

U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Dr. Karim Shortridge

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Clarksville Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 6535 South Trotter Road

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Clarksville MD 21029-1204
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Howard County

Telephone (410) 313-7057

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E-mail karim_shortridge@hcpss.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Michael Martirano

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail superintendent@hcpss.org

District Name Howard County Public Schools System Tel. (410) 313-6600

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Ms. Mavis Ellis

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

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):
 - 42 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 20 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 12 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

74 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	134	87	221
7	107	137	244
8	103	110	213
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	344	334	678

*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
 - 42 % Asian
 - 6 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 44 % White
 - 5 % 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: 3%

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	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	560
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Chinese, Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 3%
Total number students who qualify: 21

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %
22 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>6</u> Autism | <u>1</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>7</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>2</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	30
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	15
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school 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 23:1

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	97%	97%	97%	97%	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 2018.

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. 2006

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

Our mission is to be a world-class middle school, preparing our students for a global 21st century society.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Clarksville Middle School (CMS) is located in a rapidly growing suburban area in the Baltimore-Washington, DC corridor. The school primarily serves a planned community with mixed housing, cultural diversity, and a central village concept. The student body and staff of CMS reflect the cultural and religious diversity of the neighborhood: the nearly 50% minority population represents Asian, African, and South American countries, and all major religious faiths. In addition, many minority students are bilingual. The diverse population at CMS presents numerous opportunities for cultural enrichment, including multi-cultural nights, guest speakers, and increased parental involvement. The addition of 140 students this year due to redistricting has given CMS more opportunities for family and community engagement including open houses, parent information sessions, and team-building field trips for students and parents. CMS families highly value education, and partnering with them creates a safe, nurturing, and academically challenging environment for students as they navigate through a world-class middle school experience.

CMS is especially proud of its tradition of community service as student-led projects have sought to meet the needs of others. Harvest Fest and School's Out Summer Lunch food drives have supported the Howard County Food Bank for 20+ years.. Food on the 15th is a monthly grocery delivery by students to senior citizens. Students have made blankets for hospitalized children through Project Linus, cleaned up the Chesapeake Bay, created reading kits for the Ronald McDonald House, conducted coat drives, collected toiletries for a local shelter and hurricane victims, and hosted "senior proms" for senior citizens. The staff has received numerous recognitions, including several National Board Certification achievements, a Washington Post Outstanding Educator award, Counselor of the Year awards, and outstanding county teacher awards. Performing Arts groups consistently earn top ratings at adjudications. Other traditions include an annual school play, Hoops for Heart, and spirit days.

Multiple key strategies encourage and challenge all students to develop their full potential at CMS. The committed and knowledgeable staff goes above and beyond for students before, during, and after class. Teachers and students utilize Canvas, an online learning management system that gives students and parents 24/7 access to classroom materials, due dates, and updated grades. Canvas allows teachers to differentiate instruction and facilitates communication between students, teachers, and parents. Before and after school programs including study sessions, Homework Club, and Beyond School Hours for math and reading offer additional academic assistance to students struggling or in need of one-on-one assistance. Partnerships between classroom teachers and the library media specialist and Gifted and Talented (GT) teacher enrich instruction and increase rigor.

CMS offers students many opportunities to engage emotionally, physically, socially and culturally. All students are encouraged to develop their own unique talents and interests through seminars on various topics, Makerspace activities in the library media center, and multiple performing arts ensembles. Other activities open to students include a variety of academic and athletic intramurals, grade level team-building field trips, school publications including newspaper and memory book, student government, CyberPatriots, and TV studio crews. Small group sessions offered by the School Counseling office provide students an opportunity to share concerns with counselors and peers in a safe setting. The CMS Culture Committee focuses on bringing staff and students together as a community around social norms and celebration of culture. The once weekly Comet Time offers students the opportunity to receive remediation and/or intervention in all of their core subject areas; students can also use the time to engage in enrichment and extension activities.

Receiving the National Blue Ribbon School Award in 2006 served as a springboard for CMS to continue on a path of excellence in a changing educational environment. Maryland's adoption of the Common Core (CC) in 2011 saw a shift in Howard County's curriculum and instruction. Members of the CMS staff worked on several areas of the county's CC curriculum development, presented at professional development workshops, and supported colleagues within the building. Professional development initiatives at CMS have included StrengthsFinder for both teachers and students, individualized PD like Clarksville U, and the current Professional Learning Communities. Teacher evaluation has moved to the Danielson Framework for Learning; teachers work with administrators to develop Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) to measure and

verify student knowledge and skills.

