

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):
- 141 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 26 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 25 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 192 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	35	32	67
1	28	45	73
2	25	48	73
3	62	84	146
4	77	71	148
5	57	76	133
6	83	53	136
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	367	409	776

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 20 % Asian
 - 11 % Black or African American
 - 21 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 39 % White
 - 9 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

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

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

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	9
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	33
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	42
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	770
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 15 %
117 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Cambodian, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Nepali, Farsi, Bulgarian, Creole, French, German, Kanarese, Pilipino, Polish, Punjabi, Portuguese, Pashtu, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yoruba, Dari, Malayalam, Somali, Tigrinya, Akan, American Sign Language, Mongolian, Serbian, Uyghur

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 19 %
Total number students who qualify: 147

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %
66 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>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>10</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>16</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>7</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>16</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</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: 7
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.	32
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	18
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	14
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 24:1

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	97%	97%	97%	98%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Keene Mill Elementary School seeks to empower today's learners to become tomorrow's leaders.

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

N/A

PART III – SUMMARY

Keene Mill Elementary School (KMES) has educated students in Springfield, Virginia since December 6, 1961. Originally, KMES was built to serve military families assigned to Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Over the years, our student population has grown and diversified. In the early 1970s, KMES added an Advanced Academic Program (AAP) for grade 3-6 students who were found eligible for full time gifted services by a central selection committee. KMES also hosted a preschool program for students with moderate to severe disabilities until 2009. Three separate renovations have added much needed space to the building. The most recent was from 2015 through 2017, when KMES went through a complete renovation, restoring the school to “new” condition and adding 25,000 square feet to the building, along with an innovative playground.

Student enrollment has grown steadily, from 269 students in December 1961 to 776 students in January 2018. KMES serves a wide socio-economic spectrum of families who reside in single family homes, townhouses, apartments, and multi-family homes. Although KMES was originally a neighborhood school, we only have a few students who are walkers now. Most students ride one of our ten buses or use our 150-car Kiss and Ride to get to and from school. Students from six other elementary schools attend KMES for the AAP program. With regard to race and ethnicity, 20% of students are Asian; 11% are Black; 21% are Hispanic; 9% are other races; and 39% are White. Students represent 42 languages. 15% of students are English Language Learners. Currently 52% of students access general education; 43% of students access the AAP Level IV program; 13% access AAP levels II and III; 19% receive free or reduced lunch; and 9% receive support in inclusive general education settings or self-contained special education settings.

Historically, KMES has a tradition of building strong relationships within the surrounding community by hosting well attended community-wide events. These include an annual Hoedown with a professional square dance caller and square dancing for students, staff, and families. We also host an annual Veteran’s Day Assembly to honor veterans within the KMES community and their families. The event includes a color guard presenting the flag, the Pledge of Allegiance, patriotic songs performed by our band, chorus, and orchestra, a class recitation of a patriotic poem, the reading of Patriot’s Pen essays by our sixth grade students, and a guest speaker. One of our most celebrated events is our wet and wild field day, full of water-based events for students. Newer traditions include our Innovation Fair, where students innovate products to make them more effective. Student projects are evaluated by judges from the United States Patent Office.

Academically, KMES failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress for the Virginia Standards of Learning three out of four years from 2008 to 2011. In the fall of 2011, the new administrative team created a sense of urgency among staff for generating high levels of learning for ALL students. The administrators introduced the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model and a system of tiered intervention and enrichment for academic, social/emotional, and behavioral support. That fall, grade level teams learned what it meant to collaborate. KMES staff created a shared vision statement: “Empowering today’s learners to become tomorrow’s leaders!” We also created a common mission statement, beliefs, and commitments. The staff built a shared understanding of what collaboration looked like and sounded like by participating in twice-weekly Collaborative Learning Team (CLT) meetings facilitated by the school administration. As administrators modeled facilitating CLT meetings, the literacy and math instructional coaches took Adaptive Schools and Cognitive Coaching to learn how to coach teams and to facilitate work through the CLT Team Cycle. The next year, the instructional coaches facilitated CLT meetings. Team leaders and administrators attended Adaptive Schools training to develop a common understanding of the expectations for CLTs. Team leaders collaboratively designed a list of expectations for CLT meetings that they shared with all teachers. Using a model of gradual release, team leaders played an active role in guiding the work of their teams and the even harder work of collaboration to promote student success. Each year, our students have experienced increased levels of achievement. At this time, KMES is one of the highest performing schools in Virginia.

