

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):
- 26 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 11 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 10 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 48 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	22	18	40
1	17	23	40
2	19	21	40
3	20	20	40
4	27	23	50
5	24	26	50
6	22	28	50
7	33	27	60
8	27	33	60
9	27	33	60
10	30	28	58
11	27	31	58
12 or higher	19	30	49
Total Students	314	341	655

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 8 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 86 % White
 - 0 % 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: 2%

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	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	654
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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: 2 %
Total number students who qualify: 12

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %
24 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>5</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>22</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	34
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.	2
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	59
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	93%
Enrolled in a community college	7%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

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

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2012

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

Merrol Hyde Magnet School is committed to excellence using the Paideia educational philosophy to prepare students for college, their community, and their ultimate potential.

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

Any Sumner county student in grades K-12 may apply to Merrol Hyde Magnet School (MHMS). Admission is determined by an individual assessment on a nationally normed academic test. Prospective students must score at the 85th percentile or higher in reading, language, and math. Eligible students are then placed on a waiting list using a random lottery process as enrollment is controlled to meet state funding guideline using prescribed teacher-student ratios. MHMS also has a sibling consideration practice so that eligible siblings can attend.

PART III – SUMMARY

Merrol Hyde Magnet School (MHMS), located in Hendersonville, Tennessee, is one of 48 public schools in Sumner County and is the district's only magnet school. MHMS opened in August 2003 and will celebrate its 16-year anniversary in the 2017-18 school year. Hendersonville is a fast-growing suburb of Nashville, which makes it a perfect community for families relocating to the middle Tennessee area. MHMS currently educates 665 students in grades kindergarten through twelve.

MHMS is a county-wide magnet school serving students and families from diverse communities. Sumner county is home to more than 175,000 residents ranging from rural communities to bustling larger cities. Due to its geographic proximity to Nashville, much of Sumner County is becoming increasingly metropolitan. This cultural diversity is one of the school's many strengths and attractions for interested families pursuing admission.

Any Sumner county student in grades K-12 may apply to MHMS. Admission is determined by an individual assessment on a nationally normed academic test. Because MHMS is a choice school that serves the entire county, bus service is not provided. Parents are responsible for their student's transportation. Since its inception, MHMS has implemented the district's first and only school uniform policy. MHMS students wear a strict uniform which is not intended to suppress students' right to self-expression; rather, students are able to focus on other skills and talents that make them unique.

Because Paideia focuses on educating the whole child, MHMS offers the following exceptional student experiences:

Academic Achievements. MHMS is a K-12 academic magnet school which embraces the Paideia philosophy. In 2017, U.S. News and World Report recognized MHMS with its rank of "Gold Distinction" and a national ranking of number 179 for all public high schools. Currently, MHMS has the highest composite ACT scores in Tennessee, with the graduating class of 2017 boasting an average ACT score of 30.1 and claiming more than \$3.4 million in awards and scholarships out of a total offering of \$8.7 million. Notably, MHMS seniors over the past 5 years have earned 8 perfect 36 scores on the ACT, with 57% of the class of 2017 achieving a composite ACT score of 30 or higher. Out of eleven graduating classes with an average class size of 54 students, MHMS has graduated 23 National Merit Finalists. Since inception, the school has maintained a 100% graduation rate and a 100% college acceptance rate. MHMS meets or exceeds all state graduation requirements mandated by the Tennessee Diploma Project.

K-12 Foreign Language. Exposure to multiple foreign languages is an integral part of MHMS and its mission to increase cultural awareness and prepare global students. Students take French and Spanish from kindergarten through 6th grade. In 7th grade, students add courses in Latin and Mandarin Chinese. All high school students are required to study foreign language for four years with the opportunity to study five years of Latin, Spanish, or Mandarin Chinese.

Award-winning Co-curricular Programs. MHMS places an emphasis on programs and opportunities to educate the whole child, one of the tenets of a Paideia school. Clubs, activities, and affiliations enrich and enhance the robust curricular options for all students. In addition to nationally recognized opportunities such as National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America) Marketing, and Youth in Government, MHMS offers students options such as Robotics, Model United Nations, Math Team, Geography Bee/Bowl, History Bee/Bowl, Forensics, and Quiz Bowl. The Robotics Team captured the southeastern championship at Auburn University in 2017, and MHMS places more than 20 students annually at the state DECA competition--an average of 50% of competitors--earning those students an invitation to the international competition.

