

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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 7 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 5 High schools
 - 2 K-12 schools
- 15 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, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	49	42	91
10	35	35	70
11	35	42	77
12 or higher	38	29	67
Total Students	157	148	305

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 13 % Black or African American
 - 21 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 56 % White
 - 7 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 13%

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	24
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	17
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	41
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	311
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4%
13 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Italian, Spanish, German, Romanian, Russian, French, Thai

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 18%
Total number students who qualify: 54

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
39 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>7</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>19</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</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: 1
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.	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 0:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	93%	91%	91%	91%	91%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	98%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	68
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	66%
Enrolled in a community college	14%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	6%
Found employment	2%
Joined the military or other public service	8%
Other	4%

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.

Educate, Engage, and Empower each student to succeed in a dynamic world.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Vicenza High School serves military connected dependents within the United States Army Garrison (USAG) Vicenza. The school and base are located in the Veneto region of northeastern Italy which is approximately 37 miles west of Venice, situated at the foot of the Dolomites. Vicenza is a thriving and cosmopolitan city with a rich history and culture. USAG Vicenza supports multiple units including the US Army Africa Headquarters, elements of the 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), the 21st Theater Sustainment Command-Italy, the 509th Signal Battalion, and other smaller units and organizations. Ultimately, students at Vicenza High school have parents that jump out of planes, deploy to Africa, or support one of those activities. Parents are 60 percent active duty military personnel and 40 percent DOD civilians and contractors. Since much of the population is Army personnel, frequently one parent is deployed for military assignments.

Vicenza High School plays an important role in providing families with a safe, supportive learning environment and high expectations for all students. The school has a diverse student population with an enrollment of just over 300 students in grades 9 through 12. These students are served by two school-level administrators, 30 teachers, four counselors, a school psychologist, five support staff and five paraprofessionals who work collaboratively to advocate for each student and maintain a rigorous and caring learning environment. Typically students spend 2 to 3 years in the Vicenza Community before parents are assigned to another duty station. Many Vicenza students attend more than six different schools before graduation, and therefore new students always find a welcoming atmosphere when they arrive.

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is a global school system, operating 164 accredited schools in 8 districts located in 11 foreign countries, seven states, Guam, and Puerto Rico. It was established shortly after the end of World War II, to educate the children of servicemen and women stationed in Europe and the Pacific. DoDEA is committed to the vision of providing, “Excellence in Education for Every Student, Every Day, Everywhere.” VHS strives to reach this vision by providing a world-class education that prepares each student for college and/or career success in a 21st century globalized society.

Vicenza High School was established in 1954. The present two-story building which serves as the school’s home was built in 1958, initially serving as a hospital. Grades K-12 were originally housed in the current high school; however, in 2008 two new buildings were constructed for Vicenza Elementary School and Vicenza Middle School. A 21st century school building is currently in the planning stages for the faculty and students of VHS. Students, teachers and community members have been an active part of the planning for this new building.

The faculty and staff of Vicenza High School believe that all students are entitled to a rigorous academic curriculum as well as a robust support network. High academic expectations, social and emotional supports as well as character-building extra curricular opportunities allow students to develop their full potential at VHS.

In the academic realm, the school offers a selection of Advance Placement and honors courses across a variety of subject areas, from STEM fields to language arts to world language. The school also boasts four career and technical pathways in addition to a wide selection of fine arts courses. Students are challenged to earn advanced diplomas according to their interests and talents. Programs also exist to academically support students at all levels. The school’s Student Support Team (SST) monitors grades, behavior and attendance on a weekly basis to flag at-risk students. Follow up support for these students is then provided using a tiered intervention model. VHS also works to ensure that high achieving students are being challenged through differentiation and extension activities. The school’s gifted and talented coordinator works with teachers to provide instructional strategies to support these students. The AVID program provides support for students that show great potential but are underachieving. After school tutoring is also available from both teachers and volunteers from various honor societies.

VHS also offers a variety of programs to support students socially, physically, emotionally, and culturally.

