



## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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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

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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):
- 11 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 5 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 20 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	39	57	96
10	29	57	86
11	31	59	90
12 or higher	30	52	82
<b>Total Students</b>	129	225	354

\*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):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 4 % Asian
  - 4 % Black or African American
  - 16 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 73 % White
  - 3 % 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: 8%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	24
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	31
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	382
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.08
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0%  
1 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
One student's primary home language is Spanish.

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 28%  
Total number students who qualify: 99

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %  
10 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>0</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>0</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: 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:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	8
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 18:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	98%	97%	96%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	98%	99%	98%	97%	97%

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.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	80
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	87%
Enrolled in a community college	13%
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.

Florida SouthWestern State College's Charter Schools provide a rigorous learning environment ensuring students will achieve their greatest potential through Principles of Excellence. Building on a strong pedagogical, ethical and socially conscious foundation that fosters creativity and innovation, Florida SouthWestern State College's Charter Schools produce graduates equipped to contribute to the diverse community of life-long learners in Southwest Florida.

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

Florida SouthWestern Collegiate High School is a public charter high school. Incoming freshmen are chosen to attend by a random lottery. We invite all interested students and their families to attend a school informational session in January/February (three different ones to choose from occurring on different days of the week for convenience). Students then submit an online application and are assigned a lottery number by the end of February. We enter these lottery numbers into random.org and notify the first 115 that they have been selected. We also notify those on the waiting list of their wait list status by the middle of March. We hold an incoming freshmen orientation the week weekend of May.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Florida SouthWestern Collegiate High School (FSWC) is a public charter high school sponsored by Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW) and approved by Charlotte County Public Schools in Charlotte County, Florida. We strive to provide the opportunity for our students to earn their Associate's Degree from FSW while simultaneously working towards their High School Diploma. When our school first opened our doors in the 2009-10 school year, we were not entirely sure how we would develop an incoming high school student to be ready for full time early admission to college by the start of his/her junior year. While a random lottery opens up opportunities for all students, it proves to create a challenge in making sure applicants understand our focus. We do not screen our applicants for proficiency levels and test scores prior to the lottery so it is important that a prospective student and his/her family make an informed decision about whether the students wants to take on the academic rigor and challenge that our school requires. We have learned that communicating our clear vision and mission is absolutely critical in achieving our school goals. As we better understand the requirements and characteristics that enable our students to be successful in full time early admission, we are able to embed these expectations and strategies into our honors level courses and better prepare our students.

FSWC is in Punta Gorda, the only incorporated city of a lightly populated county in Florida. It is located at the head of Charlotte Harbor, the second largest estuary in Florida. Charlotte County has the second highest median age in Florida, due to the large number of retirees. The largest employers are the school system and the healthcare industry. Other prominent activities are fishing and agriculture. The 2018 US Census Bureau estimates the racial and ethnic composition is 90.4% White, 7.2% Hispanic or Latino, 6.1% Black or African American, and the remainder of the categories represent less than two percent. FSWC mirrors the demographic composition of the county.

We are successful at FSWC-Charlotte Campus because of the caring relationships we build with our students, the mindset of continuous improvement, and the professionalism of the faculty and staff. Although we as a school are acknowledged for being ranked in the top ten since becoming eligible to be ranked (after we completed our 2012-2012 school year), we take pride in developing the whole student and do our best to prepare them for college and life beyond. Students realize that we as a faculty and staff work hard for them – we go the extra mile for them in class and out of class. They in turn, work hard for us. To a certain extent, the students have seen the success of prior cohorts through various programs, so they know if they work, they will be successful as well.

Our educational philosophy is simple. We have a caring environment, high expectations, a student-centered approach, and a growth mindset.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts:**

Students at Florida SouthWestern Collegiate High School are required to take English Language Arts classes in their ninth and tenth grade years at the honors level in preparation for dual enrollment classes as upperclassmen. Reading, grammar, analysis and writing are stressed in the first two years. Students take the state English Language Arts assessment in both ninth and tenth grade.