Mandatory Athletics. Educating the whole child includes the physical component of the body. All students in grades 7-12 must compete in interscholastic athletics each year. MHMS believes in the importance of natural learning through commitment, training, discipline, and competition that sports offer developing students.

Since 2012 and the designation as a National Blue Ribbon school, MHMS has continued to excel with student achievement, teacher efficacy, and community impact. The recognition has attracted more families than ever to apply for admission with noticeably more families relocating from outside of the state inquiring about admission criteria. Since more people are aware of the school and its niche within the community, there has been an increase in the number of teacher applicants for open teaching positions. The administration has been more intentional on providing professional learning to different groups of teachers which sustain and enhance the various traditions and curricular programs. Also, the school's teachers and administration have become more ambitious in seeking and attracting more community stakeholders to school events, namely the community seminars. Upholding the achievements and success of a Blue Ribbon school has moved the administration and teachers into a natural cycle of reflection and goal setting to support the school climate of rigorous college preparatory education. Specific goals at each level include elementary students entering middle school at least one full grade level ahead of their peers; middle school students earning two high school credits before their freshman year; and high school students earning a minimum of six college credit hours or equivalencies upon graduation.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

MHMS is committed to excellence. As a Paideia academic magnet school, teachers encourage students to challenge themselves academically and set high character standards. Acquisition of knowledge, application of linguistic and mathematical reasoning, as well as growth of the understanding of ideas, molds instruction. A challenging curriculum gives students the tools to strive for excellence in core academics, the arts, and humanities such as foreign language. Paideia project-based learning allows students to develop intellectual skills through group and individual projects. All classes and courses align with the Tennessee state standards, and dual enrollment (DE) classes offer students opportunities to participate in college coursework for credit. MHMS's curriculum and instruction focuses on improving ACT scores to produce a 100% college-bound student body, while the school's philosophy maintains its focus on the whole child--mind, body, and spirit.

All language arts instruction follows the Tennessee state standards. Elementary language arts instruction focuses on phonics acquisition and application, reading across all genres, close reading strategies, and writing to specific texts using a rigorous writing workshop model. Reading and language instruction is delivered in holistic lessons often taught in a literacy block. Middle school language arts further develops all writing techniques as well as increases vocabulary application. High school English concentrates on American, British, and world literature through the following courses: English Honors I-IV, DE (Dual Enrollment) and AP English Language in 11th grade and AP Literature in 12th grade, Journalism, and Creative Writing. Teachers at every grade level use research based writing rubrics to critique written assignments and provide prompt feedback to students. Prior years' data, when writing was assessed and reported separately, reveals MHMS students outperformed students at the local and state levels. Informal data shared by MHMS alumni confirms that MHMS students outperform other freshmen in college in reading stamina, rigor, and the volume and quality of required writing.

All math instruction aligns with Tennessee state standards using the district adopted math textbooks and curricula. Elementary students are engaged in instruction, practice, and application using an instructional math block. This daily scheduling model has proven to accelerate student achievement and understanding as students progress to higher grade levels. Students in middle school follow a rigorous state curriculum which focuses on standard algorithms, mathematical practices, algebraic reasoning, and geometry concepts. All high school students must take at least one math course each year from the following list of courses: Honors Algebra I, Honors Geometry, Honors Algebra II, Honors Pre-Calculus, DE Statistics, AP Statistics, and AP Calculus AB. The high school math track is designed for student success in college by offering courses that closely parallel introductory or pre-requisite level math courses within most college majors.

All science courses align with current Tennessee state standards. Migration towards the Next Generation Science Standards has already begun with full implementation in the fall of 2018. Grade-specific content standards include earth science, life science, physical science, and the engineering design process. These standards spiral and loop as students progress from 2nd through 8th grades. Beginning in 2016, science standards were aligned with literacy expectations, embedding science instruction into elementary reading through more informational texts, interpretation of data through extended writing, and primary source documents. Science is taught in each middle grade as a core content subject with in-depth focus on specific content strands. High school students at MHMS are required to complete four years of science, which exceed the state graduation requirement. Courses offered at the high school level include: Honors Physical Science, Honors Biology I & II, Honors Chemistry I & II, Honors Anatomy & Physiology, Honors Physics I, Honors Ecology, AP Chemistry, and AP Biology. In 2017, 67% of students earned a 4 or 5 on the AP Chemistry exam, and 100% passed the AP Biology exam with a 3, 4, or 5 earning students college level equivalencies. Beginning in the fall of 2018, MHMS will offer AP Environmental Science to juniors and seniors seeking a science focus.