The strategy of cultivating a small, safe environment where each individual is acknowledged and cared for sits at the heart of VHS. The faculty strives to ensure that each student is active within the school and has at least one adult advocate whether it be through a classroom teacher, activity club sponsor, or coach. Additionally, all students at VHS have access to four full-time counselors, a school psychologist, and full time registered nurse. Teachers sponsor a diverse selection of athletics, clubs, and organizations for students: varsity athletics, honor societies, robotics clubs, gay / straight alliance, and drum corp are a small sampling of offerings that exemplify the diverse choices for all students. Another student-run program is the Student-2-Student organization that both welcomes new students and connects our American students to the Italian culture. This organization also provides leadership and ambassadorial roles for veteran students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

DoDEA’s College and Career Ready Literacy Standards for English Language Arts are divided into four categories: reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. These support DoDEA’s three instructional shifts for literacy: regular practice with complex texts and its academic language; reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from texts, both literature and informational; and building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction. Together these standards and shifts drive instruction in English classrooms at VHS.

Professional development focuses on gaining a deep understanding of the standards, exploring the model units and curriculum, and teaching strategies for the implementation of these new standards. In addition, teachers work in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to improve classroom practices and share student work to determine if students are reaching the standards. Teachers use the following instructional approaches when addressing the standards within the classroom: argument and debate, evidence-based argument, inquiry-based instruction, vertical team planning, common rubrics, student-teacher reading conferences, the writing process, centers and station rotations, and Socratic seminars.

VHS English teachers utilize both formative and summative assessments to drive instruction. Teachers routinely collect and analyze data to inform instructional practices related to meeting standards. Students chart progress on responses to critical reading passages in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in mastery of standards. Across grade levels students are engaged in the writing process, including multiple opportunities for revision following directed feedback from both peers and teachers. The Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) assessment also assists teachers in tracking student reading progress and in helping students make informed decisions when selecting independent texts. Those same SRI scores also aid teachers in differentiating reading material for students. Results of systemwide summative assessments like the PSAT allow teachers to identify students who might excel in advanced courses as well as those who could benefit from extra help offered in the remedial reading elective course.

1b. Mathematics:

VHS follows a standards-based instructional approach that is aligned to DoDEA’s College and Career Ready Math Standards. All math courses address these rigorous standards through a balance of conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and application of mathematical concepts. This balance promotes learning beyond rote memorization of formulas, and strives to create mathematically literate students. In addition to the content standards, eight “Standards of Mathematical Practice” run vertically through all grade levels. These Math Practices help students focus on how to learn, discuss and explain mathematics.

Since 2016, professional development has focused on NCTM’s book, *Principles to Action: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All*. This text addresses eight, “Mathematics Teaching Practices” that are necessary for students to learn mathematics. These include establishing clear learning goals, implementing tasks to promote reasoning/problem solving, using multiple representations, facilitating discourse, posing purposeful questions, building fluency through conceptual understanding, supporting productive struggle, and eliciting evidence of student thinking. The integration of these teaching practices, along with a common belief in the importance of differentiated instruction, have been critical in the success of our math teachers and students.

Formative assessments in each math course are used to inform daily instruction and unit planning. The math PLCs are currently studying Standards Based Assessment and Differentiation in an effort to better identify and meet the needs of students in need of intervention or extension. Summative data is used to inform program level decisions and also identify students for specific courses. PSAT data is used to recruit students

for AP Statistics and Calculus, and identify students in need of additional support to meet college readiness benchmarks. Systemwide, end-of-course assessments are also used to identify students for Math Lab courses. These courses are taught in conjunction with Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II, and help students with current content, as well as foundation skill.

1c. Science:

Inquiry-based instruction is at the heart of science teaching and learning at Vicenza High School. All science classes include a minimum of 20 percent lab time. These labs provide students an opportunity to learn domain specific standards in each course, while also gaining an understanding of the processes involved in scientific research. VHS has also taken great strides to include literacy into all science courses. Since 2016, the Science Department has participated in quarterly professional development focused on strategies for reading, writing and speaking, and listening. In the upcoming school year, the science department will transition to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Professional development is currently aimed at preparing for these new standards while still integrating the literacy standards and strategies that have been working so well.

With the adoption of the NGSS, VHS will require all students to take Biology, Chemistry and Physics for graduation. The Science Department has been preparing for this change by working on strategies for differentiated instruction. This focus on differentiation has not only helped scaffold instruction for lower achieving students, but also provided extension and enrichment activities for upper level students. Another instructional approach that has been adopted throughout the science department is inquiry-based instruction. Experiments provide students the opportunity to discover content that is then reinforced and extended through classroom discourse and explicit instruction. The integration of technology is evident in these labs, as students regularly utilize the Vernier probeware to collect and analyze data.