In ninth grade English, the teacher is using the PEAL (Point, Evidence, Analysis, Link) strategy for generating a quality short response paragraph to a prompt. At the beginning of the Spring term, a marked improvement in the overall writing of the students was seen. Overall, students in this class raised their scores from a 1.84 average (based on a 4.00 point scale) to 2.78. There was a marked improvement across all classes after the introduction of the P.E.A.L. strategy. In tenth grade, our English teacher utilizes NoRedInk to bring grammar instruction and practice to life by blending the rules of language with student interests. Students start each concept at their level and learn at their pace, and because of this type of differentiated instruction, students not only learn grammar, they master it. In eleventh grade, Composition I and Composition II are taken as dual enrollment college courses. Composition I is a course in essay writing designed to develop skill in paragraph composition and methods of presentation. The course includes practice in critical reading and analysis of texts as well as an introduction to researching and properly documenting sources using MLA format, composing and editing an essay using a word-processing program, accessing information from the World Wide Web, and understanding the differences between electronic databases and the Web. Composition II involves advanced instruction in expository and other modes of prose writing, including the preparation and writing of a full-length research paper.

#### **1b. Mathematics:**

Each spring, we meet to plan the upcoming year's course sequencing and to schedule students individually based on multiple criteria. Students are individually placed into classes in which they can find success and growth. The sequencing is assessed and changed if necessary each year to enable this to happen. Past test scores, grades in math, overall grade point averages and habits of students who we have previously taught are all used to determine placement in either Algebra I, Algebra II, or Geometry.

In the past two years, math learning gains and math learning gains of the lowest 25% among students have increased significantly, from 57% to 88% and 52% to 92%, respectively. Also contributing to these gains are strategies implemented to improve Geometry End of Course (EOC) scores. Last year, the Geometry teacher implemented continuous recall of past material, including Algebra. Repetition of skills was included in new daily bell work, homework, vocabulary quizzes, chapter reviews and chapter tests. Each day, students complete a problem and every student now works one out on the board on Fridays, when they are all reviewed together. With these changes, our Geometry EOC passing rate has increased from 84% to 96%, including Level 2 scores decreasing from 16% to 1% and Level 5 scores have increasing from 39% to 48%. In the upcoming school year, we are offering College Algebra to sophomores for the first time.

We noticed that many of our accelerated freshmen who are interested in a STEM career path scored exceptionally high on the college entrance exam for mathematics. We have acknowledged that we need to provide resources and scheduling for our accelerated students and we believe this course offering addresses this need. While textbooks are available, students use an online program, MathXL, to complete the majority of their homework and review. This is aligned with a college level program, My Math Labs Plus, which is used in many of the college level classes. The program allows students to work through guided examples or watch a video when struggling with a problem. Students must qualify for dual enrollment classes as upperclassmen through testing and grade point average qualifications. Students are required to take a minimum of two college level math classes.

### **1c. Science:**

For most of the history of the school we have offered Honors Biology then Honors Chemistry. Once at the college, students had nearly a dozen science course options. In the high school Honors biology course, the teacher has begun to infuse Socio-scientific issues into the curriculum, holding student-led debates, among other activities. Students were assigned a side to a controversial topic in biology that may have no one correct answer. A unique feature of the science curricula in our school would be the teachers who were scientists, active in their respective fields, before becoming teachers. The teachers who also held advanced degrees in their fields, would bring their own experiences to share with the students. They realized the teachers were experts in their fields as well as accomplished teachers. They are able to bring the real world into the course material using a combination of modeling and other active learning strategies in conjunction with direct instruction and independent research.

Our science teachers coordinate with the college professors to ensure our students would be adequately prepared. As a testament to the success of our students, nearly half were able to pass a chemistry placement test to bypass the college's Introduction to Chemistry and go directly to Chemistry I. Data are used in a proactive way in addition to formative and summative manners. Discussions and student presentations were also used to root out misconceptions. Teachers use guided questioning and answer questions with another question to guide the students to an understanding of the concept. For the Honors Biology course where the pace has to be very brisk, lessons are recorded and posted to the Canvas web site for review. Students can then come with questions if they still needed help.