The K-12 social studies program teaches students to appreciate the diversity of community and cultures, and guides them to manage a complex understanding of the human experience. Elementary instruction begins

with a primary (grades K-1) focus on civic knowledge and the local community. Grades 3-5 introduce geology, geography, concentrated focus on state (TN) history, and U.S. History up to 1900. Sixth and 7th grade social studies is a two-year journey of both history and geography of world civilizations from approximately 5000 B.C. to 1600 A.D. American History from discovery through Reconstruction is the focus of 8th grade instruction. The social studies courses offered in high school include: Honors World History, Honors U.S. History, Honors Economics, Honors Government, AP European History, AP U.S. History, AP Human Geography, and DE Psychology. To meet the changing needs of students, MHMS began implementing the Document-Based Questions (DBQ) Project within the social studies courses for students in 8th-12th grades. Students frequently write essays in all social studies classes. They develop skills such as formulating a comprehensive tripartite thesis statement, analyzing primary source documents, identifying bias or point-of-view, and grouping ideas into distinct, thematic sub-topics. Students experience diverse viewpoints and develop academic vocabulary through extensive readings outside of the assigned textbook. Students collaborate with peers through creative projects based on the analysis of primary documents. Such projects include historically accurate skits, newspaper-style “front page” posters, PowerPoint presentations, and extensive analyses of past Supreme Court decisions.

MHMS has always required more rigor from all students in order to graduate. These additional requirements exceed the state requirements for graduation, and are closely aligned with college expectations for entering freshmen. Two such requirements include all students taking foreign language instruction every year, with the senior year being optional, and all students taking at least one AP course. These requirements are considered part of the core curriculum at MHMS.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

As a K-12 school, MHMS is intentional about providing educational experiences to all students at their developmental age as well as their academic readiness level. The school has developed a comprehensive, research based curriculum to blend experiential learning with foundational elements of a well-rounded, humanities based education for the whole child.

Foreign Language. Exposure to multiple foreign languages is an integral part of MHMS and its mission to increase cultural awareness and prepare global students. Students in grades K-6 take both French and Spanish, focusing on basic vocabulary, conversation, culture, and literature. In 7th grade, students begin introductory courses in classical Latin and Mandarin Chinese. Beginning in 8th grade, students choose one of the languages to pursue for high school credit with the goal of at least four consecutive years in the same language. With this humanities focus, MHMS is able to offer Spanish, Latin, and Chinese up to level IV and Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish.

Fine Arts. In spite of its small size, MHMS boasts a full fine arts program including band, orchestra, theatre arts, and visual arts for middle and high school students. Elementary students receive weekly music and art instruction through their related arts rotations. Their creations are displayed throughout the school, and students regularly perform cultural music selections throughout the year that complement their academic studies. Middle and high school visual art students regularly have their work displayed at local shows and installations throughout the community and greater Nashville area, including the Sumner County art exhibition where students have received numerous awards. MHMS students annually audition and are selected for county and state honor bands and orchestras at a rate higher than most other traditional schools in the county. MHMS theatre students are exposed to various types of performances as well as writing their own scripts. MHMS is fortunate to be able to capitalize on the K-12 structure by having school day performances as well as evening shows for the community. All MHMS graduates earn at least one fine arts credit.

Physical Education. Also integral to the Paideia whole child philosophy are physical education and health and wellness classes. Elementary students engage in physical education classes twice a week for 35 minutes, and they enjoy recess each day. Most middle school students have nine weeks of physical education each year. High school students earn 1.5 credits in wellness and physical education during their high school career. Beginning in 7th grade, all students are required to participate in at least one sport yearly.

Technology. Elementary students take technology classes once a week to learn keyboarding and internet literacy skills. Fourth and fifth grade students access the computer lab to complete classroom projects using Excel and PowerPoint. Middle school students have nine weeks of computer class each year, with the 8th grade course emphasizing keyboard skills and digital citizenship. High school students are able to bring their own device according to local school policy. Four computer labs are open daily for student research and document creation.