The KMES community is proud of our rich history, cultural diversity, time-honored traditions, and inviting school climate. The KMES staff works in a collegial and collaborative manner to ensure that all students become successful learners and productive citizens. We implement an inclusive instructional approach for all students, offering a continuum of opportunities that includes enrichment and academic, behavioral, and social/emotional supports for every student by name and need. Our dedication to meeting the needs of all

students is evidenced through a learning environment that fosters academic excellence, creativity, respect for individual differences, and the development of self-efficacy.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

All curricula at KMES are aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning and the Fairfax County Public Schools Program of Studies.

The language arts curriculum includes objectives and instructional strategies that promote students' growth in reading, writing, word study, and oral language. Development in these areas is facilitated through direct instruction, modeling by teachers, guided practice, and small group instruction. All teachers embrace a balanced literacy approach and include its components in a workshop format with word study integrated throughout. The workshop is structured with a short focus lesson followed by purposeful independent reading or writing and concludes with a sharing and reflection time. While students are working independently or conferencing with a partner, the teacher meets with small differentiated groups for guided reading, strategy instruction, or 1:1 conferences. Skills are also explicitly taught during a shared or interactive reading/writing activity. Teachers integrate language arts strategies into other content areas by using fiction and non-fiction texts. This year, teachers elected to use the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project Units of Study to support instruction. All students receive AAP Level I lessons in the nine Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies. AAP Level II students receive differentiated lessons and extensions in the classroom. AAP Level III students engage in weekly advanced academic lessons provided by our Advanced Academic Resource Teacher. AAP Level IV students have been identified for full-time advanced academics and benefit from instruction in greater depth, breadth, challenge, and complexity. Resources used for advanced learners include William and Mary Language Arts units, Caesar's English, Data Based Questions, and Jacob's Ladder. Strategies we utilize include Socratic Seminar, RAFT, and Reading Above. These resources and strategies are also available for all students based on their readiness. Special education students receive instruction in research based reading intervention programs such as Foundations, Leveled Literacy Instruction, Read Well, Just Words, Reading Success, and Language! Regardless of students' strengths or areas of need, our goal is to develop independent, strategic readers, writers, and thinkers who engage in authentic learning in order to become life-long lovers of literacy.

The mathematics curriculum is purposefully designed to develop students' foundational understanding of quantitative concepts and relationships for proficiency in basic computations. Our instruction is strategically implemented to support students in mathematical discourse and elicits evidence of their thinking. The acquisition of specialized mathematical vocabulary and language patterns is crucial to students' understanding and appreciation of mathematics. Students are actively engaged using the math workshop model using concrete materials, manipulatives, games, and technology such as calculators and computers. Within the workshop, students receive direct instruction, work collaboratively via math stations, and practice independent tasks. Students apply mathematical principles they are learning to solve real-life problems and integrate these with science and other subjects they are investigating. These real-world experiences are also provided in project-based learning tasks that encourage student inquiry. Problem solving is a key component of the curriculum at every grade level. Instruction in the development of critical and creative thinking skills is integrated early and continuously into each student's mathematics education. Math classes at KMES are differentiated to provide access to a rigorous and relevant curriculum for all students. Resources include the Envision online textbook, Investigations, Number Talks, DreamBox and Groundworks. Students eligible for AAP Level IV and advanced math students are instructed one or more year(s) above grade level using these resources and more challenging material such as Mentoring Mathematical Minds (M3). Special education students receive mathematics instruction in the general education classroom and in small groups during our intervention period. Supplemental instruction is provided through research based programs such as Do the Math and Number Worlds. A very small number of special education students receive mathematics instruction using TransMath.

The science program consists of inquiry-based units that engage students in hands-on scientific learning. Thought-provoking lessons develop students' ability to think and work like a real scientist. Activities are designed to encourage children to explore the world around them through scientific experiments and investigations and to learn to be environmental stewards. Students apply their learning to problem solve and

comprehend the nature of science. Science trade books, Learn 360 video streaming, problem based learning, our STEAM Lab, the Virginia Initiative for Science Teaching and Achievement (VISTA), Engineering is Elementary, Jason Learning, and the KMES Innovation Fair are among resources used to support science instruction.

