successively with college bound students doubling up in Geometry and Algebra 2 during their 11th grade year. The progression of this coursework provides our students with the mathematics skill necessary to be successful on college admission tests, specifically the ACT and SAT, by the end of their junior year. This also ensures that they graduate with sufficient math skills to be successful in the workplace as well.

South Carolina requires that all graduates take Biology and two additional levels of science. In addition, college bound graduates must ensure that in satisfying this requirement they take three lab sciences as defined by the SC CHE. A typical progression of science coursework for a Fort Mill High School student includes Physical Science during the ninth grade year; Biology during the 10th grade year; Chemistry, Environmental Science, Physics, or Marine Science during the 11th grade year; and an additional different selection of Chemistry, Environmental Science, Physics, or Marine Science during the 12th grade year. While the ninth grade requirement of physical science does not satisfy the SC CHE's requirements for a lab science, we find that it provides students with the fundamental background in chemistry and physics content as well as laboratory skills that lead to success in all subsequent science courses. Additional complimentary

coursework is available in Biology 2, Chemistry 2, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, and AP Environmental Science. A firm foundation in physical science balanced with coursework in other advanced science subjects not only prepares students for science portions of the ACT, which is offered yearly to 11th grade students in South Carolina, but also provides the necessary exposure to the content to generate well-rounded graduates.

With regards to the social sciences, the state of South Carolina requires all graduates to take a course on US History and the Constitution, Government and Economics and one other social studies course. The progression of social studies coursework for a typical Fort Mill High School student includes World Geography in the ninth grade; World History in the 10th grade; US History and the Constitution in the 11th grade; and Government and Economics during the 12th grade. Complimentary coursework is available in AP Human Geography, AP European History, AP Macro Economics, Dual Credit Government and Economics, AP Psychology, Criminal Justice, Law Education, Mock Trial, Model United Nations and Sociology. This progression ensures a general knowledge of domestic and foreign history as well as a basic knowledge of the world and its governments.

Our school focuses on producing graduates that have the world-class skills and knowledge to be successful in a career or college after high school. We also integrate life and career characteristics--such as interpersonal skills, ethics and a global perspective--into the various curriculum we teach. This is documented in our Student Learning Objective (SLO) alignment in each course offered at Fort Mill High School. As our mission statement conveys, we strive to “provide each student with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to become a lifelong learner and a responsible, productive citizen in a democratic society.”

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Fort Mill High School offers a wide arrangement of other curriculum areas to our 2200 ninth through twelfth grade students. In the area of fine arts, the courses we offer include painting, portfolio art, drawing, 3-D design and sculpture, advanced placement for studio art, ceramics, dance, concert chorus, guitar, theatre, public speaking, marching band, concert band, symphonic band, and wind symphony band. Several of these courses are honors level. Courses are offered each semester giving students ample opportunity to participate in multiple performing arts classes throughout the school year.

The art learning community strives to share their passion of love for art with students by giving them the basic skills and knowledge they need to be successful throughout their coursework in the program. Once those skills are acquired students often complete higher levels of coursework with honors or advanced placement classes. The art department also has a STEAM leader teacher who focuses on incorporating STEAM lessons for her students as well as collaborates with district elementary schools and creates cross curricular events with teachers in the building. Each year the art department hosts an art show to showcase the artistic versatility of the AP students throughout the school year. Our dance classes focus on introductory dance skills, learning the technique of specific dances including jazz, ballet, modern, and tap as well as choreography and performance. The band and choral departments include classes geared towards beginning learning of the subject material to honors level courses requiring students to audition. Currently the band has won twenty-four state championships, has been a Band of America finalist eight times, as well as appearing nationally and internationally at many events. Our chorus students have performed at Carnegie Hall and internationally throughout the years. Select students have been chosen for the national honors chorus every year. Theatre courses introduce fundamentals of theatre at the basic level of voice, acting, lighting, and sound through learning how to direct, produce, and construct costumes. Students gain confidence by improvisation exercises, and they also learn the ability to speak publicly and think quickly.