Summative literacy data for the school is used to inform professional development in reading and writing across the curriculum. Additionally, individual student SRI scores are used to identify students that need support with complex nonfiction text. Regular use of formative assessment helps to inform daily instruction and unit planning. Professional development has also been provided on how formative assessments can be used to differentiate in the science classroom.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

DODEA's College and Career Ready Standards were adopted to raise expectations for students and to support and three shifts in content literacy. Professional development over the last two years focused on the implementation of these shifts through a variety of instructional activities. The Social Studies Department strives to implement the standards through increased rigor and development of essential reading, analytical, and writing skills within the content area.

VHS uses a variety of instructional approaches to meet content and literacy standards. Inquiry-based Learning allows students to engage with a variety of historical documents and data to answer complex historical questions. Data-based essay questions allow students to engage in critical thinking through the analysis of historical documents. Students are challenged to make deeper civic connections in their essays by offering counterpoints, extending their arguments beyond the documents, and making comparisons to current events. Scaffolding strategies allow students to activate prior knowledge and build upon it. Some scaffolding activities used are fish bowl, K-W-L, pre-teaching of vocabulary, and Pause-Ask-Pause-Review. Schoolwide AVID strategies like Philosophical Chairs and Socratic Seminar allow students the opportunity to develop their speaking and listening skills, as well as improve their capacity to build arguments and support them with evidence.

Both formative and summative assessment data help inform instruction. Formative assessments in each course are used on a regular basis to determine student mastery and assist in lesson and unit planning. Common rubrics are used to assess writing and provide feedback to students. Student SRI scores are used to select appropriate texts and ensure that all students are able to engage in the content. AP practice exams are given throughout the year to evaluate student progress and inform instruction. Summative data such as the NBRS 2019

PSAT is used to recruit students for AP World History, AP US History, AP Government, and AP Comparative Politics.

1e. For secondary schools:

DoDEA has adopted a set of clear educational standards for students across all subject areas. These College and Career Ready standards establish clear, consistent goals with the purpose of empowering students to be prepared upon graduation. In addition, VHS offers four Career and Technical Education Pathway choices for students: National Security (JROTC); Video Communications; Digital Design and Communication; Teaching as a Profession. Students are prepared for Adobe certification exams. Students can also elect to participate in the Career Work Experience program where they gain work experiences with agencies on the military post such as the Public Affairs Office, Child Development Center, and library.

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The fine arts programs use standards-based lesson planning which is implemented through the Understanding by Design learning model. Students are challenged to engage in higher order thinking through peer critiques and group critiques when examining artistic pieces and performances produced by the class. Approximately 35 percent of the student body is enrolled in a fine arts course each year. The arts help support other curricular areas by using strategies that have been adopted throughout the school. Some examples include using the top hat graphic organizer to compare and contrast and reading for meaning, and using Socratic seminars to examine articles and news about art and artists.

Students at VHS also have opportunities to participate in European Fine Arts programs. Choir and band performances bring together students from schools across the continent with opportunities to find success in both small and large ensembles. Similar programs bring visual arts and drama students together to work with professional artists and actors.

The Physical Education Department plans standards-based lessons using the Understanding by Design model. The PE department consistently collaborates with other departments to engage students in various problem solving activities. Reading and writing is supported through learning new vocabulary in conjunction with each unit, reading for meaning, as well as regular practice with the text. Approximately 50 percent of the student body is enrolled in a PE course each year. Students are challenged to create arguments and justify them with evidence from their texts. Students also set goals for each new unit and track their own progress and skill acquisition. Students take part in “30 Second Expert” activity to hone their speaking and listening skills.

Courses offered in the VHS World Language and Culture program are guided by the College and Career Ready Standards for World Languages. VHS offers Spanish and Italian as world languages, both with five levels of courses. Students acquire knowledge and language skills through immersion: world language teachers strive to hold classes in the target language over 90 percent of the class period. Approximately 50 percent of the student body is enrolled in a world language course each year. Students in world language classes also participate in exchange programs with several local Italian high schools. All students in the school engage in study trips that optimize the rich culture and heritage of Italy.