The social studies curriculum emphasizes the skills necessary for students to become responsible, global citizens. These skills develop as students broaden their understanding of the historical and geographical relevance of Virginia, the United States, and the world. Students study fundamental concepts in civics, economics, and geography as they progress through history and learn about change over time. Using Document Based Questions (DBQs) and Library of Congress materials, students examine primary sources to better understand the impact of historical events. All students engage in a variety of activities that demonstrate their cultural awareness and global citizenship. Using what they have learned about world cultures, fifth graders complete a Global Awareness Technology Project. This project incorporates research, technology, and higher level questions to help students make global connections. Third grade students develop their understanding of economics by creating products and selling them at Kanga Mart. Students in grade six make history come alive through their Portrait of America Museum.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All students engage in art classes for one hour per week and utilize a range of strategies to form concepts, analyze and respond to artworks, and produce meaningful art. Emphasis is placed on expressing ideas that relate to the formation of identity and a sense of place within a historical, social, and cultural context. Students have opportunities to problem-solve as they create art. They expand their understanding of ways artists convey meaning through a variety of art forms and practice to improve their skills in using materials and tools safely and effectively. As students realize the value of the arts in society, they become producers and selective consumers of the arts. Student work is showcased throughout the school and in local newspapers, high schools, and the Workhouse Art Center.

Students participate in two or more music classes of 30 to 60 minutes weekly. They explore pitch, beat, rhythm, and form through singing, playing instruments, movement, and performances. Kindergarten students build basic music skills, engage in vocal exploration, and sing a variety of songs. They develop an awareness of steady beat, describe concepts such as high/low and fast/slow, engage in movement activities, and play simple rhythms on various instruments. By sixth grade, students compose original pieces, evaluate how musical elements express ideas, compare and contrast musical works, consider cultural and historical context, and defend preferences among musical compositions. Students in grade 4 may choose to participate in strings classes. In grades 5 and 6 students may elect to participate in band, chorus, and/or strings. Students in band, strings, and chorus perform in the winter and spring and have opportunities to participate in local and honors events.

Kindergarten through grade 3 students participate in Physical Education (PE) for at least 1.5 hours per week, and grade 4-6 students engage in PE two hours per week. PE helps students embrace a physically active lifestyle and acquire skills that lead to personal fitness, health, and enjoyment. Small-group cooperative and competitive games are taught, as well as outdoor fitness, dance, and strategic thinking through sports. Students assess their own fitness and set goals for improvement. They make decisions and solve problems as they collaborate with peers. The health curriculum helps students develop the knowledge and skills needed to make healthy decisions and to facilitate individual, family, and community health.

Language through Content (LTC)/Spanish classes are provided for every student one hour per week. In LTC classes, students learn Spanish through science and STEAM integrated content. Students develop basic language proficiency through units of study using a project based learning instructional focus that supports the Virginia Standards of Learning for Science. Cultural objectives and conversational Spanish are also explored throughout LTC units.

All students engage in hands-on learning opportunities in the STEAM Lab for one hour every other week. Instruction includes the use of the Engineering Design Process to create innovative projects. Students learn

to use critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity while constructing original work using a variety of technology. Projects in the STEAM lab include team building tasks, engineering challenges, projects with electronic building blocks, original innovation design, coding with tablet computers, and programming physical robotic toys.

The library program supports teachers and students with not only resources, but also instruction. The librarian coordinates enrichment activities such as Read across America Week, the Summer Reading Program, author visits, Virginia Reader's Choice, and our annual book fair. Library classes for kindergarten through grade 3 occur on a weekly basis, and the library schedule for grades 4 through 6 is flexible. During this time, the librarian reinforces classroom instruction by teaching reading comprehension strategies, helping students choose high interest just right books, exploring different genres, and guiding students in the research process.

Rather than being a stand-alone subject, technology is a tool students use to access content, create new knowledge, collaborate with teachers and peers, and communicate their learning. KMES is fortunate to have 1:1 devices for every student in grades 1-6 and 1:2 devices for students in kindergarten, and we seamlessly integrate technology use across all subjects. We are moving toward student-directed learning that enables students to choose the time, path, place, and pace of their learning.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

KMES utilizes a system of tiered intervention and enrichment to tailor instruction to specific student needs. Tier 1 is high quality, differentiated core instruction provided by classroom teachers and support staff. Tier 2 is a higher level of intervention and enrichment provided by grade level teams and support staff. Tier 3 is intensive, research based intervention delivered by highly trained teachers, counselors, psychologist, and social worker.