The FMHS Career and Technology department (CATE) has a plethora of unique and engaging classes for students to take during their four years of high school. These courses include early childhood education, introduction to engineering, civil engineering and architecture, aerospace engineering, principles of engineering, digital electronics, engineering design and development, computer integrated manufacturing, graphic communication, principles of biomedical science, biomedical innovations, human body systems, medical intervention, media technology, sports medicine, health science, agricultural science and

technology, animal science, small animal care, introduction to veterinary science, foods and nutrition, and culinary arts. We also have a success driven business department which includes courses offered in the following areas: integrated business applications, web page design and development, foundation of animation, marketing, sports and entertainment marketing, sports and entertainment management, marketing management, personal finance, virtual enterprise, entrepreneurship, accounting, business law, computer programming, and advanced placement for computer science principles. Once again several of our CATE classes are offered at the honors level giving students the opportunity to receive honor credit.

CATE courses offer a project based approach to learning while incorporating our district wide STEAM initiative. This department also gives students the privilege of participating in internships to observe different career possibilities. CATE teachers often include industry certifications as part of their curriculum. Our health science department has had a 100% passing rate for the national health care skills assessment for the past five years. The students in the culinary program have the choice to take two different certifications tests (ProStart and ServSafe). Once the students pass the exam they will receive college credit for a culinary school. The two-time national award winning Buzz TV students have the irreplaceable experience of learning television broadcast production while mastering the skills of effective communication in a collaborative and creative environment.

The newly renovated FMHS media center is known to our students as the Learning Commons where there is a multitude of learning that takes place throughout the school day. Our ninth grade students benefit from lessons on plagiarism, instructional research, book talks, and a library orientation class. All students are welcome to use the resources for instructional purposes with the assistance of our staff. Students are allowed to use computers for reading counts book tests, WE video, interactive lessons with teachers, DISCUS database lessons, and of course instructional research for all grade levels. We currently have over 1000 google chrome books for student use during instructional time in the classrooms as well as a computer lab in each building (four buildings). Students are well versed in the use of google chrome books to communicate with teachers using google classroom, google drive, etc.

The foreign language department consists of nine teachers, seven of whom teach Spanish classes from level one to level four and two French teachers who also teach level one to four. The foreign language department focuses on an immersion type of instruction in which 80-85% of the course is taught in the target language. The department follows the ACTFL national standards that focus on “can do” statements where students and teachers work together to make meaning functional.

Our Physical Education department offers a wide variety of instruction to all four school grade levels. All 9th grade students take PE unless enrolled in our award winning Marine Corps ROTC program. Our PE program supports student fitness and healthy lifestyles, as well as supporting our athletic teams. Our JROTC program assists with leadership development and have won many state, regional, and national awards. Additionally, all students at FMHS are required to take HS 101. HS 101 is an intro to high school course taken by 9th grade students. HS101 curriculum includes our comprehensive health, study skills, and recently added mental health education.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

It is often said at Fort Mill High School that there are two jobs in education, teaching and supporting teachers. From this perspective all aspects of the school focus on instruction. Every employee either makes a direct impact on the classroom by leading instruction or serve others to help make that instruction more effective and meaningful. With such a focus on instruction the methods employed by our teachers are of supreme importance. In order to meet the diverse needs of the learners in our community the teachers of Fort Mill High School employ a wide variety of instructional approaches to learning.

Over the last decade our school has evolved from using tracks, which separated those students on a career or technical pathway after high school from those preparing to attend a four year college. As our classrooms became more homogenized the need to adjust our instructional methods to meet the varying needs of our diverse learners became more apparent. Differentiated instruction and tiered instruction are commonly displayed in the academic core to accomplish this task. While all learners are still setting out to accomplish

the goal of mastering the same learning objectives and standards, the path to this mastery may look different from learner to learner. In English classes studying *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, students in the same classroom may go about mastering the content by reading excerpts, scholarly reviews, or summaries to gain the same basic understanding of the content. Once the foundational knowledge is attained the teacher can scaffold up for those respective learners, meeting them at their own level, until they can take ownership of the complex text as a whole more independently. This same approach to meeting students where they are and scaffolding up is also commonly employed in elective classes where there is even more diverse populations of students, because most electives lack an honors level iteration of the course. This means that elective teachers frequently have a cross section of the student body that includes everyone from the valedictorian to the student with the lowest rank in their class, making the ability to differentiate instruction all the more important.

