

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Kim M Guilarte Gil  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Somerset Academy Middle South Miami  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 5876 SW 68th Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Miami State FL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 33143-3693

County Miami-Dade

Telephone (305) 740-0509 Fax (305) 740-0510

Web site/URL http://www.somersetsomi.com E-mail kguilarte@somersetsomi.com

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. Bernardo Montero E-mail berntero@somersetacademy.com  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Miami-Dade Tel. (305) 995-1000

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 Mr. Todd German  
(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**

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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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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 (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
  - 252 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 61 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 79 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools

392 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

- Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

- Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the 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	19	32	51
7	30	32	62
8	31	35	66
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	80	99	179

\*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
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 92 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 5 % White
  - 0 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: ≤1%

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, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	1
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	1
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	217
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish, Mandarin, and Vietnamese.

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11 %

Total number students who qualify: 20

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %

30 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>1</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>1</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: 11

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
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.	1
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 22:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	98%	99%	97%	99%	98%
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 2019.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

Foster achievement by providing a technologically and challenging environment; develop high academic standards; and instill a sense of compassion, facilitated by a highly qualified staff.

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

Student Enrollment/ Lottery

Students will be admitted to Somerset Academy Middle South Miami regardless of race, gender, religion, or ethnic origin and our admission and dismissal procedures will be equitable for all students.

All Somerset Academy, Inc. schools will implement the following enrollment/lottery policy:

1. Somerset Academy Middle South Miami will set and advertise a registration/lottery date.
2. The following groups of students will not have to participate in the lottery and gain automatic admission/re-admission assuming they complete the “Intent to Return” form prior to the lottery date.
  - i. Current students enrolled at Somerset Academy Middle South Miami
  - ii. Siblings of enrolled or accepted students at Somerset Academy Middle South Miami
  - iii. Children of teachers at Somerset Academy Middle South Miami
  - iv. Children of governing board members, however, for Federal Grant Recipient Schools, preference will only be given to children of founding board members of the grant recipient school, Somerset Academy Middle South Miami, while the school is in the grant period. Any governing board members which are nominated and/or elected to the governing board after the founding of the school shall not be eligible for any enrollment preference while the school is in the grant period.
  - v. Children of an active duty member of any branch of the United States Armed Forces.
  - vi. For Federal Grant Recipient Schools, sibling and children of teacher exemptions only apply to the children of the grant recipient school. An exemption cannot be granted if the child does not have a sibling in

the Federal Grant Recipient School and/or the teacher is not employed at the Federal Grant Recipient School.

3. If the number of applicants is less than or equal to the number of available slots, each qualified applicant will be accepted and enrolled.

4. If the number of applicants meeting the established criteria of the charter exceeds the stated capacity of the school, or individual classroom or program, each child will be placed in a random lottery (the "Lottery").

5. Each application will be given a number, and all numbers for each classroom/program will be placed in a database. Numbers will be drawn on a random basis and all slots available per grade will be filled based on the rank order of their drawing. The remaining numbers will be used to create the waiting list (the list will be developed based on the rank order in which the remaining assigned lottery numbers are randomly drawn).

6. There will be at least one school administrator plus a member of the board and/or a representative from an independent auditing firm present at the Lottery.

7. After the Lottery is completed, students will be contacted in the rank order in which names were randomly drawn and established on the waiting list.

8. As openings arise throughout the year, the next child on the waiting list for that particular classroom will be offered the "space". If the school accepts applicants during the school year and already has a waiting list from the previous lottery, the school may either re-draw all names to date (less those accepted/withdrawn/removed by request) or conduct periodic subsequent lotteries and add the names in the rank order drawn to the initial list created via random lottery.

9. The parent has 48 hours to accept/refuse the space and complete all required documentation for admission into the program. If the parent is not able to do so, the space will go to the next child on the waiting list. Applicant names for parents who do not respond within 48 hours or who do not accept the available space will be removed from the list and requested to reapply in the future if they would like to be considered at a later date.