Students are engaged in core instruction through opportunities to collaborate, communicate, create, and think critically. Project-, problem-, and inquiry-based learning activities allow students to learn actively, grapple with real world problems, and develop authentic solutions. Providing small group, guided instruction within a workshop model allows teachers and support staff to intervene and enrich during instructional periods. (Tier 1) Teachers teach social/emotional skills using Responsive Classroom (RC) Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). Counselors deliver core instruction to develop social/emotional skills through lessons on character education, bullying and harassment, anxiety and stress management, self-care, goal setting, and careers. Our instructional schedule includes 30-minutes of daily intervention or enrichment for each grade level, allowing time to support students with additional instruction for content, social/emotional skills, or behavior. (Tier 2) During this time, teachers meet with small groups or in conferences with individual students. Support staff and the mental health team meet with small groups regularly to intervene with programs such as Leveled Literacy Instruction, Foundations, Do the Math, a double dip of guided reading or math, Homework Organization and Planning Skills (HOPS), Strong Kids, Girls and Boys Circles, Students with a Gift (SWAG), Mind Up, and Unstuck and On Target. Additional opportunities are provided for students who benefit from enrichment through parent volunteer programs, AAP Levels II and III, and Young Scholars. Students who require additional time and support beyond Tier 2 are provided access to the curriculum through Tier 3 intervention. This intense, small-group, daily intervention is delivered by highly trained teachers using research-based interventions such as Just Words, Language!, Number Worlds, Read Well, Reading Mastery, Reading Success, Trans Math, and 1-1 counseling sessions. Our tiers of intervention are monitored monthly by a school-wide intervention team comprised of administrators, instructional coaches, special education teachers, ESOL teachers, counselors, school psychologist, and our social worker. This interdisciplinary team reviews the progress of each student and determines next steps.

The school uses all available data to inform instructional decisions. Classroom teachers examine student achievement data from assessments such as performance tasks, exit tickets, formative common assessments, running records, rubrics, and district assessments which include universal screeners for reading and math, diagnostic reading and math assessments, division-wide online formative assessments, and the Virginia SOLs to determine whether students are making adequate progress. Twice each year, a district assessment

is administered to students. CLTs and instructional coaches meet during Data Days to celebrate student success and to design intervention and enrichment by student name and need. Teachers highlight the needs of students who are not making expected progress with classroom interventions during “Kid Talk” at every CLT meeting.

KMES has made outstanding progress in our quest to close the achievement gap for all students. On the 2016-2017 Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments, there were no achievement gaps for Black students in reading or math. For Hispanic students, the achievement gap in reading was 4.96%, and the gap in math was 3.44%. However, there were gaps for other subgroups. On the Reading SOL, there were achievement gaps of 10% or greater for the following subgroups: LEP, 11.74%; Fee Waiver, 14.66%; and SWD, 21.25%. For the Math SOL, there were achievement gaps of 10% or greater for the following subgroups: LEP, 10.73%; and SWD, 12.28%. To close these achievement gaps, we will continue to provide timely, tailored interventions by student name and need and to closely monitor student progress. We will continue to do whatever it takes to ensure the success of all students.

As a high performing school, we will ensure continued student success by collaborating with our colleagues, families, and community, learning together, and maintaining a laser-like focus on results. We will continue to research and implement rigorous, innovative, and engaging practices for all students and help them develop the necessary skills for success in our rapidly changing world.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At KMES, we believe that school must be safe, welcoming, and fun for learning to occur. All students and staff must feel physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally secure at school. To ensure that all KMES students and families feel a sense of belonging, we engage in Cultural Proficiency trainings offered by FCPS. This enables our staff to interact effectively with people of different cultures, backgrounds, belief systems, and life experiences. We also adopted Responsive Classroom and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports to explicitly teach positive behavior to our students. The direct teaching of social and emotional skills and school-wide expectations enables our students to understand what positive behavior looks like, develop social and emotional strengths, and feel a part of the KMES community. Students are more connected to their peers and teachers and are intrinsically motivated to contribute to the good of others.

Creating team spirit among students, staff, and families is one of the best ways to engage and motivate them. Strategies we have implemented include daily RC morning meetings and greetings; identifying and sharing hopes and dreams; school-wide quarterly pep rallies/awards assemblies with hilarious games and Sparky, our kangaroo mascot; spirit days; Workout Wednesdays, in which all staff and students dress for exercise and stop to work out throughout the school day; PBIS Kanga Cash for classes who demonstrate they are respectful, responsible, and ready to learn; incentives like earning extra recess, a bubble gum day, and sliming the principal; and weekly staff incentives including drawings for a special delivery lunch or coverage for a duty.