Library. MHMS has 2 distinct libraries and 2 full time library media specialists (LMS). Elementary students receive 70 minutes of library instruction every week, focusing on library etiquette, circulation, and the ever-changing resources available through the library. The LMS regularly collaborates with classroom teachers to design instructional reading lessons, provide materials and resources to supplement classroom instruction, and to assist in the maintenance of classroom libraries. The elementary LMS co-leads the reading initiative in the elementary grades with the administration by providing structure and access to a rigorous canon of texts and titles for all students. The middle and high school LMS maintains a separate facility which is organized for maximizing student use and access. Most titles reflect student interest, award winning authors, and popular novels for student check out, with the remaining holdings comprised of nonfiction and reference materials for both academic and personal experiences. Middle school students receive monthly library instruction. High school students receive direct instruction through their English classes at the beginning of each term.

Career and Technical Education. MHMS continues to build its aspiring business and marketing education programs for high school students. Within a 2 year cycle, students can take as many as 9 career and technical education (CTE) courses, with 7 of these courses approved to be taught at the honors level. Students in this elective program learn advanced concepts in the business cycle, promotional advertising, current marketing trends, and factors that influence the economy. In 2017, the marketing education students built a partnership with a local Bojangle's franchise to promote business strategies, conduct research, and collaborate in real time with the local business sector.

CTE students have the option to participate in work-based learning alongside classroom studies. These students are placed in companies within the community to gain valuable experience and learning from experts in their fields.

Students are also encouraged to compete locally through the DECA organization where they prepare for role play, written events, promotional campaigns, and service learning. MHMS is currently looking for ways to expand this avenue for more students due to the academic and social success of the program.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

MHMS teachers teach according to Paideia Philosophy: "All children can learn; All children deserve the same quality of schooling, not just the same quantity; and Each student's achievement during the year should be evaluated in terms of that student's competencies and not solely related to the achievements of other students." (ref. Paideia Principles, National Paideia Center)

MHMS is committed to helping all students reach excellence in and out of the classroom. Most classroom instruction is delivered using the Paideia methodology where traditional teacher-centered lecture is replaced with intellectual coaching and facilitating, and student learning is a shared endeavor through dialogue, exploration, learning from initial failures, and collaborative group work. MHMS works in concert with the district using the RTI2 framework, and all instruction is delivered at Tier 1 with explicit and systematic enrichment provided at all grade levels. The success of MHMS at all three grade bands is directly attributed to intentional differentiation not only within each content area or classroom, but also vertically as students move from grade to grade.

MHMS's goal has always been for 100% of its students to master or exceed each of the curricular standards and content areas. As a K-12 school, MHMS incorporates a wide variety of assessments that drive curriculum and instruction. Brigance K and 1 screening, EasyCBM benchmarking and baseline testing, Reading A to Z, and classroom based testing protocols are administered in the primary grades (K-2).

Intermediate students in grades 3-5 continue with local benchmark testing via Study Island and begin Tennessee state achievement testing (TNReady/TCAP). Students in middle school undergo annual TCAP testing, intermediate benchmark testing, and career assessment testing in seventh and eighth grades. Eighth grade students will take the Algebra I End of Course (EOC) exam beginning in the fall of 2018 for high school credit. All high school students take part in EOC, PSAT, and ACT testing. At the conclusion of Advanced Placement courses, high school students take the College Board AP exams. Students may also choose to take the HSK National Chinese Exams after completing level 3 and 4 courses. Teachers reference TCAP and EOC data from previous years to plan instruction, support student growth, identify areas of strength and opportunity, and partner with parents to plan post-secondary opportunities. In addition, teachers use data to identify areas where interventions and remediation are needed. Teachers have access to TCAP and EOC data from the previous year to better understand their current students and to identify trends in student learning. With this previous and current data, teachers form instructional groups, remediation or intervention groups, and identify areas where instruction can be accelerated and compacted.

Recent data points reveal that the methods and assessments are meeting the needs of students. MHMS's ACT composite score for 2017 was 30.1--the highest in the state of Tennessee. At MHMS, all students who take an AP class are required to take the AP exam. Over the past 5 years, the number of students taking AP coursework and the exams has increased 15.6% from 83 students to 96 students in 2017. In the spring of 2017, 94 out of 96 (97.9%) high school students taking AP exams received a score of 3, 4, or 5. MHMS continues to have the highest percentage of students meet or exceed the state expectation in elementary, middle, and high school state testing. Additionally, students routinely perform in top two quintiles according to the state value-added assessment system.