10. If there are more spaces than applications, the school may accept all students after the registration period has ended. If the school continues to accept applications after the initial registration period, the school will:

a. Conduct subsequent registration periods with advertised due dates and determine whether a lottery is necessary at the end of that period; or,

b. Conduct a "rolling" registration weekly. At the end of each week, determine whether or not a lottery is necessary.

1. If the school receives more applications that week than the seats, the school will:

a. Conduct a Lottery;

b. Notify families that received available spaces, and

c. Put remaining applications on the waiting list in the rank order their numbers were randomly drawn OR let families know they will be included in the next lottery when spaces become available.

2. If no lottery is necessary at the end of the week because the school has more space than applications received, all applicants may be accepted.

3. Repeat steps a and b above at the end of each week or as long as the school continues to accept applications each school year.

11. The school may choose the option of maintaining a waiting list application pool rather than a rank ordered waiting list. When the school chooses this option, it will conduct the lottery from all available applications received to date and stop when all available spaces have been filled. Each time the school has available space, it will conduct a new lottery.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Somerset Academy Middle South Miami (SoMi), a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accredited school, opened its doors in August of 2009 with one sixth grade classroom comprised of 24 students. Today, the school has 179 students enrolled in grades six through eight. SoMi is housed in the same building as Somerset Academy Elementary South Miami that serves as a feeder to the middle school. These two schools opened the same year and have functioned for the past ten years as one school community. In addition, the two schools share both the school facility and staff. Since its inception, the school continuously strives to deliver an educational program that is in direct alignment with the School's mission, and moreover, supports and facilitates its implementation. In accordance with its mission, SoMi promotes a unique educational program that aims to create well-rounded students prepared for success in an ever-changing global society.

Somerset Academy Middle South Miami is a high-performing charter school that has earned a letter grade of "A" for nine consecutive years, based on the results reported under the State of Florida Accountability Program. Out of 871 middle schools in the state of Florida, SoMi ranked 6th for the 2018-2019 school year. Sixth grade students ranked 5th in the state in math, seventh grade students ranked 1st in both civics and math, and in reading, the middle school ranked 3rd in the state. On October 18, 2017, the school was also designated a "School of Excellence" by the Florida State Board of Education. The required study of Spanish or Mandarin, as a second language, is partnered with a challenging curriculum and enhanced by dedicated teachers who are committed to serving the needs of all students. The use of innovative instructional methods and techniques are encouraged, ensuring curriculum is effectively taught to all students, regardless of student's respective varied learning needs and/or preferred learning style.

One of the reasons for the schools continued success, stems from a commitment of a team concept in support of our students. The administrative team recognizes that the culture of student success begins from the collaboration between all stakeholders, parents, faculty, and staff. Administration works arduously to promote, engage, cultivate, mentor, and motivate innovative educational strategies and high standards that exceed expectations from year-to-year. The administration meets on an ongoing basis to facilitate support for teachers and students, discuss data, and capitalize on available resources to amplify student learning and ensure a return of investments albeit funds, time and/or talent. In turn, SoMi teachers nurture and support the students and are also encouraged to formulate lessons that are engaging and designed to meet the varied needs of the students in their classes. The educators follow the Miami-Dade County Public Schools pacing guides and manage the content utilizing their professional judgment to engineer successful lessons that stimulate their students and go beyond just the necessary material to be covered. The students take ownership of their academic goals and seek to maximize upon their individual potential. Students are motivated to attend school because they feel that when they miss school they miss out; and students are proud of their personal and collective achievements as a class/school as the team effort concept is evident in all stakeholder circles. Learning is (fun)damental and purposeful at Somerset SoMi. Parents play a vital role in supporting their children's academic success by partnering with the school. Both parents and educators send the message that we too are a team, and we work together to ensure students' success. The dedication and collective team effort of all stakeholders helps to ensure that SoMi remains an educational institution that strives to thrive and wherein, students, parents, teachers, the community and the school continuously achieve goals and maximize their individual and collective potentials.