Our school culture helps teachers feel valued and supported. The KMES administrative team makes it a priority to recognize teachers for their hard work and dedication through faculty and staff awards, commendation memos, and kudos in our weekly staff newsletter. Administrators protect teachers' instructional time and enforce high expectations for student behavior. Teachers also support their colleagues by sharing shout outs for one another on the staff lounge bulletin board or Kanga-Gram Kudos. We offer team builders at every staff meeting so that teachers have the opportunity to build relationships and have fun together. One of our best team builders required staff to create sofas made of balloons that supported the weight of one team member. We also create school dance videos that involve everyone in the school. "Kanga Style," a spoof of "Gangnam Style," is our most popular dance video to date.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

KMES utilizes many strategies for engaging families and community. These include a weekly principal's email to parents and community members, teacher newsletters, parent/teacher conferences, interim progress reports, quarterly report cards, digital marquee, and quarterly principal's coffees. We also use Facebook, Twitter, Seesaw, and Class Dojo to communicate with families.

We have several community partnerships. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church provides mentors and meeting spaces for school teams, retreats, and PTA meetings. Elite Martial Arts offers childcare for evening events, martial arts demonstrations at school, and full year scholarships for at-risk students. FCPS partnerships with colleges and universities allow KMES to support educational interns and student teachers.

The KMES PTA is a vital force in ensuring the success of our students, families, and community. Active parental support of school initiatives promotes the most positive learning environment possible, provides before and after school enrichment for students, fosters effective home-school partnerships benefitting all students, and draws upon the talents and strengths of our diverse community. In addition, the PTA engages families through relationship building events such as our Back to School Picnic, Costume Bingo, Family Fun Night, Family Science Night, Innovation Fair, and International Night.

This year, we created a Wellness Committee made up of staff and parents/guardians. The committee meets on a quarterly basis to discuss concerns about student wellness and to generate strategies to support

students. Collaboratively, we have created a school-wide goal, #Breathe, to teach students the signs of anxiety and stress and breathing techniques to reduce stress. All students will teach a breathing technique to their families this year.

Another innovative engagement strategy is the KMES Helping Games. This is a community service collaborative competition that includes every student, teacher, staff member, and parent/guardian within our school. The school is divided into four teams that engage in community service activities and school events to earn points for their teams. The games motivate our students to help others, get involved in school and PTA activities, and show school spirit. The games focus on four ways of helping others: Help the Cold by donating gently worn winter clothing and coats; Help the Community by donating books for a needy school; Help the Hungry by donating non-perishable foods to a local food bank; and Help the Patients by donating coins to Pennies for Patients. Students earn points for donated items, attending PTA events, wearing team t-shirts on Thursdays, and volunteering in the community.

3. Professional Development:

Learning by Doing defines a PLC as: "An ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators." As a National Model PLC School, this describes the professional learning approach that is deeply embedded at KMES.

Over the years, we have used multiple data points to identify professional development topics for our school. These include student achievement data, the Employee Engagement Survey, staff needs assessments, and school and district initiatives. We prioritize teacher voice and choice in professional learning.

Faculty, staff, and administrators engage in division-wide activities, school-based opportunities, and individually selected experiences for professional growth that enhances student learning. District priorities include Cultural Proficiency, the FCPS Literacy Symposium, and After School Specials for the new FCPS Pacing Guides. School-initiated trainings include teacher-led learning about Jan Richardson's Next Steps in Guided Reading, Math Workshop, Running Records, Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies, The Energy Bus, Responsive Classroom, 6+1 Writing Traits, Adaptive Schools, Content Coaching, Managing the Crisis Cycle, Vertical Articulation, and Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships. Teacher-directed learning activities include participation in the wide range of rich professional learning opportunities provided by FCPS. We have also implemented peer observations and Teacher to Teacher Tuesdays, which allow teachers to share high yield strategies with colleagues. Teachers as Readers has been an effective strategy for groups of teachers to study a topic of shared interest. Books have included Simplifying Response to Intervention, Creating Innovators: The Making of Young People Who Will Change the World, Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning, The Differentiated Classroom, Teaching with Poverty in Mind, Teach like a Champion, and The 20 Time Project.