VHS supports students’ acquisition of skills and knowledge by providing the equitable physical and intellectual access to the resources and tools required for learning in a safe environment. VHS boasts a rich collection of print and digital resources for students and teachers, from current young adult fiction and nonfiction aligned to curriculum standards to online databases and e-books. The information specialist collaborates with classroom teachers with a focus on essential learning skills need for the 21st century and maintains a website of resources in order to facilitate easy access for students and teachers.

In the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathway courses, students acquire a vast array of technical skills and soft skills that are vital to everyday workplace environments. In the Video Communications Pathway, students are introduced to the concepts and equipment related to video production. Through a hands-on, project-oriented approach, students apply knowledge to filming, editing and production, lighting, audio, computer graphics, and effects to communicate effectively using the video communication medium. In the Digital Design and Communication Pathway, students learn to create, design, and produce interactive multimedia products and services. The CTE Department also includes courses in International Business and Personal Finance, both which promote the development of 21st century skills. All students at VHS are engaged in one of these courses for at least three semesters. Some students elect to focus on a particular pathway and earn a distinction related to the pathway upon graduation.

The Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program is open to high school students of all grade levels and is also considered a CTE Pathway: The National Security Pathway. The program currently includes around 80 students. JROTC teaches students character education, academic achievement, physical fitness, leadership, and diversity. JROTC cadets gain these skills through a clearly defined curriculum that is taught by two full time JROTC instructors at VHS.

3. Special Populations:

Vicenza High School students with a variety of needs have the benefit of extensive support resources. Students considered academically at risk are identified and monitored by the Student Support Team (SST) and/or Case Study Committee Team (CSC) on a weekly basis. Students have access to homework help and tutoring three times a week. Further intervention is available in the form of general education lab classes for math and reading. Students in need of medically-related accommodations are served through a 504 plan which is overseen by the school psychologist.

There are currently 39 students, or approximately 13 percent of the school population, who have an active Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Within the Special Education Department, student needs are met through a variety of avenues to match their specific learning profiles. VHS has four co-taught classes in grades 9 and 10 where students benefit from supported inclusion with two teachers of rigor, one of whom is a special education service provider. Five full-time paraprofessionals further support least restrictive placements of our students in the general education classrooms. For students with more extensive deficits, math, English, Learning Strategies, and Daily Living classes are offered in a resource or self-contained classroom. The moderate-severe teacher has developed a robust life skills and transition program through community partnerships which allow these students to have valuable, real-world learning experiences. Additionally, students with identified medical, language, and/or learning needs are provided with systemwide and general accommodations for assessment. This included access to a variety of assistive technologies, environmental modifications, and translation supports.

The diverse school population includes students with a second language influence at home. These students are enrolled in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program in order to receive support services of a qualified ESOL teacher. The ESOL site team meets quarterly to review the progress and needs of the identified students. The goal for students is acquisition of the English language and American culture while also honoring their first language and culture.

For students scoring above grade level, the school provides a robust selection of AP and honors courses. Additionally, the school has a gifted and talented coordinator who works to help teachers differentiate all classes and provide meaningful extension opportunities for more advanced students. The coordinator also monitors students that have been identified as gifted and talented.

Three achievement gaps have been identified in summative school data. Currently, the school is working to close those achievement gaps by targeting students for support opportunities and interventions. Summative test results are used to identify students for remedial math and reading lab courses. Focus Seminar classes meet three times per week and provide structured academic support for struggling students during the school day. AVID is another schoolwide program that identifies underachieving students and helps to support

learning through organization and motivation. In addition to these support classes, Professional Learning Communities identify specific strategies to support struggling students.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The positive school culture and climate stands as a strength of VHS. While this is an important element of any high school, the unique mission of supporting military-connected students living overseas intensifies this need at VHS. The school is truly at the heart of the lives of the students. As a result, the faculty places great importance on meeting the needs of the students beyond the obvious mission of academic excellence; the social and emotional growth of students are equally important. The faculty of VHS feels valued and empowered as teachers, leaders, and mentors.

Within the school day, VHS provides a seminar period where students forge connections and receive additional support from teachers. Seminar teachers monitor student progress across disciplines and work closely with seminar students to ensure their academic success. Underperforming students are identified and placed in special focus seminars, generally with a 1 to 6 student to teacher ratio, and receive targeted assistance. After-school tutoring is offered to students both by certified teachers and peers who are members of the honor societies.