In addition to helping students achieve their personal best academically, Somerset Academy Middle South Miami seeks to develop well-rounded citizens. This is evidenced in SoMi's commitment to providing a plethora of activities for students to be able to participate throughout the school year. Students are also encouraged to give back to the community, and therein the school offers opportunities to engage students in the community, as well. For example, SoMi has participated in different events to support the surrounding neighborhood such as hosting canned food drives, sponsoring Thanksgiving meal collections, hosting holiday toy drives and collecting donations to support victims of natural disasters, to name a few. In an effort to develop a well rounded child, the students are also offered opportunities to participate in school-wide learning events such as, but not limited to, the Math Bowl, STEM Week, and the Spelling Bee. Moreover, to support the physical development of our students, the school hosts an annual Field Day where

students are exposed to a variety of team and individual sports. Additionally, after-school sports such as Tae Kwon Do, basketball, baseball, soccer, flag football, volleyball, dance, and cheerleading provide students with knowledge, skills, values, and enthusiasm to maintain a healthy lifestyle. In addition, the social development of students is supported through various events and leadership opportunities. Members of the SoMi Cares Club, Student Council, and National Junior Honor Society work together to develop different activities throughout the school year such as bake sales, flag football competitions, Acts of Kindness Week, and visiting the Ronald McDonald House. The Schosl also hosts a variety of festivals to honor, celebrate and bring awareness to the school community the different cultures represented in our student body, such as a Hispanic Heritage Celebration and a Black History Celebration, to name a few. The SoMi calendar maintains a healthy array of meaningful events that allow for stakeholders to collaborate in planning enrichment activities to contribute to educating the mind and spirit of our students, and developing well-rounded and pluralistic citizens.

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

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

Somerset Academy Middle South Miami's (SoMi's) educational philosophy is to advance the student's intellectual, physical, and social/emotional development in order to prepare them for a successful life. SoMi also believes that the development and growth of the whole student is important, and therefore, students are exposed to different learning strategies and teaching styles, ensuring all students, regardless of learning needs and/or abilities are nurtured to be able to learn and further develop their talents and skills in the way the students are comfortable learning. SoMi educators consistently adapt, accommodate, plan, and monitor student's learning, thereby kindling the desire and fostering the ability for students to become lifelong learners.

The aforementioned concepts are embodied in the school's program and serve as a vehicle to increase learning opportunities with special effort made to help all students, of all learning abilities and levels, have success and consistent learning gains, thereby engaging in a cycle of continuous improvement. The school's philosophy is built on a set of beliefs and values and these serve as the impetus for all student performance and achievement of goals and objectives.

Somerset Academy Middle South Miami's educational program is aligned to innovative learning methods and established research-based practices that have proven successful in raising achievement. These are derived from research-based strategies, veteran teacher knowledge, innovative board members and stakeholders, and commitment from parents and community partners. The school functions on a six period bell schedule. Students receive 55 minutes of instruction per period in the following courses: math, language arts, social studies, science, physical education, and a world language. The world languages offered at SoMi are Spanish I, II, III and Mandarin I, II, and III. Student's educational needs are met through intervention and the intensive courses that are offered to support and scaffold their learning. SoMi continues to strive to meet high standards through constant analysis of student performance and data derived from district and state assessments along with classroom formative and summative assessments. The school utilizes the i-Ready program to assess students and provide an interactive online individualized instructional program to the students based on their specific needs.

While the school implements, with fidelity, the required coursework and curriculum of the school district, as well as, all that is mandated by the State and sponsor for basic curriculum content, SoMi is not solely restricted to the required content. Whenever appropriate, SoMi will introduce new elements and seek differentiated instruction methodologies for the courses offered.

### **1b.** Reading/English language arts

At Somerset Academy Middle South Miami, reading is an essential subject that is utilized across all subjects. The skills that students gain in their English Language Arts (ELA) classes help them to acquire the literateness they need to become educated citizens of the world. The ELA teachers utilize the Spring Board text series to deliver instruction at a grade level above their own. The Spring Board texts are used in conjunction with teacher developed lesson plans to enhance the learning standards by using relevant content that engages students in rigorous activities that are both engaging and stimulating. The ELA teachers work arduously to teach students to apply reading strategies not only in their classes, but across all subject areas.