MHMS attributes student achievement gains to having a clear vision, an excellent staff, implementing an accessible, rigorous curriculum, excellent student attendance rates, and the consistent use of data to plan and drive meaningful instruction. To that end, all teachers are required to analyze current available data concerning the trends, needs, and successes they find from the test results, and develop an action plan which is shared with the administration. Faculty members also identify individual students who need special attention. Each year, the administration meets individually with teachers to discuss plans of action to meet student needs and ensure success for every MHMS student.

As a high performing school, MHMS must continue to seek out ways to not only meet the needs of its students, but also be innovative in addressing challenges that may not yet be identified. To maintain the high levels of achievement at each grade band, the administrators, teachers, and parents regularly collaborate to pursue enrichment and alternative learning experiences.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The school's mission statement reflects the Paideia educational philosophy: "Merrol Hyde Magnet School is committed to working in partnership with the students, parents, and the community to provide broad, comprehensive opportunities with a challenging, quality academic curriculum while further individualizing to allow students and teachers to realize their highest potential and to nurture a lifelong love for learning. We are committed to excellence."

MHMS offers students a different kind of school culture and climate to thrive, where academics are celebrated, and civil discourse is a priority. The Paideia philosophy drives everything that makes MHMS uniquely successful within the community and attracts students and families from across the district.

MHMS places great emphasis on practices and opportunities where students in grades kindergarten through twelve can interact authentically. This complements the Paideia philosophy in which there is a priority placed on social consciousness and service learning. One example is when high school chemistry students design and facilitate lab activities for fourth grade students studying the same standards. In addition, school spirit competitions are not organized by grade; instead, teachers and students are organized into Pillars which encourages the family atmosphere that permeates the school culture. Further, each high school student is involved in multi-grade monthly Connect Groups where they enjoy lunch off campus with a faculty member, allowing students and teachers to strengthen the relationships necessary for learning and sustaining school culture.

Educating the whole child includes the physical component of the body. All students in grades 7-12 must compete in interscholastic athletics each year. To meet the unique needs and interests of our diverse student body, MHMS has created non-traditional sports and clubs, and administration can approve a sports substitution for a student who competes off campus. This required element of a student's education reinforces the school's climate and belief that all students can learn and grow, and that many times this occurs in areas that would not otherwise be an academic priority.

The administration uses a rigorous selection process for all staff. Potential teachers and paraprofessionals must demonstrate their belief in the Paideia principles as well as have a highly refined skill set for teaching and mentoring high achieving students. Teachers are continually mentored by more experienced teachers. The administration protects classroom instructional time and makes it a priority to visit each teacher's classroom regularly and provide positive feedback. Monthly faculty meetings begin with staff celebrations, news, and acknowledgements. The administration created a public relations committee which regularly seeks out community media outlets to highlight the achievements of students, teachers, and the school.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Family and community engagement is a fundamental part of MHMS. Parents are welcome partners in their child's education; volunteering in the school is highly encouraged. Families provide financial and professional support for many school undertakings. Doughnuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom, community seminars, book-fair nights, character education programs, Middle School Transition Night, FAFSA/College Night, graduation planning, sports recognition, senior picnic, Jr/Sr Prom, the Snowball Dance, and the annual Fall Festival are some of the ways MHMS seeks to engage parents.

MHMS is intentional about serving the community through on campus events. A prime opportunity is through community Paideia seminars where local businesses, families, and community leaders are formally invited to experience a Paideia seminar led by students. Families and community members become authentic audiences when presenting Paideia coached projects which are the culmination of intensive study, research, and problem-solving that spans multiple disciplines. The public is also invited to view the middle school STEM fair, and MHMS periodically hosts academic tournaments. Each spring, MHMS hosts a 5K Hawk Walk and Run for families, local athletes and distance runners. Businesses and community partners

sponsor this event. MHMS administration welcomes interested families for monthly tours.

With the generous support of the PTO, open communication with stakeholders, and outside partnerships, MHMS continues to thrive both academically and within the growing community. Over the past five years, voluntary membership in the PTO has increased to an average parent participation rate of over 82%. The PTO sponsors the Fall Fest, and a biennial music festival. Funds raised provide teachers and students with needed technology. PTO funding also provides online services and software, as well as much needed professional development for individual teachers, including annual allocations for Paideia training and AP institutes. The PTO and ABC have partnered to embark on a capital campaign to improve campus facilities.