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

Our freshman Social Studies teacher employs a very effective strategy for students to develop key academic skills that includes the ability to track the quality and progress of their knowledge and skills as they grow. Students in World History Honors are taught how to produce a concise, content-driven response to each component of multi-part "free response questions." This ability is at the heart of most written scholarly work and is a key skill for the future success of every student. The teacher gives continuous instruction on how to break down questions in to their component parts and how to identify and organize the content most suited to each part of the question.

The US History Honors course has a content-dense curriculum and a state adopted end of course exam. It is only offered at the honors level on our campus. In order to explore the volume of material while simultaneously growing our students' academic capabilities, it became necessary for the students to have a resource they could use to guide their work, plan and budget their time, and monitor progress in competing their assignments. The teacher provides for his students a weekly outline/schedule for the coming week's lessons, projects, and assignments. These outlines spell out each day's lesson, the key topics, and any assigned activity, e.g., reading, or homework for each day. These outlines provide a level of organization in advance that gives students the ability to see what is coming for each day of the following week and to plan their time accordingly. Students can easily see if they are meeting their academic challenges and requirements. At the college level, students must pass Economics and Government and may take a variety of other Social Science classes as their schedule and interests allow.

### **1e. For secondary schools:**

As the focus at FSWC is to be fully dual enrolled as an upperclassman, all core classes in ninth and tenth grade are taught at the Honors level. Students must have an unweighted gpa of 3.0 and required test scores to qualify for early college admission to our college sponsor, Florida SouthWestern State College. Our upperclassmen are well prepared for college courses. In 2018, 72% of the senior class graduated with a two-year college degree and the projection for 2018 is 80%. Graduates who have not completed the two-year degree have still completed at least a year of college classes.

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

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

FSWC has an extraordinary capacity to engage learners through multiple avenues that not only increase student content knowledge but also provide these learners the opportunity to develop intangible skills that are embodied in our Buc PRIDE, school core values. Together the knowledge and skills the students acquire give them the ability to be successful at the college level and in their chosen career paths. We demonstrate this capacity in the following ways: active engagement, minimally disruptive behavior, data and feedback driving change, and community involvement. We offer elective courses in the areas of arts, physical education, foreign language, technology, and career/life skills.

Chorus is offered as an elective to freshmen and sophomores. Students learn to work together to prepare music with up to 6-part harmony to be performance ready. In the process, students learn the importance of practice and constructive criticism as well as how to read music, hear harmonies, use dynamics and appreciate multiple musical forms.

Students in Florida are required to take Health Opportunities in Physical Education (HOPE). Any freshman who enters FSWC without this credit is enrolled in a HOPE class. Weight Training is also offered as an elective for freshmen and sophomores. Students must be actively engaged in class and perform physical activities three to five times a week. Students learn how to care for both their physical and emotional needs in this class in the hopes of beginning habits to support a healthy lifestyle.

Currently Spanish is offered at the college during students' junior and senior years. If an incoming freshman has taken Spanish in the eighth grade, they may get approval to continue the sequence with Spanish II online. Beginning next year, FSWC will offer and encourage students to take Spanish during their freshman and sophomore years in order to ensure the caliber of teaching and to give students daily exposure to the language over an entire year.