The team of freshman teachers developed a Freshman Academy to help students transition from middle school. This team collaborates weekly regarding the academic and social-emotional concerns of individual students and grade-level events. Group conferences are also held with parents and students several times throughout the year. Specific initiatives implemented by this team include the obligatory planner and common classroom policies.

The VHS staff includes a host of full time counselors: Military Family Life Counselor; school psychologist; Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor; and 2 academic counselors. This team organizes a Wellness Day during the first quarter in order to raise awareness of mental health concerns and to inform students of available services both at VHS and in the community.

A diverse selection of extracurricular activities are offered to students. In addition to 16 varsity athletic teams, VHS offers over 20 other clubs and activities. VHS teachers share the responsibilities of supporting the students outside of the classroom. Some connect through coaching, others through arranging volunteer opportunities for students, and still others through the unique opportunities of travel with students. This year the MUN teacher took a group to Prague, the basketball coaches escorted teams to Bahrain, the FBLA sponsors spent a week in the Bavarian Alps with club members, the Italian teacher arranged a study trip to Milan and the school psychologist accompanied student leaders to Wiesbaden.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The innate nature of our small American Department of Defense school situated on a military post in the heart of Northern Italy facilitates cooperation among stakeholders. Teachers and school leaders work tirelessly to ensure that families and other community members remain engaged and informed with of the school through both systemic and local measures. Community members are kept abreast of the daily activities of the school through the school website, social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, and the Principal's Message which is distributed to stakeholders via email once a week.

Parents and other community leaders lead the School Advisory Council (SAC), an elected group whose objective is to advise the principal on matters deemed important by students and parents. Also a member of the SAC, the School Liaison Officer acts as a conduit of information between the school and the local military commands. The school often partners with the local military commands, to include a military police officer who is detailed to the school on a part-time basis. VHS maintains an active PTSA and Booster Club, both which support academic and extracurricular pursuits of students. The music department hosts evening concerts. Students in the AVID program team with the Army Education Center to host a College Night. Parents are often invited into the school and the administration has an "open door" policy. Parents and community volunteers are also welcomed in the school in roles as diverse as assistant wrestling

coach to FBLA co-sponsor to guest speaker in the Spanish classroom. In a small, tight-knit American community overseas, these relationships are essential to the success of the school.

A Back to School night is hosted in the fall when parents have the opportunity to meet teachers, and one day each semester is dedicated to parent teacher conferences. VHS also offers a series of course selection meetings where guidance counselors host information sessions in the evenings for parent and students: AP teachers offer a similar informational evening. Student progress is communicated through the systemic online gradebook program, Gradespeed, as well as through quarterly grade reports. Schoolwide systems are in place to identify at-risk students and to communicate with their parents in an effort to effect change. Alternatively, students who excel in both the academic and athletics realms are recognized in quarterly awards assemblies, honor society induction ceremonies and award banquets. An end-of-year awards assembly is held each June. A graduation ceremony brings the community together at the end of each year in celebration of student achievements.

3. Professional Development:

Vicenza High School is part of the Europe South District, one of eight districts in the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA). DoDEA contracts and develops systemwide professional development focused on domain specific academic standards. All staff at VHS attend these full day quarterly professional development sessions. The Europe South District Office helps to facilitate the quarterly professional development sessions and also works with individual schools to provide follow-up professional learning activities and site-specific support. Instructional Systems Specialists (ISSs) for all content areas are housed at the District Office in Vicenza, Italy. These ISSs work with schools, departments and teachers to provide ongoing personalized support based on assessment data. The VHS leadership team, consisting of teacher leaders and administrators, meets weekly to coordinate all professional development. The primary goal of the leadership team is to balance “macro” and “micro” professional learning in an effort to maximize the impact on student achievement. The “macro” professional development sessions from DoDEA and the District Office provide each department with in-depth information about content standards and also include domain specific teaching strategies. Research shows, however, that little implementation occurs when professional learning is done in this type of discrete isolated event. The leadership team at the school-level works to extend the learning from these “macro” events through ongoing “micro” professional learning sessions that take place on a weekly basis. These “micro” sessions occur in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) during early release time every Thursday afternoon. The PLCs provide teachers the opportunity to collaborate on instruction with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement. Four key elements have been adopted to help coordinate all professional learning at the district and school levels: increasing rigor; collaboration/professional learning communities; the Learning Walkthrough Tool; and DoDEA Comprehensive Assessment System

