

**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 [X] Choice

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

Official School Name Rollings Middle School Of The Arts  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1635 Beech Hill Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Summerville State SC Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 29485-7870

County Dorchester County

Telephone (843) 873-3610 Fax (843) 821-3985

Web site/URL https://www.ddtwo.org/RMSA E-mail papye@dorchester2.k12.sc.us

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\* Mr. Joseph Pye E-mail jppe@dorchester2.k12.sc.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Dorchester 02 Tel. (843) 873-2901

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 Mrs. Tanya Robinson  
(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)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 15 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 6 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 3 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 24 TOTAL

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

2. 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

3. 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	93	178	271
7	82	183	265
8	63	143	206
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	238	504	742

\*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):
- 0.8 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 4 % Asian
  - 19.7 % Black or African American
  - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.8 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 69.6 % White
  - 1.1 % 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: 2%

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	15
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	706
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

Vietnamese, Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 6 %  
43 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 17 %

Total number students who qualify: 129

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %

55 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>3</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>7</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>2</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 the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	3
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.	13
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.	4

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 17:1

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	97%	97%	94%	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 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.

The mission of Rollings Middle School of the Arts is to provide its students, members of a global community, with an integrated curriculum that develops maximum academic potential and excellence in the arts.

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

Rollings Middle School of the Arts is a school for the fine and performing arts. The District's Fine Arts Department oversees auditions. The acceptance process is solely based on the arts audition. Academic progress is not included as a factor for acceptance. Any current fifth grade student who resides in the Dorchester School District Two attendance area is eligible to attend Rollings Middle School of the Arts. A student is accepted as a major in one of the following areas: Band, Dance, Piano, String Orchestra, Theatre Arts, Visual Arts, or Vocal Music.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Entering the building, you are welcomed by a bright lobby featuring art and music by students. The sheer volume of the space echoes the excitement and opportunities afforded to the artists enrolled at Rollings Middle School of the Arts. As you move through the halls, music flows from the orchestra class where strings and band students blend and weave notes together. Vocal students fill the spaces with harmonies and melodies. Music moves the dancers as they glide and leap. Actors' voices ring out as Shakespeare rehearsals play out on stage. Artists' brushes dance across canvas with color and texture. It is the heart of the school in action. The arts are what brought the students here, and it is what binds the school family together.

Rollings Middle School of the Arts (RMSA) was established in 1997 as an arts school. The original campus was erected in 1924 with Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds. The new campus welcomed students for the first time in 2018. The new campus' design flows so that it is the optimal facility for the all of the various arts programs it houses. Additionally, the campus connects with the new Summers Corner Performing Arts Center, offering a professional arena where our students perform while fine-tuning their artistic abilities. Thoughtful planning went into the design of every space and each piece of furniture in the building. The stage is set for endless artistic possibilities from the one thousand-seat performing arts center, to the black box theater, the art and dance studios, and the music rooms.

RMSA serves 731 students in grades six through eight. These 731 students all audition in visual art, vocal music, dance, strings, theatre, piano, or band as part of the enrollment program. Every middle school student in the Dorchester District Two (DD2) school district has the opportunity to audition to attend RMSA. While prospective students audition to secure a place in the school, there is no academic requirement for acceptance. This allows for an opportunity for all students to benefit from this unique learning environment. Students attending RMSA represent all areas of Dorchester District Two, serving a population of students that it embraces 32% male, 68% female 26% minority, and 17% of students receive subsidized meals. Due to the high correlation between academic and artistic giftedness, RMSA serves as an important need within the community with the focus on developing artistic skills, as well as, promoting high levels of achievement.

RMSA is located in a rapidly growing suburban community, composed primarily of working families and retirees. Due to the community growing so quickly, the annual district enrollment continues to increase. Continental growth creates challenges but Dorchester School District Two remains the highest performing district in the region. Additionally, RMSA is the highest performing school within the district and among the highest in the state of South Carolina. The community has high expectations for student achievement at RMSA, and the school rises to the challenge year after year. It is notable that the state of South Carolina has consistently recognized RMSA's high level of talent and achievement as it repeatedly receives an "Excellent" rating every year since the school report card rating system began. The award-winning programs have received state and national recognition for the use of the arts as an essential component of the curriculum. The community expects the best from the RMSA family, and the school proudly and passionately delivers.

## **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

Rollings Middle School of the Arts (RMSA) uses the South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards as the basis for the core academic curriculum. In addition, it uses the South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards for Visual and the Performing Arts Proficiency as the foundation of its core arts curriculum. As a school for the artistically gifted, the faculty strives to integrate fine arts curricula into all content areas. This integration elevates students' interests and engages them across a bevy of learning styles.