Students may take Digital Information Technology in their freshman or sophomore year. Students in this class have the opportunity to prepare for and take Microsoft Certification Exams such as Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Outlook, and Access. Florida SouthWestern Collegiate High School's Personal Career and School Development Skills Curriculum (PCS) exemplifies our school's ability to facilitate students' development of self-efficacy providing engagement opportunities for learners. The students' growth is multidimensional and the benefits from this course are realized by all stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, and parents). PCS has become an increasingly important class helping to improve student learning outcomes, and these skills are continually practiced throughout the year. We identified a need amongst students – to develop and practice “soft skills” with peers before undertaking fulltime dual enrollment. In PCS, students are taught how to effectively collaborate and utilize communication skills, develop critical thinking skills, embrace 7 Habits, mindfulness, and the power of a positive mindset. PCS is also the class in which the school counselor presents critical information about mental health, depression, bullying, suicide, as well as college and career planning. Although we infuse these concepts and reinforce these skills in core courses, we deem these skills as being so critical to student success that they warrant a dedicated course.

## **3. Special Populations:**

FSWC has positioned itself as a leader in promoting “high expectations” within our district and the state. We were the first public charter high school in Southwest Florida. Our vision was and is to help high school students achieve fulltime dual enrollment, creating the opportunity to simultaneously earn their associate's degree and high school diploma. We created our school with open enrollment through a random lottery to give all students the chance at two years of free college. Many times, we are asked why there are not application requirements related to academic achievement such as test scores or grade point averages. Interestingly, students prove to us again and again that they can rise to higher expectations if given the academic support and strategies needed to succeed. It is a constant balancing act to give students what they need and maintain the rigor of all honors courses in preparation for early college admissions. However, as long as the students have the motivation to work, we provide the resources for them to be successful.

We use a Monitor Progress toward Dual Enrollment form that allows students to review their grades in real-

time and implement work and study strategies before grades are finalized at the end of the marking period. In this way, students can target areas for improvement and get back on the path to success and dual enrollment. Monitoring is performed on a regular basis in a Grade 9/10 elective class as well as during student and parent meetings. We also have a grade reporting data system, Focus, that allows students and parents to see their grades in real-time. Most of our faculty use an online learning platform, such as Canvas, to share resources with students for enrichment or re-teaching. Students can communicate directly with faculty through these online tools or through a messaging app such as Remind.

We have recently implemented the student-directed parent conference. With this type of meeting, the student prepares a form addressing why the student believes he or she is having difficulties in classes. The student is encouraged to develop strategies and study habits that will lead to better results. Suggestions are made by teachers and parents but ultimately agreed to and written down by the student. Follow up meetings are held to monitor progress.

We have a part-time math tutor who is available three days a week during and after school to provide tutoring to students. Additionally, teachers are available for tutoring after school. In the classroom, teachers build relationships with students and the students respond by engaging in learning. Teachers use a variety of teaching styles and lessons to encourage engagement. Assessments are used to monitor progress. Test repair is offered in some classes when an assessment shows students struggled with a concept.

In addition to the above strategies that we use to help students who struggle, we also offer opportunities for our gifted students to achieve maximum growth. Almost every single teacher has a master's degree and each is very knowledgeable in her or his field, so we have the ability to provide additional depth to the content we deliver. High achievers are challenged through Project Based Learning, student-led research, and flexible ways to demonstrate content mastery. Some class assignments, e.g., in science, are interdisciplinary in nature and prompt the students to think beyond the science content, as well as how the scientific activities affect society. These assignments are controversial in nature and do not have one single correct answer, so they help students develop their own moral and ethical compasses. Other teachers will have students roll-play different characters in history or literature, composing their own scripts based on research they conduct and present them live or via video recordings, which allows differentiation of the assignments according to student abilities and motivation. Through this we challenge the high-achievers, while still providing appropriate rigor to those that struggle. In implementing these strategies and many others, teachers constantly meet the needs of the special populations at FSWC.

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

At the start of the 2015-16 school year, we introduced our school's "Buc Brand" which represents the core values of social intelligence, zest, gratitude, curiosity, self-control, grit, and optimism that our staff believes will lead to students being successful at our school. Posters were made with a definition of each character trait and distributed around the school. The traits were mentioned by all teachers and the terminology began to be used by staff. In 2016, we started a Peer Mentorship program that has grown and expanded to be a valuable program helping students transition from middle school to high school. Our upperclassmen (juniors and seniors) volunteer to serve during the entire school year. On the very first day of school, we suspend classes during the morning before lunch to teach our freshmen about our "Buc Brand". We have student mentors describe a trait and then tell how implementing that trait had helped them succeed. The mentors then put together a couple of skits on time management and school rules/expectations. We play team-building games to show our freshmen that we work together and support one another. Our mentors visit a ninth grade elective class each month and talk about different topics that will help them succeed in high school including academic, social, and emotional topics.