Three changes in administration in 13 years have brought challenges that resulted in renewed energy and purpose. The move from MSPAP to MAP and PARCC revealed that CMS students can consistently meet high academic standards on high stakes assessments.

Clarksville Middle School fosters an atmosphere that embraces student values with a world view of citizenship and provides an exceptional learning experience for students. CMS continues to be a safe and nurturing environment in which students' needs come first, teachers and staff are valued, and community support is welcomed.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

CMS follows the curriculum provided by the Howard County Board of Education, which focuses on enhancing reading, writing, and speaking skills throughout the school year. Grade level curriculum is divided into three thematic units that explore fiction and nonfiction literature through the reading and interpreting of diverse media, poems, short stories, and novels. Each grade includes two levels of instruction: on grade level (regular) and above grade level/gifted and talented (GT), so that instruction can be differentiated to better meet the needs of the students. All students maintain writing portfolios to show growth as strategic writers. Teachers use scores from state and national assessments (MAP and PARCC) to better align instruction with the current needs of the students. Classroom experiences are enriched through guest author visits, participation in local and national spelling bees, a Shakespeare residency, field trips to local theaters, a Book Madness reading challenge, local author seminars, writing contests, and partnership programs with the public library.

The Secondary Reading Programs focus on producing strategic, independent readers through the implementation of a rigorous curriculum that aligns with the College and Career Readiness Standards. The Innovation and Inquiry Middle School Reading program is designed to prepare school system graduates for success in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs. In addition, CMS provides support for students at all grade levels who struggle with decoding or comprehension through reading seminar courses. The reading specialist assesses and determines the appropriate placement for these students and provides daily instruction in small group settings of three to six students. Students who require comprehension support are enrolled in Reading Seminar C.

1b. Mathematics:

Teaching and learning in mathematics at CMS is based on the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Principles to Actions: Eight Practices for Teaching and Learning and works in conjunction with NCTM's Equity Practices in teaching the Maryland State Standards in Mathematics for College and Career Readiness. Recently, CMS adopted the new Open Up Resources curriculum, which provides high-quality, equitable instruction to all students.

The department's core values for teaching mathematics include a dedication to problem-solving with opportunities to support and engage students as they grapple with mathematical ideas and relationships; students make connections among mathematical representations to deepen understanding of concepts and procedures. The math team employs practices of collaborative planning, common assessments, and scoring protocols to ensure all students are provided with exemplary equitable instruction in all mathematics courses.

Students are supported at all levels of instruction through the mathematics courses at CMS. Classes range from Math 6, an on grade-level course for 6th graders, to AP Statistics, an accelerated mathematics program for Gifted and Talented learners through the Howard County Public School System. A Beyond School Hours intervention program provides extended small-group instruction for any student struggling in any level of mathematics. The goal for teaching and learning in mathematics at CMS is to provide opportunities for students to develop an understanding and appreciation of the significant role of mathematics in the world around them.

1c. Science:

The science curriculum at CMS centers on project-based inquiry addressing the essential questions and performance expectations identified within the Next Generation Science Standards. Students investigate Disciplinary Core Ideas and Crosscutting Concepts while developing skills in Science and Engineering

Practices in the context of addressing challenges and answering questions about the world around them. Students discover earth science (6th grade), life science (7th grade) and physical science (8th grade) in a tiered approach by exploring real-world questions and challenges, researching, investigating, experimenting, gathering evidence, and forming explanations.

Students regularly engage in asking scientific questions that drive their investigations, leading to an increasingly sophisticated analysis of data and understanding. Students collaborate with others and share what they have learned in a variety of ways. Formative assessment probes based on the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) research are used to identify skill gaps and misconceptions. Assessment data from PARCC and MISA tests are used to identify and develop student learning objectives (SLOs).