MHMS continues to seek ways to involve families at all grade bands, and the faculty communicates with parents through multiple channels. Traditional methods such as student folders and agendas complement newer technology such as Parent Portal and a school website. In 2015, MHMS launched several official social media accounts for both parents and community stakeholders. In 2017, the administration began using the social media platform “Remind” to send periodic text messages to parents, and a “Monday Messenger” email highlighting academic, athletic, and fine arts happenings in each grade band.

Student involvement within the community is a fundamental part of the MHMS culture. Outside agencies provide high school students with opportunities to complete their mandatory hours of community service. Students work with the YMCA, the Sumner County Humane Society, various church organizations, and the Jason Foundation (a youth suicide prevention program) among others. Many high school students choose to tutor younger students in after-school programs. In the fall of 2017, the high school counselor organized MHMS’s 1st annual community service fair where twenty organizations invited middle and high school students to participate throughout the school year. MHMS set an ambitious goal for students to accrue 10,000 hours of service by the end of the 2017-18 school year, further expanding the school's footprint within the growing community.

3. Professional Development:

Professional learning is a job-embedded expectation for all faculty and staff at MHMS. One of the main Paideia principles states “the desire to continue their own learning should be the prime motivation of those who dedicate their lives to the profession of teaching.” In addition to the district requirements of professional learning, MHMS teachers regularly exceed the required hours because of their desire to learn and improve for their students. More than 50% of teachers have served as leaders of PLCs, local or district professional learning sessions, or presenters for state conferences. Each year, MHMS teachers are asked by colleagues around the district to present Paideia, seminar, or content lesson strategies. Within MHMS, teachers collaborate daily about student learning, social-emotional needs, and planning instruction.

The administration has created a quality committee of teachers representative of all grade levels to seek feedback and design professional learning for the staff to include academic, cultural, and systemic needs. The Paideia facilitator helps the administration plan and implement professional learning for new teachers to learn the Paideia philosophy for their classrooms. New teachers to MHMS are inducted and mentored closely by the Paideia facilitator and veteran teachers the entire first year. New teachers receive coaching, practice, and regular feedback on conducting seminars in addition to curricular classroom support. Mentoring spans the entire first year for each new teacher until he or she becomes independent in selecting texts, writing seminar questions, designing post-seminar activities and projects, and sharing results with authentic audiences. This professional learning has shown that MHMS teachers adapt more quickly to a new school and new expectations than new teachers in other schools, which can be quantified in higher teacher retention rates. The administration regularly offers teachers time for professional learning and collaboration during the school day. MHMS frequently offers district-wide professional learning for teachers wanting to implement Paideia seminar instruction in their classrooms.

The administration creates surveys for teacher interest and need when planning professional learning, including specific opportunities for teachers to facilitate directly to their colleagues. Professional learning activities over the past five years have been responsive and proactive to local and state mandates and shifts.

Recent analysis of prior professional learning activities on the teacher observation model yields data that shows MHMS teachers have a deep understanding of the correlation between best practices by which they are evaluated and student achievement. Ultimately, MHMS teachers have higher effectiveness scores compared to local and state percentile expectations.

MHMS teachers intentionally engage in professional learning which revisits the school's mission, vision, and goals. This focus has shown to directly and positively impact student achievement by aligning teacher practices to student outcomes which far exceed local and state averages. In 2017, based on responses to teacher concerns, MHMS focused professional learning on two questions: "Why do we do what we do?" and "What guarantees do we give our students, parents, and community?" Teachers worked in strategic groups to define each of the school's stakeholders and perceived challenges to continued growth. The results yielded two immediate practices that support the school's mission--intentional outreach to community stakeholders, and increased communication with parents.

4. School Leadership:

The administration at MHMS is committed to excellence, working as one cohesive unit for student and teacher success. The principal and assistant principal are active and visible in every facet of the school. The administrators model continual learning and growth, promoting the school's mission and vision in tangible ways. To this end, administrators regularly engage and organize stakeholders, such as the ABC, the PTO and community partners to work in congruence with students, faculty members, and staff to provide the necessary tools and environment for high student achievement.