A focus on increasing rigor for all students frames the purpose of professional learning at VHS. With this focus in mind, all teachers participate in PLCs with a clear understanding that collaboration can only prove useful if it impacts instruction, and in turn, student learning. The “Learning Walkthrough Tool” is a classroom observation instrument that is used to help determine what strategies are being implemented and where future professional development activities should be focused. Ultimately, the work of professional development should lead to improved student learning. The DoDEA Comprehensive Assessment System consists of the various College and Career Ready assessments that are used to evaluate student learning. Data from these formative and summative assessments informs next steps in classroom instruction and also professional development.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy that guides Vicenza High School is one of collaboration and shared leadership and is directly related to DoDEA’s Mission statement: “Educate, engage, and empower each student to succeed in a dynamic world.” This belief in the mission is a commitment to the students and parents of the Vicenza Community, and it provides insight on exactly what the professional teaching community values. Every staff member is an integral part of the VHS team and contributes to the collective goal of helping each student succeed. The principal is cognizant of the strength of each team member and has

worked diligently to capitalize on those strengths to build a team with this collective mission and purpose in mind.

The leadership structure at VHS consists of two administrators, one administrative resource officer (ARO) and numerous teacher leaders. The ARO works logistical matters and is shared among the high school, middle school, and elementary school. The administrators visit classrooms every week and meet weekly with the teacher leader team. This team, comprised of six teachers and administration, guide the school improvement process and school level professional development. This work includes planning the weekly PLC meetings that have become a foundational part of the school's success. Additionally, a parent-led School Advisory Committee (SAC) and Student Council help shape school level decisions. The Student Council is in place for all grades, and the leaders meet routinely with the administration.

The principal, in conjunction with the counselors, tracks a D/F list every week, meeting with every student on the list and speaking with teachers and parents on ways to provide assistance and adjustments on a case-by-case basis. The primary focus of these discussions is discovering and removing barriers that would impede or prevent success. A tiered, pyramid of interventions has been established and is in use as a programmed, standardized response to any student experiencing difficulty.

The administration is highly visible every morning as students enter school and at every lunch recess, during which the administrators have the opportunity to interact with all students to maintain positive relationships and build trust with the student body. By maintaining a high level of visibility both in the classroom and at every extracurricular and athletic event, the administrators are able to monitor and model appropriate actions taking place throughout the school that are aligned with the collective mission and purpose of DoDEA and Vicenza High School.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The practice that has been most instrumental in Vicenza High School’s success is undoubtedly the school’s commitment to collaboration and continuous improvement. This culture of collaboration has developed over the last five years since VHS implemented early release time on Thursday afternoons. District and school leadership worked with the community to build support for the early release time. During the initial two years of the early release time, much of the collaboration was focused on increasing 21st Century Skills in all students. Professional development and collaboration during this time focused around Understanding by Design, Technology Integration and the use of Google Apps for Education. Tony Wagner’s “Seven 21st Century Skills” provided a common vocabulary and focus for all teachers, and these skills quickly spread to students. Over the past three years DoDEA has adopted new College and Career Ready Standards for nearly every subject area. The collaborative groundwork laid during the implementation of the 21st Century program helped to pave the way for these new standards.

The time that stakeholders have dedicated to collaboration on Thursday afternoons has been a critical component of the school’s success. Teacher leadership is the other factor that has played a vital role in the impact collaboration has made on student learning at VHS. Teacher leader training has been offered annually, to help support the development of teacher leaders and build capacity for functioning Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at VHS. These PLCs provide all teachers the opportunity to collaborate on the work of applying new strategies in the classroom with the ultimate goal of improving student learning. PLCs are currently set up in nine week cycles that allow each teacher to receive feedback on lesson plans using the Critical Friends Protocol. Specific time during these collaboration sessions is also dedicated to reviewing student work samples to evaluate the effectiveness of a lesson and inform next steps for differentiated instruction. Teacher and administrator feedback, along with use of student data, help to modify and improve collaboration time at the end of each PLC cycle.

The collaborative work accomplished in Vicenza has spread to the rest of the Europe South District. With most schools collaborating on Thursday afternoons, it has become possible to collaborate virtually between schools. As most schools in DoDEA are geographically isolated, this provides the chance for course specific collaboration throughout the Europe South District, which has schools in Italy, Spain, Turkey and Bahrain.