Students are expected to read and comprehend proficiently. They work and collaborate to discuss and develop arguments for essays. They read novels and integrate technology to enhance their learning and make it meaningful in order to access all avenues of knowledge. Students compare literature and non-fictional texts to maximize comprehension strategies. Instruction is driven and differentiated by the data obtained from school-wide assessments, which allows the teachers to tailor instruction in a manner which is

most effective for each student. For example, this past year a strong emphasis was placed on enhancing vocabulary instruction. ELA teachers focused on working with words and teaching prefixes, suffixes, and root words. In turn, the comprehension levels of the students across the school improved significantly as was evidenced in our i-Ready assessments.

Additionally, writing is integral to the success of the ELA program. Reading and writing are foundational across all subjects and are done simultaneously to stimulate growth and expand upon techniques from previous years. Students write about texts they have read, they write journals, and they also write about their real life experiences. Students at SoMi also love to present, discourse and argue topics, wherein through debate they simulate opposing views; all skills that help the students to better strategize how they can better express themselves and convey different ideas in their writing.

Many of our middle school students test out of i-Ready by the time they reach eighth grade, because they are reading above grade level. This is due, in great part, to the rigorous and hands on approach utilized by SoMi teachers. When this happens, teachers continue to challenge their students. Students are assigned and encouraged to read texts at their level and complete project-based learning to supplement what is being done in the classroom.

SoMi offers an intensive reading course for the students who do not score at grade level on the state assessments. These students receive additional and targeted reading instruction daily. The focus of this course is comprehension at the grade level of the students. Students read texts in small groups, they work on cold reads and continuously discuss the text in a small group setting. The teacher supports these students on a more individualized level and helps to remediate deficiencies. This course has proven to be very successful in assisting our students to close gaps from previous years so the learner can have learning gains and demonstrate continuous improvement and grow their reading ability.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Acceleration has historically been a keyword when it comes to the success of the mathematics curriculum at SoMi. Students complete three courses: in the sixth grade, Advanced Math 1 Honors; in the seventh grade, Advanced Math 2 Honors; and in the eighth grade, Algebra I Honors. Every year of mathematics instruction at SoMi is as important as the next, as the school solidifies a "well-planned high school preparation foundation" with each subsequent year of mathematics instruction. In each middle school year, teachers arm their students with the necessary subset of skills to help them succeed in their courses and excel in high school and beyond. The mathematics teachers utilize a combination of two grade level book series each school year, for example, the sixth grade mathematics teacher utilizes a sixth and seventh grade textbook and the seventh grade mathematics teacher utilizes a seventh and eighth grade textbook. By the time the students are eighth graders, they are ready for the Algebra I course because they have completed and mastered all of the standards and foundational skills to ensure success in Algebra I, a high school level course, which is often considered the mathematical foundation, and even coined the "gateway course" for high-level mathematics in high school and beyond.

Mathematics instruction at SoMi is rigorous and students are effectively taught through various methods. Teachers utilize the gradual release method to ensure that material is delivered, and "I do, we do, and you do" is done throughout each lesson. When a math concept is introduced, the educator presents the chapter and activates background knowledge to make the topic relevant and accessible to all. The educator assists students with math note-taking skills and also teaches students to utilize math vocabulary, which is a skill that will help students to solve mathematical word problems. After students take notes, the teacher models and works with the them to show and demonstrate the steps the students should undergo to solve the mathematical problem. The teacher will complete various math problems through such demonstration, and students will also take turns to lead the step by step problem solving exercise to further reinforce skills. Students will also work individually to practice and solidify the skill, as well as for the teacher to check for student understanding and ensure that all students have mastered the associated standards.