Various technologies such as probeware, simulations, Noodle Tools, databases, and other internet resources are utilized. Courses are managed through Canvas, which allows students to access instruction, submit work, receive feedback and monitor progress in multiple ways including video, audio and text, allowing opportunities for differentiated instruction. The Thermal Protection System Design Challenge (6th grade), Howard County Conservancy Stream and Habitat Restoration Project (7th grade) and the Packaging Design Challenge (8th grade) provide gifted and talented differentiation.

Multiple programs have provided enrichment, community involvement, and mentorship, including Lego Robotics, Drones, CyberPatriots, Science Olympiad, Engineering with Little Bits, NSTA/Toshiba ExploraVision Competition, and Green School. CMS students have received many recognitions, distinctions and awards through these programs. For example, they presented at the Maryland Watershed Summit having collected and contributed biotic and abiotic stream health data to state databases.

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

The social studies team at CMS focuses on incorporating theories of geographic and historical reasoning within the content of the curriculum. Relevant primary and secondary sources are used to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills in both general and gifted and talented classrooms. The curriculum aligns with the Maryland State Social Studies Curriculum as well as the National Council for the Social Studies-College, Career and Civic Life (C3) framework.

In 6th and 7th grades, students study world geography and world cultures in a program that spans two years. They develop an understanding of geographic and cultural issues and gain an appreciation of cultures different from their own. CMS 8th grade students study United States history up to the Civil War. Students analyze historical evidence to better understand the role of majority and minority groups in various historical events. Instruction is geared to the individual learner and is differentiated based on the level of students as determined by standardized test data, results on assessments, and teacher feedback.

Opportunities are provided for all students to participate in extracurricular programs that enhance students' social studies experience. Over 150 eighth grade students participate in the rigorous and long-range National History Day research project, learning various research skills through partnerships with the GT teacher and the library media specialist. Developing skills in thesis writing, in-text citing, annotated bibliographies, and media literacy will serve students in high school and beyond. CMS students regularly advance beyond the county and state NHD events to compete at the national level. All CMS students also have the opportunity to compete in both the National Geography and History Bees, where they consistently move on to competitions at the county and state level.

1e. For secondary schools:

Clarksville Middle School is committed to delivering rigorous instruction that is grounded in the Common Core State Standards. These internationally benchmarked standards were designed to prepare all students for college and career success in the 21st century.

In ELA and Reading the curriculum is divided into three thematic units that explore fiction and nonfiction

literature through the reading and interpreting of diverse media, poems, short stories, and novels. Teachers engage students in critical thinking and analysis of the various texts through discussion, debate and writing. Likewise, Math instruction is steeped in strategies of problem-solving. Students are engaged with math tasks that simulate real-life scenarios. Both Science and Social Studies engages students in research simulation and engagement in critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The art program at CMS challenges students in grades 6, 7 and 8 through developmentally appropriate art experiences informed by the HCPSS Visual Arts Curriculum. Artwork produced by students in class is featured in school, local, and statewide exhibits. Students have the opportunity to engage in an after-school open art studio to explore and pursue their own interests in a self-paced environment; the Artists in Action seminar plans and creates permanent art installments throughout the building. Students who excel are eligible for advanced placement in high school.

CMS's music department features two-thirds of the school's student body in nine large performance ensembles: three choirs, three bands, and three orchestras. These award-winning ensembles consistently receive the highest ratings at county, state, and national performances. Beyond the large ensembles at CMS, students also have the opportunity to perform in smaller chamber ensembles, a school musical, and a challenging General Music class that allows them to continue their musical development beyond the curriculum set forth by the county and state.

The Family and Consumer Science Curriculum prepares students for life by providing opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for living in a diverse global society. The program provides authentic learning experiences in three core areas of study: Nutrition, Food and Preparation, and Financial Literacy. The financial literacy component teaches students strategies to create, build, and protect wealth. Students learn how to effectively manage their money and make healthy food choices.

CMS students can begin the CMS World Language curriculum by taking French or Spanish in the 7th grade. They continue in 8th grade to complete Level One of the county world language curriculum. Ninety-nine percent of students complete the course and earn one high school credit. Students engage in authentic performance tasks in order to build meaningful and spontaneous target language production. Ninety percent of teacher input is in the target language with the goal of student output also reaching that level. CMS students are thus prepared to continue into Level Two in ninth grade.