This year, as a staff, we developed a school-wide positive behavior support system centered on our core values. We want to help students make connections between our core values and the behavioral expectations that create a safe and warm school culture for all students. We call this our "Buc PRIDE" program and staff members recognize students on a weekly and monthly basis when they see a student demonstrating these core values. We ask our students to show us their "Buc PRIDE" by demonstrating: P = Passion and Curiosity for Learning; R = Respect and Kindness towards Others; I = Integrity and Ethical Decision Making; D = Determination and Grit While Working on Long Term Goals; and E = Excellence in Academic Achievement. This program has led to a decrease in disciplinary referrals by over 60% this school year. In response to verbalized parent concerns regarding academic stress and strain, we started a "TNT" Club (Teens Needing Teens). A small group of mentors with strong communication skills meet with students who are feeling overburdened during their lunch or elective periods to offer peer support.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Here at FSWC, we strive to involve all of our stakeholders from the moment a student is considering attending here to post graduation. We host mandatory informational sessions for potential applicants and their families to minimize any misunderstanding or confusion among incoming families about our school. During these informational sessions, the rigor and academic expectations of FSWC are clearly outlined by our faculty. We also encourage current students and parents to speak to the attendees about the expectations and benefits of attending FSWC. Sharing student and parent perspectives has had a strong impact on new families and shows them that we are a community of shared partners. Examples of student work and course syllabi are also shared at the informational session to offer prospective students and families insight into the level of academic commitment required for success at the school. We have reinvented the traditional "Open House" at FSWC. For the past five years, we have invited parents to spend an evening in the shoes of their student. They rotate through an abbreviated class schedule and our teachers present a 10 to 12-minute content-relevant lesson with parents in the role of the student. This shows parents the instructional style of each teacher and allows them to better identify and understand the academic expectations required of their child. We have found this to be extremely well attended and parents tell us that it is so much better than being herded from room to room only to be handed a syllabus and class supply list and then pushed along to the next room. We also feel that this helps us build a relationship with parents that helps when the need to communicate in the future occurs. Our students are very active in the community through community service projects, internships, and local events. We encourage our stakeholders to be involved in our school. We hold monthly parent and community meetings to share our student objectives and upcoming events. We ask students to present to this group what they are currently working on in their classes and bring samples of projects. This keeps our stakeholders informed and creates a climate of shared governance. We have utilized this group in many educational tasks such as coming in

to “mock” interview our students. This has been a great way for them to be involved and it certainly helps our students develop their interviewing skills.

### **3. Professional Development:**

When FSWC faculty are interested in participating in professional development, they are encouraged to do so. They are often the only person teaching a specific subject in our small high school so it is important for them to network with other teaching professionals and learn from others outside of our building. We support their membership in professional organizations and pay for one year of membership for each faculty member to the professional organization of their choice. In addition, we encourage faculty to attend and present at professional conferences. Our faculty currently averages over thirty hours of professional development this school year. They have presented and attended many reputable conferences this school year such as the Florida Charter Schools Conference, the Florida School Counselor Association Conference, and the Florida Council for Teachers of Mathematics.

The level of support given to faculty in their professional development needs certainly impacts instruction here at FSWC and provides for more engaging classrooms with varied teaching strategies. For example, one of our faculty members attended and presented at the American Evaluation Association’s annual international conference and returned with updated means of sharing outcomes from data collection that he shared with his students preparing for Science Fair. Each of our students’ projects were enhanced as a result of this professional development and one student earned the opportunity to compete at the state level with his project. Another faculty member gained updated knowledge about youth mental health issues and suicide prevention that she returned to campus with and created classroom presentations and handouts for students. This professional development is not only directly related to her position here as a School Counselor but also supported curriculum required in several of our freshmen level courses.