For students in need of additional mathematics support and/or remediation, teachers will provide targeted and data-driven instruction to address the specific learning needs of the child. By differentiating instruction,

SoMi teachers fill learning gaps that might otherwise have impeded students from progressing through an increasingly difficult curriculum. This personalized approach allows the teacher to make the material, with which the student is having difficulty, comprehensible. Only after the teacher addresses the deficiency, will there exist the opportunity for the student to learn the skill and move on to next level of math instruction. Students complete i-Ready lessons and assessments throughout the year and teachers utilize that i-Ready data to identify student strengths and weaknesses, and subsequently use that information to plan data-driven instruction. iReady data together with state level assessment data are also both utilized as the basis for meaningful and personalized discussions between various stakeholders, but most importantly between the teacher and student. This specific data chat allows the teacher and the student to set learning goals together and also increases the teacher's ability to prepare a meaningful and targeted plan of action for each child's instruction.

The school also meets often to discuss mathematical data and to monitor progress towards continuous improvement goals in mathematics. The i-Ready program is instrumental in helping SoMi teachers to be able to provide targeted support for their students and develop the individualized lesson plans (which have proven successful). These lesson plans are tailored to meet each learner's academic needs and provide the opportunity for each student to continuously learn, grow, and maximize their individual potential.

#### **1d. Science**

The science curriculum at SoMi is also advanced. Students in sixth grade take Comprehensive Science 1 Honors; students in seventh grade are enrolled in a ninth grade course called Physical Science; and in the eighth grade students take Biology Honors, which is a tenth grade course that has an End Of Course (EOC) state assessment. Through real-world connections, hands-on activities, and the use of the school's technology-rich environment, the science content is delivered to the students and brought to life. This program of sequence and course of study has proven effective for SoMi students and our students have excelled.

At SoMi, teachers utilize the flipped classroom model especially in the science classroom where students can preview lessons and prepare in advance for the material which is to be taught. The act of reading and comprehending science text is another foundational skill taught in our science classrooms, including the history and the content-rich science topics. Understanding rich scientific vocabulary provides a strong foundation for rigorous high-level science courses, those in which we are preparing our students to be successful in the future. To target the needs of all students, the science teachers deliver lessons that all students can understand using visual representations and hands-on learning experiences to make the science content comprehensible.

Students are also taught and encouraged to utilize graphic organizers, note-taking skills, outlining skills, two column notes, and even mind maps to support their learning in science. Students are able to work collaboratively when working on projects and are also able to meet with the teacher in small groups to ask questions and discuss science topics. The comprehension of science topics and terminology is key for student success. Being able to apply their science content knowledge to real world questions and scenarios is the goal to making science comprehensible and relevant.

Just like in all other subject areas at SoMi, mastery of science standards is assessed through formative, summative, and performance-based assessments throughout the school year. The assessment data collected, together with teacher observations of student understanding, are used to inform instruction and build future science lessons. Teachers and administrators are able to analyze the data derived from the assessments and the trends of previous years in order to continuously improve student performance and inform student instruction. By reviewing these data points and having candid conversations about classroom results as a team, the school is able to assist the teacher in making instructional decisions with the needs of the students at the forefront of all instructional decision-making.

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

SoMi recognizes that all students need to be active citizens of the world. As a school, students are encouraged to be active participants in their community and to be informed citizens. In the sixth grade, students complete a U.S. History course; in seventh grade, students complete a Civics course, which has an EOC state assessment component; and in eighth grade students are enrolled in World History. These courses all support the development of the students becoming active and responsible citizens of the world. These rigorous courses depict life in the past and present. The teachers utilize texts, videos, as well as they continue to develop note-taking skills which are necessary for students to be successful as the material grows in depth and scope.

Students work on research-based projects, develop arguments, explore and discuss the history of their world and community through discussions and debates about the impact of history in the present. These discussions are conducted by essential questions such as “How does conflict develop?” “What is a common thread across cultures?” “How did civilization begin and end?”, to name a few. The purpose of exploring such essential questions is for students to develop a strong sense of civic duty; an understanding of the pluralistic world in which they live; and how they can further contribute to society or be a part of affecting necessary changes they wish to see in the world. SoMi students are taught to care about their community and the social studies courses bring the real world into the classroom.