Through the library media program at CMS, students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades, in conjunction with classroom teachers, develop and refine the skills needed to become effective users of information in high school, college and beyond. Vertically aligned research skills based on the American Association of School Librarians National School Library Standards are taught through a variety of curricula. Students strategically explore and evaluate digital and text sources; inquire, reflect and read for a variety of purposes; and ethically document sources. Students use a range of communication tools and information resources such as NoodleTools, G-Suite, and Weebly to research and create collaborative and independent projects on topics ranging from heat shields to National History Day. Through monthly reading initiatives and Makerspace opportunities, students build confidence, grow their imagination, and develop creativity and problem-solving skills.

Through Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education at CMS, children study the scope of technology, research elements of technological design, and problem solve on a daily basis. Students' skills build, beginning in 6th grade with discovering effective means to communicate ideas and document the development of design plans. In 7th and 8th grade, students learn how criteria, constraints and processes affect designs by working individually and collaboratively on engineering design activities. Through practical minds-on/hands-on experiences, students learn how technology, innovation, design, and

engineering interrelate and are relevant in school and society.

The CMS physical education program nurtures the whole child. Students participate in PE every other day, year round, in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. Students are provided a space to develop critical motor skills, apply cognitive strategies, and practice healthy habits. The CMS physical education program sponsors a curriculum of games/sports, fitness/fitnessgram, dance/rhythms, and individual performance, with daily goals to encourage vigorous exercise.

The National Health Education Standards form the framework for the CMS Health Education curriculum in grades 6, 7 and 8. This skill-based curriculum provides students with the opportunity to develop health knowledge, analyze influences, access valid information, communicate, set goals, make decisions, and advocate for themselves, in a safe and supportive environment. Health is a critical component of a student's education as it empowers him or her to make choices that will shape a healthier lifestyle that will enable academic success.

3. Special Populations:

The unique learning profiles of diverse learners at CMS are met with quality instruction that encompasses rigor and engaging learning opportunities. Individualized supports are carefully identified and provided to assure that students have equitable access to the curriculum. The GT, ESOL and Special Education departments work collaboratively with general education staff members to provide individualized instruction that meets and challenges students at their instructional level while still ensuring high academic expectations for all students.

Gifted and talented students, like other special groups in the school population, possess unique abilities, interests, and needs which can be addressed only through differentiating the regular curriculum and designing specialized programs and courses. CMS strives to develop programs and schedules that serve not only students who are intellectually gifted or excel in specific academic fields, but also those students who excel in creativity, the arts, or leadership. Dedicated high level courses and seminars based on interest, such as film, debate, leadership, social activism, art, television production, writer's workshop, and book club, are offered. Before and after school academic opportunities include a Math competition team, Academic Bowl, and CyberPatriots Team. The goal of gifted education at CMS is to identify and serve gifted and talented students from all cultural groups, across all economic levels, and in all areas of human interest.

The Special Education department at CMS serves a diverse group of exceptional students. Since each student's needs are unique, providing a variety of accommodations and modifications is essential so they can access their academics. General education teachers and special education staff that includes teachers, paraeducators, student assistants, a speech pathologist, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, an adaptive physical education teacher, a behavior specialist, a school psychologist, and a vision and hearing specialist work together to level the playing field. Assistive technology, reading and math programs, and specialized instruction are provided as needed to students to close the gap to be on grade level. Co-teaching takes place in all areas of academics at CMS and allows exceptional students to participate and learn alongside their same age peers. Teachers, staff, students, parents, and the community work together to help facilitate the best possible learning opportunities for all.

The ESOL Program at CMS provides highly individualized and effective academic support to ELL students. The content area teachers and ESOL teacher work collaboratively to communicate high expectations to the ELL population. There is a strong respect for a diversity of cultures at CMS, and the instruction is interactive and meaningful to the students. ESOL parents are valued and encouraged to participate in the education of their children.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Ensuring the academic, social, and emotional growth of our students is a priority at CMS. To that end, several protocols and programs are in place that engage and motivate students. Engagement begins with knowing students and creating a welcoming climate; teachers greet students as they enter the building and at their classroom doors. During the first week of school, teachers dedicate time for students to learn about each other in a small-group setting, and those activities carry throughout the year through service learning, cultural nights, and team-building events.

CMS piloted Student Voice, a program that identifies practices for building genuine relationships among students, staff, and faculty. Student leaders facilitate sessions in conjunction with administrators and staff to elicit student input for school improvement.