All employees are able to access a wide variety of professional development training offered in person and online in areas of instructional strategies, technology integration, and personal development offered by our charter school sponsor, Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW) through their Teaching and Learning Center. FSW additionally offers tuition reimbursement for undergraduate and graduate courses which is very uncommon for educators throughout Southwest Florida. Additional opportunities for professional development are offered via Charlotte County Public Schools through their Professional Development Center. Our teachers can participate in all professional development opportunities offered by the school district and often take full advantage of in-service opportunities related to certification renewal.

### **4. School Leadership:**

We practice the “Leader-Leader” model at Florida SouthWestern Collegiate High School (FSWC). While our school Principal serves as an instructional or organizational leader, our teachers take ownership of their roles here and set the example for true facilitative leadership. Our weekly faculty meetings are collaborative work sessions. Every teacher feels that their opinions are valued and that everyone has a voice in decisions affecting our school. Our meetings have an agenda, distributed prior to each meeting, and everyone is encouraged to bring their thoughts and ideas about the items that will be discussed. When changes are made, new things attempted, our faculty has buy-in because everyone has a voice and we truly collaborate.

Our teachers are given autonomy within their classes. Our test scores continue to lead the county and consistently put us in the top 3% statewide. Our Principal not only allows teachers, but really encourages teachers to try different strategies within the classroom. She tells teachers to “Get out of your box and find new ways to challenge our students”. This support allows teachers to try new ideas and not fear failure.

Each month, our school holds an evening meeting for parents and community members. With this group, we discuss our school objectives and upcoming events. This focus group provides feedback on how we are doing as a school community. We ask students from each department to present recent topics and sample projects during these meetings so our stakeholders understand what is happening in our classrooms.

There is a high correlation between strong relationships and student success. Many educational leaders do not place enough value on effective teacher-student relationships. The leadership at our school encourages teachers to take the time and develop strategies to really get to know our students and show them we care about them.

Many of our staff publish journal articles and speak statewide and nationally in the areas of their expertise. Our school leader takes measures to support these activities that help our faculty further develop their leadership skills by supporting these opportunities.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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We at Florida SouthWestern Collegiate High School (FSWC) are often asked what makes our students achieve such a high level of success. Many other educators and parents ask us what makes us “different and better” than other schools. We feel that without a doubt it is due to our emphasis on each individual student. We know that they come to us as freshmen with varied levels of academic, social, and emotional maturity. We strive to offer opportunities for our students to develop their critical thinking skills through rigorous coursework. We challenge them by often asking “why?” and “what do you think?” We know that we are pushing students beyond their comfort level in diverse ways whether it be academically, socially, or personally. We engage them in deliberate ways to get them to work with one another and supporting each other. We utilize project based learning in many courses and seek ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and not just recite information. We have learned that sharing our philosophy and approach to learning is critical for students to make an informed decision about entering our random lottery for admission.

We invite upcoming freshmen on a Saturday before school starts to attend a school orientation session. It is at this meeting that any summer assignments are dispersed to students. While we try to make this orientation fun and exciting by having student mentors lead ice-breaker and team-building games, we also make it understood that self-directed learning and intrinsic motivation will be needed by students. Our teachers make their contact information known to new students and their parents as we begin to build what we hope to be a strong relationship with students and their families.

As our students progress and become eligible for full-time early admission to college, we understand that college policies and procedures need to be understood by students and families. We hold student meetings during the school day and invite parents to an evening meeting to share important information such as reviewing our school goals, diploma and degree designations, course selections, lunch options, transportation options, and most importantly the college readiness characteristics that have shown to lead to success towards the achievement of their Associate’s Degree. We ask the students to self-reflect and use their reflections as a basis for goal-setting and designed student specific strategies that may need development.