Like all other subjects, students are assessed in different formats to ensure that standards are being mastered and that knowledge is being attained. Teachers also meet with administration to devise plans to address the learning needs of all students, to ensure that instruction is effective and student potential in social studies and civics is being maximized.

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

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

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

Somerset Academy South Miami recognizes that there is a growing international interdependence among nations, which demands that the United States develop citizens with a sound understanding of international and cross-cultural issues and the ability to communicate in more than one language. SoMi develops students’ understanding of international and cross-cultural issues as well as their ability to communicate in more than one language. Students complete three years of Spanish and/or Mandarin foreign language instruction. After successful completion of these courses, students meet the course work requirement for public high schools. These courses are demanding and immersive. Students read texts in the second language and write and communicate in class utilizing the given language. Many of these students have studied the language beginning in elementary school.

The last course that completes their daily six class schedule is physical education (P.E.). Physical education at SoMi requires an in-depth knowledge of sports. The P.E. teacher ensures that students have a basic understanding of a sport prior to engaging in the actual sport. Students learn about athletes, sports and their respective origins, and also create their own dance routine throughout the school year. Sports and dance assist in the development of sportsmanship, character education, teamwork, cooperation, confidence and also encourage a fundamental understanding of the importance of physical fitness as a healthy and daily habit. Students also receive wellness and nutrition education to promote lifelong healthy habits. Overall, the main focus of P.E. is to not only teach students about the importance of a healthy lifestyle, but to also kindle in them the desire to live a well-balanced and healthy life.

## **3. Academic Supports:**

### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

As a school, we closely monitor all of our students. Progress monitoring occurs throughout the school year with students. A team assembles and discusses what actions need to take place in order to support students

and monitor their growth for reading, math, and/or behavior. The Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) or Response to Intervention (RtI) team work together to make decisions and plan interventions for students who need extra support in academics or with their behavior. Students are provided with intervention strategies once the RtI process has begun. Teachers and/or teacher assistants provide this support in a small group setting using supplemental, standard-aligned resources. Students move within the tiers based on their intervention and classroom data. Teachers document student progress and the data collected helps to inform whether a student needs to move up a tier, at which time parents are contacted, and new plans of actions to support the student are prepared.

The MTSS Team focuses meetings around one question: How do we develop and maintain a problem solving system to bring out the best in our schools, in our teachers, and in our students? The team meets once a month to engage in the following activities:

Review universal screening data and use the data to inform instructional decisions; review progress monitoring data at the grade level and classroom level to identify students who are meeting/exceeding benchmarks, as well as students at moderate risk or at high risk for not meeting benchmarks. Based on the above information, the team will identify professional development and resources. The team will also collaborate regularly, problem solve, share effective practices, evaluate implementation, make decisions, and practice new processes and skills. The team will also facilitate the process of building consensus, increase infrastructure, and make decisions about implementation.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

In the same way that the school analyzes and supports our low performing students, the MTSS/RtI team meets to discuss students performing above grade level. Through our commitment to rigor and via our commitment to differentiate instruction, we have developed a model wherein we aim to grow our students to meet or surpass their required grade-level knowledge mastery threshold, which is a challenging task. At SoMi, students take honors courses, are often a year advanced, and in some cases are reading three or four years above grade level. The instructional decisions for these students are constantly changing to ensure that these students are also making academic gains and that their education goals and needs are also being fulfilled.

The data to inform how we will support and ensure learning gains for each of these students occurs at our Data Chats. During Data Chats, teachers and admins discuss previous student performance, the capabilities of each child, and we create a plan and set goals that will ensure each student makes significant personal learning gains. At the middle school level, we may choose to offer the student the opportunity to pursue a more advanced course, sometimes online, in an effort to ensure the student receives enrichment that will allow for maximizing upon his/her talent and potential. Currently, we have a student enrolled in Algebra I and Geometry Honors, which are the courses these students need in order to continue to address their learning needs. Decisions for acceleration, especially of this sort, require parent cooperation, student buy-in, and a commitment from the school for the student to receive additional support, whenever necessary.