Grade-wide field trips are another vehicle for developing relationships among students and teachers. The 6th grade participates in Outdoor Ed, a three-day overnight program designed for students new to the building to get to know each other right from the start of middle school. The 7th and 8th grade students spend the day at a local outdoor ropes course engaging in team-building and role-playing activities.

Students in need of academic support are invited to attend the twice weekly after-school Homework Club to receive assistance from high school students and CMS teachers. Beyond School Hours (BSH) programs in math and English provide academic interventions and supports during 30-minute before-school sessions, three days per week, to assist students with demonstrated gaps in skills or content knowledge.

All CMS students participate in Comet Time (CT), a weekly 35-minute period where they choose among a variety of opportunities that best serve their academic, social, and emotional needs, such as extra tutoring from teachers, collaborating on group assignments, or participating in interest groups, seminars, support groups, or school clubs. All teachers are assigned or sponsor a Comet Time group, thus contributing to the program's success.

The CMS staff is valued through a longstanding history of shared ownership and commitment to the mission and vision of the school. Trust and transparency are created by empowering teachers to lead committees and school improvement initiatives, giving them a voice in making decisions and allowing them to thrive in a supportive and healthy environment. Staff is afforded a wide latitude of creative license and autonomy to operate within county guidelines. Scheduled common planning time ensures that teachers have opportunities during the day for ongoing collaboration.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

CMS believes strongly in valuing and connecting with students' families and the larger community. A shared partnership amongst all CMS stakeholders is not only necessary but also fundamentally crucial to the success and well-being of every child.

CMS has a strong and active PTA that seeks to serve and represent all student groups in the school. This partnership has a culture of working collaboratively with administration and teachers to support the mission and vision of not only the school, but also the community. CMS administrators and teachers attend every meeting to provide monthly updates on academic achievements and initiatives. That communication is not one way; the PTA's voice is heard at the school's weekly leadership meetings, which the leadership team then uses to make informed decisions that consider all of CMS' stakeholders.

Parents are invited to be active committee members on academic, cultural, social, emotional, and facility related teams. Howard County is surrounded by a wealth of cutting-edge industry, technology, and government jobs, which provides Clarksville with the opportunity to call on its community for academic partnerships. Teachers and administrators routinely call on parents to share their expertise from the field to provide students with real-world accounts and expertise. These range from working for the World Health

Organization in Ebola-stricken areas of Africa to TED-type talks from a NASA aerospace architect.

CMS believes strongly in ensuring that the community's culture is alive and visible within the school building. The CMS Culture Club is a student-led club that partners with the community to provide rich cultural experiences throughout the year. The annual Cultural Night highlights the community's diverse ethnicities and cultures through fashion, food, music, and dance. This partnership is a clear example of student voice and community voice at work.

The environmental quality of the school building is an often overlooked aspect of students' health and well-being. CMS, in partnership with the Howard County Central Office, conducts two Indoor Environmental Quality walkthroughs, which include parents and students. The collaboration promotes transparency and partnership within the school community.

The last and arguably most important example of community partnership is the School Improvement Team. CMS is strongly committed to partnering with parents and the community on school improvement initiatives. Parents and community members take an active role in reviewing school data, analyzing school improvement targets, and helping CMS carry out the key initiatives needed to move the school forward on its school improvement plan.

3. Professional Development:

Howard County's district-wide call to action invites staff to, "Be somebody to someone" and centers around the idea that "To teach a child well, you must know a child well." Student well-being and success form the core of CMS's professional development (PD) goals. The PD plan is aligned with the district goals and School Improvement Plan, and it implements strategies of best practices in disciplinary and interdisciplinary content areas as well as promotes student voice and achievement. Administrators and teachers work together to periodically review progress toward goals.

Using data analysis from multiple student achievement tests such as PARCC and MAP, teams of content area teachers and staff identify trends in the strengths and weaknesses of CMS students to create a School Improvement Plan that mirrors expectations for high academic standards for every child. Teachers share common planning time, so that content and grade level teachers can meet to collaborate, design data driven instruction, and discuss student progress. Educators and Administrators participate in ongoing interactive workshops to discover specific strategies to improve student learning in targeted areas and discuss outcomes within their disciplinary teams. In core content areas, teachers tie these strategies to their SLOs and common assessments. Administrators use formal and informal observations to offer support to teachers for learning outcomes.