Teachers and administrators have taken "field trips" to Teacher's College to learn about literacy instruction and to other FCPS schools to observe implementation of the Units of Study for Reading. Based on their observations, teachers in grades K through 5 chose to implement the Units of Study for Reading in every classroom.

This year, teachers and administrators have opted in to the FCPS Blended Learning Cohort. The purpose of this cohort is to transform traditional classrooms into modern learning environments. The professional learning goals are aligned with the FCPS learning model and support teachers in designing a learner-centered culture.

4. School Leadership:

KMES is a school that has turned around. Seven years ago, KMES did not make Adequate Yearly Progress, as measured by the Virginia SOLs. Staff morale was low, and the PTA nearly disbanded. The new principal understood her role as the catalyst for change. She shared a compelling case for the academic success of all students, fostered an environment conducive to learning, developed leadership capacity in staff, improved instruction, and managed human, fiscal, and physical resources to expedite school improvement.

The principal's role can be compared to a rock that lands in a pond, resulting in ripples of influence and impact. The first ripple is the school leadership team, made up of administrators and literacy, math, technology, and advanced academic coaches. The leadership team is critical to building leadership capacity among teachers, staff, students, families, and community members. The ripples that follow are made up of team leaders, collaborative teams, students, families, and the community.

Critical steps in our journey included providing clear expectations, having administrators do the hard work alongside teachers, and creating conditions that facilitated the growth of our collaborative culture. CLTs implemented collaborative practices, including curriculum mapping of essential standards, student-friendly learning targets, high yield instructional strategies, and common assessments. Teachers included students in setting goals for learning and monitoring progress. Quarterly Data Days enabled teachers, coaches, and administrators to disaggregate and analyze data and led to our ability to design intervention and enrichment by student name and need. School leaders guaranteed all students had access to essential learning by supporting teachers; strengthening core instruction by ensuring curriculum maps and classroom observations were in alignment; providing opportunities for students to revisit critical content or receive enrichment during a dedicated intervention block; and finally, developing a school wide intervention team to monitor the progress of the most at-risk students.

Ultimately, every KMES staff member has become a leader who has a positive impact on students, families, and our community. The leadership model at KMES is a coaching model. We have developed collective responsibility for all students and capacity for shared leadership. School leaders include members of our elected Faculty and Staff Advisory Committee; curriculum, special education, ESOL, and specialist lead teachers, and grade level team leaders. Every staff member at KMES has a deep sense of shared responsibility for our students. Our motto is: "Not yours, not mine, but ours."

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The most instrumental strategy to our school's success has been building teacher capacity to function as members of high performing CLTs that focus their efforts on increasing achievement for all students. Our collaborative community has grown through shifts in organizational systems and mindsets that have been developed, sustained, and refined over the past seven years. Our master schedule provides CLTs with five hours of common planning time each week, arranged to allow teams to collaboratively unpack standards, identify high impact instructional strategies, create common assessments, analyze data, and make instructional decisions that promote student learning. In the early stages of our PLC, two hours weekly were set aside for math and language arts CLTs supported by the literacy and math coaches and administrators. They worked together to build teacher understanding of collaboration and the tremendous impact it has on student learning. Coaches supported teachers in the selection and implementation of best instructional practices to achieve high levels of student success and to instill within students a love for learning.

Our collaborative vision is embedded in our beliefs and actions. CLTs construct norms at the beginning of the year to facilitate their work together. Norms are reviewed at every CLT meeting, which currently take place weekly. Teams follow an agenda centered on the four questions of a PLC: What do students need to learn? How will we know if they've learned it? What will we do if they don't learn it? What will we do if they already know it? Teachers make time in every meeting for Kid Talk, discussing students who need greater support in order to experience success. Coaches support teachers in planning high leverage instruction, deciding how to work together in classrooms by modeling lessons or co-teaching, and selecting effective resources. Coaches and teachers analyze data and reflect on practices to develop plans based on the needs of the grade level and individual students. Special education teachers, ESOL teachers, counselors, the school psychologist, and the school social worker are another layer in the collaborative process and provide whatever students need to achieve at higher levels. In his 2015 report, *What Works Best in Education: The Politics of Collaborative Expertise*, John Hattie provided a powerful affirmation of our work: "The greatest influence on student progression in learning is having highly expert, inspired and passionate teachers and school leaders working together to maximize the effect of their teaching on all students in their care."