Our school reviews a variety of assessment data, ranging from Student Learning Objective (SLO) common assessments in all courses; to Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing in special education settings; to End of Course (EOC) exams in the academic core. These assessments equip our teachers with valuable feedback about the successfulness of their academic approaches and allow for teachers to better tailor instruction to meet the needs of their learners. The teachers from each course at Fort Mill High School have identified the five most important standards for learning which we refer to as power standards. Teachers collaborate with their peer teachers of like content to build a comprehensive pre-test, post-test, and performance task aligned to these power standards. Additionally, smaller teacher created formative assessments labeled as progress monitoring assessments measure growth towards mastery of the power standards. This helps keep our teachers focused on a growth mindset for all learners and provides the necessary assessment tools to provide comprehensive and ongoing feedback.

Our special educators use MAP testing as a barometer for students' present levels of performance. Frequent individual testing allows teachers to keep up with students' mathematics and language arts reading performance in a longitudinal setting. By taking frequent and ongoing snapshots of students improvements with regards to individual math concepts and reading abilities, special educators at our school are better equipped to comment on the growth of the student, provide academic supports and recommend more appropriate accommodations.

The state has also identified four benchmark courses in the academic core--Algebra 1, Biology 1, English 1, and US History and the Constitution--as EOC courses which contain a comprehensive final exam that accounts for 20% of the students overall grade. Regardless of level--college preparatory, honors or AP--students are required to demonstrate the same mastery of content. This has prompted teachers in these courses to adopt a more collaborative approach and incorporate even more common assessment. They review data, perform item analyses, and responsively steer instruction towards their students needs as they progress towards mastery. South Carolina neither releases previous test items nor provides any feedback other than a summative score, making the progress monitoring and reflective practice of these teachers all the more important.

EOC scores are used by the state for accountability ratings and Fort Mill High School routinely finishes among the top in overall percentage of students passing these tests. While there is not an overwhelming achievement gap, over the past three years there has been a discernible difference observed between the performance of white students and their African American peers in the overall passing rate. In order to address these achievement gaps and ensure that the school maintains its current high levels of achievement, the administration engages in open dialog about the trend, teachers engage in department specific review of this data, and the school as a whole has adopted more comprehensive academic supports. In addition to before and after school extra help sessions, all teachers offer an academic support block twice weekly during the instructional day. This academic support block takes away students excuses of being too busy with extracurricular schedules or being transportation dependent to get the help they need.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Fort Mill High School boasts a positive, vibrant school culture where teachers are empowered to take risks and students feel welcomed and supported. There exists here a climate that cultivates a sense of home and loyalty that draws graduates back to be invested long after they cross the stage at graduation. Nearly 10 percent of the faculty is comprised of Fort Mill High graduates, and our halls are often buzzing with previous students back from college or the workforce wanting to catch up with the teachers that made a positive impact in their lives. There is a unique camaraderie among both our faculty and student body. We use the term Fort Mill Family to not only describe the faculty but extend it to the students and the sense of community we establish within our school.

For the teachers Fort Mill Family describes a collaborative group of professionals that are dedicated to the students they teach and each other. It means a faculty of individuals that is personally invested in each other's professional and personal lives. And it describes an educational environment where teachers are treated as professionals, where they are free to set high expectations for their learners, where they are safe to take risks with trying new approaches and strategies and where the emphasis is on concern for students more than grades or test scores.

For the students of Fort Mill High School it describes an environment where they feel both challenged by the demands and high expectations of their teachers and supported to reach the goals they set forth. It describes a student body that is fanatical about supporting one another at athletic events, community service opportunities, fundraisers, visual and performing arts performances, clubs and school a whole host of school activities. Even in years where our athletic teams struggle our students are still painted-up and loud in one of the most raucous student sections in the state, because they are not merely cheering for points on a scoreboard but the successes and achievements of friends they wish to support. The passionate school spirit that is on display at Fort Mill High School is not only a point of pride for the school but for the greater school community as well.

Our school improvement council reviews data gathered through student, parent, and faculty surveys about each group's perception of the physical, social, and academic health of the school. We discuss any problem areas and follow up with more specific needs assessment surveys to better define areas in need of refinement. Just as formative assessment steers instruction in our classrooms these surveys direct the development of policies and initiatives aimed at strengthening school culture.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At FMHS we understand communication with families and the community are key to a successful learning environment for our students. We have several opportunities for parents to visit the campus and engage in their child's learning. We also pride ourselves on keeping parents up to date with the most important information through numerous avenues.