Learning clusters of interdisciplinary teams meet to discuss research-based culturally responsive teaching practices in order to not only improve student achievement but also cultivate positive relationships with students. These practices match up with the Danielson Framework for Learning, the county's teacher evaluation tool. These learning partnerships focus on student well-being and success and prepare students to be "ready for rigor." Teacher feedback is evaluated after each session and subsequent learning addresses staff needs.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) are implemented school wide. During the 2017-2018 school year, PLCs centered around three main topics: maximizing instructional practice time with technology, student voice, and literacy/ informational text. Currently, for the 2018-2019 school year, PLCs center around high quality student teacher relationships that impact achievement, as well as culturally responsive teaching practices. CMS PLC groups determine an area of study, identify data points of weakness, and build learning strategies around the particular topic. Some examples of PLC learning include book studies, maximizing student learning platforms, student-centered learning, social-emotional well-being, and mentoring student relationships.

4. School Leadership:

At CMS, school leadership is a shared endeavor. The leadership team is comprised of the principal, assistant principal, grade-level team leaders, and content specific leaders. The role of the leadership team is to convey, model, and implement an infrastructure which supports a shared vision of teaching and learning.

The CMS leadership team's actions are grounded in common values and beliefs. The team believes that all students can learn, achieve academic excellence, and develop into caring, contributing citizens who are on the path to being college and career ready by the time they matriculate to high school. To actualize these values and goals, the CMS community must come together to ensure that every student receives engaging instruction that is relevant and rigorous. The leadership team oversees a school-wide collaborative structure that provides teachers with opportunities to partner and engage in data driven decision-making. These collaborative instructional teams anchored by teacher leaders allow for the development of rigorous common lessons and assessments.

The leadership team understands that the middle school years are a period of enormous growth and development in a child's life. The middle school child requires a supportive environment for self-exploration and healthy socio-emotional development. The leadership team communicates a common commitment to providing students with an environment where they are intellectually challenged, provided with guidance and support, and given the opportunity to enjoy a meaningful school experience.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Clarksville Middle School is focused on differentiating instruction for individual students. The staffs' collective actions are focused on students' well-being and academic success. Teachers partner with feeder elementary and high schools to ensure that student placement is optimal from the very first day of school and continues after 8th grade graduation. Students are placed in classes that promote hard work and challenges them to stretch their learning without being overwhelmed. Teachers use individual student-data to engage in collective data analysis and decision making for the purpose of appropriately placing students. Additionally, vertical teaming ensures that students are placed in courses that are rigorous and supportive. Grade-level teams support students' social-emotional well-being and academic success. CMS consistently scores among the top middle schools in Howard County on all PARCC assessments.

Clarksville Middle School's focus on differentiation extends to the school schedule. The schedule is designed to support students and allow for individual accommodation and differing student needs. The schedule allows for weekly Comet Time periods, which provides opportunities for students to be grouped according to academic need. Students can take advantage of research-based remediation and/ or intervention in all of their core subject areas. Comet Time also provides students with opportunities to engage in enrichment and extension activities.

Students in need of further academic support and reinforcement in the core subject areas are invited to attend the twice weekly after school Homework Club to receive individualized assistance from National Honor Society high school students and CMS teachers. This partnership provides CMS students with much needed tutoring assistance and provides high school students Student Service Learning (SSL) hours, a Maryland high school graduation requirement. Moreover, the Beyond School Hours (BSH) programs in Math and English Language Arts provide academic interventions and supports to students who have demonstrated gaps in skills or content knowledge. Students invited to BSH receive additional direct instruction from their teachers 30 minutes before the beginning of the formal school day, three days per week.

Teachers' frequent use of technology enhances differentiated instruction and provides students with real time access to reliable information. All CMS teachers use a Learning Management System (LMS) called Canvas, which provides students with a streamlined digital interface that allows for instruction to extend past the school building. With Canvas, students and parents have 24/7 access to classroom materials, due dates, and updated grades. Teachers curate and embed reliable and accurate information to allow students to conduct research and access content and homework assistance. This digital tool promotes instructional transparency and facilitates parental involvement in their children's academic success.