### **3c. Special education**

The special education program that SoMi provides is delivered through an inclusive classroom. All special education students are immersed within the rigorous curriculum that all students receive and are supported by two teachers for each subject, the general education teacher and the special education teacher. Each student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan that outlines the specific accommodations that will be made to assist the student to realize their goals. SoMi follows these directives and safeguards that all of the needs of the students are met in and out of the classroom while at school. All students at SoMi participate in the same thorough content and are supported through differentiated instruction. Teachers deliver the same lesson, but they differentiate how the lesson is delivered to ensure that all students can access and comprehend the material.

**3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered**

Somerset Academy Middle South Miami provides instruction to English Language Learners (ELL) that is equal in amount, sequence and scope as what is provided to non-ELL students. School based administrator(s), teachers, and counselors are responsible and serve as advocates for ensuring that all ELL's have access to all school programs, services, and that ELL's are afforded the same rights as their non-ELL peers.

SoMi ensures that all students are engaged in and benefit from a rigorous curriculum. Special emphasis and instructional support will be provided to those students that enter the school below grade level. Interventions for ELLs are delivered through the Language Arts course and specifically working with Direct Instruction (DI) during this block. ELL students in need of remediation because of inadequate progress towards mastery of the Florida Standards will be provided with appropriate interventions through the MTSS/RTI process and have access to various support strategies that include pull out interventions and tutoring. Similarly, ELL students who are not making progress and continue to struggle academically within their core courses and are not responding to changes in instructional strategies and interventions will be referred to the school's SST. During that referral, an ELL committee will be convened to determine alternative strategies while the SST (School Support Team) convenes and includes a referral to the SST.

Additionally, the School's faculty will differentiate instruction as necessary to ensure all students are successful. Teachers will be ESOL endorsed, trained and expected to use ESOL strategies through lesson plans, classroom settings, materials used, audio/visuals, etc.

**3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered**

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

Engaging students to reach their full potential is an every day practice at SoMi. Students are motivated through a variety of practices and recognitions. The principal recognizes model students with a Deserving Dozen field trip. These students are selected by their teachers as they set the standard for being overall, great students and friends to their classmates. These students are chosen twice a year. The school also engages students all year by offering them an incentive for their successes on the Florida Standards Assessments (FSA). Students who score above average on the assessments are taken on an all-expenses, paid field trip to a theme park of their choosing. The students spend the day celebrating their accomplishments at the park with their teachers. Students are also motivated to reach high expectations through quarterly academic awards, including receiving achievement certificates from their teachers. These quarterly academic awards are also celebrated with a quarterly kickball game against their peers. These students are invited to participate in a day of fun competing in outdoor games with their friends.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Parents are an integral part of the educational career of their children. At SoMi, parental involvement is key to the long-term successes of all students. Parents are afforded a variety of opportunities to participate in the school's operations. The school ensures that parents, teachers, community members and other stakeholders are actively engaged in the design and implementation of the school's mission.

All parents are encouraged to chaperone and/or participate in events such as sporting events, fundraising events, field trips, and school celebrations. Parents volunteer their time in and out of the classroom and share skills and/or personal knowledge and expertise in their field, craft, or career with the students.

Moreover, the school also utilizes the School Climate Surveys that are conducted on a yearly basis as another tool to continuously evaluate the school and its overall processes. The parents, students, and staff at the school complete the School Climate Surveys and the results provide insight in assessing the overall effectiveness of school programs and the climate and culture of the school.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Somerset Academy Middle South Miami also recognizes that in order to provide a high-quality program, the School requires a high-quality staff. All staff members are provided a handbook at the beginning of the school year, which details the structure for implementing school policies. School-wide standards are specified regarding dress code, behavior management, procedural precautions and educational goals to enhance student achievement.