Freshman orientation is held before the start of the school year every August with the ninth grade students attending all of their classes that afternoon. During the first block of the evening their teacher gives information focusing on access and schedule, second block focuses on attendance, dress and electronics, third block focuses on food, and fourth block is a question and answer session. All teachers follow the same Power Point presentation to maintain consistent messages are received by the students. The principal meets with the parents to reiterate school policies and procedures while their children are moving through their schedule in the building.

FMHS hosts an open house event in August every school year for parents to gather information from the principal regarding school procedures and important facts. The parents then travel with their child's schedule to meet all the teachers and get specific information for the courses in which they are enrolled. This is a valuable opportunity for parents to meet their child's teachers as well as to get a better

understanding of the school itself.

AP night is held in February each year for parents and students to gain knowledge of the advanced placement program at FMHS. Administration welcomes parents and students with an in-depth discussion of the program. After the initial meeting breakout sessions are held with each AP teacher. The students attend the sessions for the classes they are interested in registering for the next school year. We also host an AP day for our prospective AP students in which they attend an informative assembly covering the structure of AP classes, prerequisites, challenges and benefits.

Fort Mill High School administration, counselors, and teachers communicate regularly to keep parents and students informed of academic, athletic and extracurricular celebrations, important dates, news, etc. Fort Mill High School currently uses Facebook, Twitter, school webpage, school announcements, The Buzz TV show, The Loudspeaker (newspaper), school emails, texts, and phone calls to ensure parents have the most up to date information possible from the school. The Principal also sends "end of week e-mail from Fort Mill High School" each week with personal editorials, announcements, important dates, and recognition for students and faculty.

The Career and Technology teachers at FMHS work closely with community businesses and members to ensure our students graduate from FMHS with a better understanding of career choices and experiences. Our advisory committee has grown throughout the years to incorporate a larger number of partnerships for potential student internships and work based learning.

There are numerous additional ways we invite families and community to our school to foster positive relationships including curriculum night, CATE ceremony, awards and scholarship programs, school improvement council, STEM day, speakers for club meetings, musicals, concerts, and athletic events honoring service members.

3. Professional Development:

We believe the success of our students stem from quality instruction they receive from the teachers at our school. With that said, we focus on a theme annually for professional development and growth with our educators. The leadership team members are asked to offer their ideas and considerations from each department for the upcoming school year. The administration requests teachers' opinions on what they feel would be beneficial for their students to be successful. The administrative team also analyzes data from numerous surveys and assessment results in addition to incorporating supportive strategies from the state and district driven initiatives. After compiling the information the final theme for the professional study group (PSG) meetings is determined.

Our educators meet once a month during their planning period to receive instruction on generating a more effective classroom with new strategies related to the current theme. The presenters for PSG meetings model the instruction we would like to observe for the students while giving specific resources to accompany the training. A variety of methods are used to engage our educators in the process of learning. Currently we are focused on giving our educators the resources to be exemplary teachers designated by the new South Carolina Teaching Standards. This year alone presentations have included Powtoons, Animate, Power Point, Prezi, STEAM lessons, Google forms, chalk talks, exit tickets, etc. We pride ourselves in giving our educators resources they can use in their classrooms to better instruction. After the PSG for the current month has been completed our educators are asked to reflect on the professional development and discuss at the upcoming department meetings. During the department meetings teachers share their opinions about the resources in their current curriculum and examples of how they will incorporate new strategies into their lessons. This gives them the opportunity to collaborate and create new lessons for numerous courses.

Another focus for professional development is the transition from middle to high school with our ninth grade students. The ninth grade administrator provides opportunities for teachers during the summer to acquire strategies for a seamless transition at the beginning of the school year. Middle school principals attend a meeting at our school with the ninth grade transition team to observe the current bridges, honors

and CATE classes for ninth grade students. This starts the discussion process for collaboration to better prepare the upcoming students for arrival to these courses.

We also offer a variety of opportunities for teachers to engage in learning by attending conferences associated to their curriculum as well as professional development programs offered through our district. Detailed discussions occur at all department meetings between teachers and administration about approaching conferences. If the administration feels a teacher would benefit from further education in an area of weakness we strongly encourage attendance for a precise growth opportunity.