MHMS uses a shared leadership model where decisions are the result of data analysis, best practices, and stakeholder input. The principal sees his highest priority as hiring the best people and then equipping them with what they need to help students succeed. The principal believes that teachers know their students best and therefore, should have autonomy in classroom based decision making. Likewise, content area teachers who are experts in their curriculum are part of scheduling, high school course paths, and transitioning students new to MHMS and between grade bands. Faculty members continually lead by selecting outside assessments, choosing seminar texts, and leading professional learning sessions. The administrative team truly models servant leadership. Both the assistant principal and principal take ownership of every task within the school. In addition to a culture of high expectations, this leadership style creates a sense of ownership among teachers and students which can be seen throughout the school.

Principals and teachers closely monitor struggling students and offer both suggestions and support, meeting individually with middle and high school students who are not working to their full potential. Principals and students devise improvement plans which are signed by parents. In addition, the principal and assistant principal join middle and high school faculty members by leading small student advisory groups, called Connect Groups, which meet five to six times a year to discuss grades, social issues, college choices, and current events. Both principals participate in selected parent teacher conferences and attend PLC team meetings with teachers. Finally, the principal and assistant principal visit classrooms to observe, participate, evaluate, and collaborate with teachers on a regular basis. The Paideia facilitator serves as a liaison between administrators and teachers and meets bi-monthly with teachers to plan seminars, discuss instructional strategies, and provide professional learning support.

Parents serve in leadership roles by serving on various committees, coaching school sports, chaperoning class trips, and sharing in some curriculum decisions. Parents also serve a vital leadership role within the school when evaluating certain school practices like new student transitions and emergency response drills. The principal meets monthly with the PTO executive board to discuss the funding of programs, parental involvement, and any relevant concerns that may arise. The principal also meets monthly with the ABC board to address the needs of the athletic programs which serve all students.

Students provide valuable leadership by initiating proposals for clubs, activities, and sports, as well as helping select seminar texts. The principal reviews all proposals and returns them promptly. Student Council members serve as a liaison that voices student concerns, which fosters a sense of ownership. Students are also encouraged to propose classroom based events that showcase their talents and learning to

other grade levels within the school and interested community partners. MHMS students understand their value to the school by upholding the school's mission and fully participating in the culture that makes MHMS unique.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One of the founding principles of MHMS is the Paideia philosophy of educating the whole child--mind, body, and spirit. Traditional didactic instruction is enhanced with more intellectual coaching and facilitation, supplemented with frequent Paideia, or Socratic, seminars. Starting in kindergarten, students are taught how to sit in a circle, refer to a text, and participate in an intellectual discussion with minimal guidance from the teacher. School-wide coached projects offer students the opportunity to study a topic across multiple platforms and grade bands throughout the curriculum, culminating in a festival where original projects and real-world applications are presented to authentic audiences. School-wide seminars are planned to carry a recurrent theme across all grades so that all MHMS students can have common discourse about the ideas and values of their respective texts.

At MHMS, teachers design lessons aligned with Tennessee state standards and in accordance with the Paideia philosophy. In a society where face to face conversations seem to be diminishing, explicit instruction in dialogue and civil discourse through the Paideia method has set MHMS students apart from their peers. Instruction is differentiated through Socratic seminar and projects. Cooperative learning, peer tutoring, grade-level coached projects, individual projects, choice activities, and extended travel all provide differentiated instruction. Technology is embedded into most lessons which helps create curious learners as well as responsible digital citizens.

Naturally gifted and high achieving students typically perform well on standardized assessments where the emphasis is on a singular definitive answer to a question or problem. By contrast, the Paideia philosophy presents open-ended questions and problems centered on a core value or belief. When high achieving students are introduced to the Paideia philosophy, the initial result is usually resistance, argument, and defensive rhetoric. However, by designing meaningful instruction around the Paideia philosophy at an early age, high achieving students begin to understand exactly how they learn alongside the content they are learning. They begin to understand that learning is thinking, and the world around them presents more open ended problems needing multiple solutions rather than a finite answer to a narrow question. The Paideia method has broadened and deepened the academic rigor across all grade levels for both students and teachers.

The growth and transformation of students over the course of several years in a Paideia school has been remarkable on a social level as well. Students report they are more confident, they have more reliable strategies to seek answers, they are naturally more curious, and they are genuinely more accepting of different view points no matter the content. With a Paideia foundation and humanities education, MHMS students also are prepared to be productive in their communities, their future college campuses, their work places, and their families.