In order to continuously support the delivery of a high-quality program that implements research-based strategies and innovations to ensure consistent gains in student performance and achievement, SoMi has the following processes in place to evaluate the programs and ensure that the school is creating a professional culture to support all learners. SoMi conducts a continuous review of curriculum to ensure a year's worth of learning of all state benchmarks and research-based instructional practices. Teachers and administrators meet to ensure that data is discussed for the previous year and the plans for the current school year. Looking at data trends supports the learners in the class by digging deep into the benchmarks, standards, and finding common thread concerns.

Another way that SoMi ensures a professional culture at the core of the school is by practicing differentiated instruction to suit varied learning styles and the integration of technology across all major disciplines. Staying up-to-date with the best learning styles and technological advances helps the School to access the best learning environments for all students. The teachers consistently participate in professional development opportunities throughout the school year. These professional development opportunities are afforded to them in house, online, and through the local school district.

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

The principal and the leadership team at Somerset Academy Middle South Miami work effortlessly alongside all students, teachers, parents, and stakeholders to bring the mission and vision of SoMi to life. The leadership team is comprised of the principal, the assistant principal, and the lead teacher. The administrative team works cohesively to secure a learning environment that prepares the future for the real-world challenges through collaboration and lessons that transcend the class.

The Ppincipal, as the instructional leader of the school, encourages teachers, on a daily basis, to instill the mission and vision of the school in their own classrooms. The principal is a role model to the staff, provides support, and inspires them to lead and go above and beyond. The principal strongly believes that cultivating leadership in others is a key element in shaping the vision of academic success. Through collaboration between the principal, teachers, and all stakeholders, the school wide vision of commitment to high standards is supported to attain academic goals. The principal has been an educator for over 20 years and is an exemplar leader nd mentor to faculty and staff members. The principal works arduously to create a family environment that supports all stakeholders and members of the SoMi team.

In turn, the assistant principal, along with the lead teacher, are involved in the education process, providing resources as needed to ensure the teachers and staff are successful throughout the academic year. Through curriculum improvements, technological innovations and creativity, the leadership team, provide supplemental resources to enrich course content and delivery of instruction. The team meets regularly to discuss implementation of the curriculum and to analyze and disseminate data. These practices translate into the classroom.

Furthermore, the administrative team cultivates a culture in the school that is like no other; everyone believes in themselves, everyone strives to be the best, and everyone encourages each other to succeed. This is a common thread across all of the teams, including, but not limited to, grade level chairpersons and committee leads, in the school. These high expectations help the school to remain in a continuous cycle of improvement wherein each member of the SoMi team can continue meeting and surpassing schoolwide and personal goals which have been set.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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Somerset Academy Middle South Miami is a successful school because of the positive staff morale and family relationships that have been cultivated since its inception. The first year that Somerset Academy Middle South Miami opened, there was only one class of sixth grade. That same year, Somerset Academy Elementary South Miami opened as a fully functioning kindergarten through fifth grade school. Since then, those elementary students have articulated into Somerset Academy Middle South Miami year after year. Relationships have been built and solidified from early on while witnessing milestones and shaping children's lives.

SoMi takes pride in having established a healthy school environment. Staff morale is high and evident in teacher retention rates. Relationships between teachers and students, parents and teachers, teachers and administrators are all cultivated and nurtured. The goal is for all to feel respected and supported to make the most out of their academic careers. Students value the genuine interest teachers have in their lives and in turn, this motivates them to reach their academic goals. In addition, parental support has been a key element in building these relationships, as well. Teachers know that with the support of the parents and working as a unified group, this will ensure and assist in success of all students.

Family is at the core of the SoMi community. The events hosted, the relationships built between families and staff, and the sense of commitment from all stakeholders truly make SoMi unique. The school prides itself in maintaining strong relationships and building a home for our students. SoMi is a home they can revisit, a home they can count on when times are tough, and a home where everyone is celebrated and encouraged. These bonds are woven into the pattern of SoMi's success and continue to strengthen each year.