4. School Leadership:

Fort Mill High School has a collaborative approach to leadership with several teacher leaders in participatory roles. The leadership team consists of administration, guidance counselors, and eleven teachers from different departments. These teachers meet monthly with administration to discuss initiatives, upcoming events, and struggles we may see within the month. The leadership team gives valuable input and are asked to gather input from their departments to report back to the principal before decisions on a larger scale are made for the school. The school currently has nine total STEAM teacher leaders in core, fine arts and foreign language departments. These teachers regularly meet with Discovery Education trainers to learn new and exciting lessons as part of a district STEAM initiative. STEAM teachers use these lessons with their curriculum and invite all teachers to learn during model lessons.

The administrative team has a relational approach to leading by creating positive relationships with faculty, staff, students, and parents. All administrators assume a supportive role with our educators. We believe in partnering with certified and classified staff to assist with needs. In fact, one of our leadership philosophies is to serve those teaching first and inconvenience ourselves long before teachers. This servant leadership style along with the belief there are two jobs in a school (teaching and supporting teaching) allows teachers to concentrate on instructional goals for their students. The assistant principals all have defined responsibilities for each school year. Each administrator brings a wealth of experience and strengths to make a very well rounded school administration.

The principal is the instructional lead who handles a multitude of duties directly related with the success of the school setting. He is accountable for maintaining the finances with several budgets, field trip request approval, fundraising approval, formal evaluations of certified and classified staff, and public relations as well as school and business partnerships. Assistant principals have specific assignments for the duration of the school year, however many times lend assistance if needed in other areas. The ninth grade administrator is responsible for ninth grade transition, orientation, scheduling, discipline, character education, formal evaluations and the supervisor of the classified staff. The assistant principal for career and technology education and testing is responsible for assessment data, upperclassmen discipline, discipline database, formal evaluations, student and faculty handbooks, student mentoring, student and teacher recognition, foreign language department and school testing coordinator. The assistant principal for administration handles all attendance, upperclassmen discipline, safety plans, security, transportation, social studies and physical education departments. The assistant principal for operations is in charge of upperclassmen discipline, duty schedules, facilities, maintenance, parking, substitute teachers, technology, alternative program, and the science department. The Curriculum and Instruction assistant principal is responsible for AP and honors programs, clubs, content recovery, grades, master schedule, school improvement council, student learning objectives, guidance department, English department, and math department. Our athletic director is also part of the administrative team and is in charge of the athletic budget, athletic booster club, athletic facilities, and all athletic operations. Under the direction of the principal the administrative staff are constantly assessing growth and development for future instructional lead positions.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Fort Mill High School employs dedicated, compassionate teachers who care deeply for their work as educators. The one practice that currently Fort Mill High School added to improve upon success for all is our use of FLEX. FLEX stands for Focused Learning Experience. The administration and faculty identified a need to provide opportunities for students to make up class work, re-test, complete labs, and receive tutoring during the school day. All FMHS teachers were required to have “office” hours four times a week before or after school. However, this was not reaching our most vulnerable students. Students who relied on school transportation, a sibling/friend, or parent were not taking advantage of extra help sessions.

In response to the need to reach all students with extra help sessions, the faculty and administration developed FLEX. FLEX is a one-hour lunch period during the school day where every teacher in the school is available to students for additional learning opportunities. FLEX is held on Tuesday and Thursday every week between 11:40 AM and 12:40 PM. Accountability for student success lies with each student. Students, along with teacher recommendations, are best equipped to know when they are struggling in a class, have makeup work to complete, or need to retest. Teachers encourage, but do not require students to attend FLEX sessions.

In practice FLEX works at FMHS due to buy-in from all stakeholders. Teachers appreciate non-instructional duties (lunch duty) being used to help students. FLEX also allows teachers and students to develop strong relationships. Students appreciate the ability to see teachers and organize their own time during the school day. Students also like being able to take care of learning during the school day and avoiding before and after school activities. We believe FLEX will help students after high school to use time wisely whether in college or work. Parents have been very supportive of FLEX often imploring their student to attend to improve their learning and grades.

Though Fort Mill High School has historically achieved great academic success, FLEX has focused our extra help on each student. Teachers are willing and available to assist students in need of their expertise. Students have been willing to spend unencumbered time focusing on their learning.