In addition to the arts infusion across all content areas, students experience cross-curricular integration between core academic subject areas. For example, in English Language Arts, students investigate historical primary-source documents. After discussion and analysis, students construct written essays, using the primary sources as support for their claims. This activity promotes the language arts curriculum as students learn to interpret primary sources, while developing argumentative writing skills. Simultaneously, students expand their knowledge of a particular historical time-period. Social studies classes also include this task in their regular curriculum. By including language arts standards into social studies instruction, students develop a further understanding of history, while improving literacy skills.

Enriched instruction at RMSA includes the integration of technology into all learning, offering a rigorous and relevant curriculum, both academically and artistically. The curriculum incorporates best practices and innovative technological pedagogy to provide the richest possible educational and learning environment for students. This includes inquiry-based, personalized, and blended learning, as well as, explicit direct instruction. Additionally, Dorchester School District Two offers district curriculum guides and standards-based content, easily accessed digitally from the Atlas Rubicon website, to support classroom-based instruction.

The effectiveness of RMSA's general curriculum, arts curriculum, interventions, and practices requires continuous monitoring. A variety of formative and summative data points are collected, analyzed, and disseminated to maximize student, teacher, administrator, and overall school growth. School leadership uses information obtained from state report cards, climate surveys, state assessments, district assessments, and grades to assess progress and to identify deficits in instruction, curricula, interventions, and test instruments. When deficits present themselves, steps to close the gap become part of the instructional review. To ensure that all students receive appropriate instruction, their grades, test scores, and anecdotal information, are reviewed for patterns of performance. Teachers, guidance counselors, and leadership use this data for strategic scheduling to ensure optimum placement that will appropriately challenge students and support their academic growth. Students who appear to need additional support in the core curriculum may be scheduled into an intervention class and/or matched to a teacher whose instructional style best meets their needs. Teachers are required to collect and analyze their own data for patterns of performance so that they can adjust their practices. Further, school administration requires teachers to submit quarterly grade distribution reports that are useful in making decisions about teacher effectiveness and student achievement. These are just some of the many ways that the school uses assessment data to improve school and student outcomes.

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

Literacy serves as a pillar of the RMSA curriculum. Learning opportunities for reading and writing are an expectation of every class, and collaboration across content areas ensures that integration is seamless and intentional. Within each classroom, teachers integrate carefully selected instructional approaches that meet student academic needs. Students engage in Socratic Seminars, literature circles, and thoughtful class discussions. This encourages critical thinking as students challenge ideas and constantly refer to a text to support their own ideas. Teachers will model reading and writing strategies, and students engage in reading and writing daily. Teachers incorporate grammar into the writing curriculum and integrate grammar into the

reading and writing curriculum rather than simply teaching grammar in isolation.

Students use technology regularly at RMSA. English Language Arts classes have a designated day in the computer lab every week and teachers have the option of reserving a cart of laptops to bring into their classrooms.

Finally, inquiry and research is a significant part of the curriculum, and students in all grade levels complete an independent research task. Students learn how to investigate questions and evaluate sources for credibility while using both oral and written communication to share their ideas with others in an academic setting. This begins laying the foundation for students to successfully research in high school and in higher education.

In order to meet the individual needs of all students, teachers differentiate instruction by selecting appropriately leveled texts, providing small group instruction, and providing varying levels of writing support. Arts integration is essential to the English Language Arts curriculum and offers another means of differentiation. Teachers offer students the opportunity to demonstrate their comprehension of their reading through creative means, typically related to a student's core art area. Differentiated instruction is not only for students who perform below grade level, but also for academically gifted students performing well above their peers. In addition to the regular education curriculum, efforts are made to provide rigorous opportunities for those students who excel in school. For example, a curriculum for Gifted and Talented students is offered at every grade level. In addition, eighth-grade students are given the opportunity to enroll in English I Honors, where they earn a high school credit upon successful completion of the class.

Teachers also assess the progress of all students through the review of both formative and summative assessment data. Within individual classrooms, teachers regularly assess student progress through informal assessments, traditional testing and performance-based assessments, in which students often have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in creative ways. Annually, students participate in SC READY, which is a statewide assessment for English Language Arts. Teachers use the previous year's data to plan for instruction and determine the strengths and weaknesses of incoming students. Students also complete two benchmark assessments in English Language Arts each year. Benchmarks assess standards that teachers have already taught, as established by the district-wide pacing guide. Teachers use this data to evaluate whether students have achieved the grade level standards as the year progresses. Grade level counterparts meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) during planning periods to create common assessments and to create consistency across the curriculum. The English department also meets regularly to implement vertical alignment across the grade levels. Additionally, teachers meet at the school and district level to discuss this data with other educators, interventionists, and administrators. This opportunity allows for collaboration as teachers plan for instruction based on this data.

Literacy is further promoted with several initiatives outside of the general curriculum. For example, RMSA has implemented a Literacy Plan, in which academic and core arts classes apply reading and writing strategies, as part of South Carolina's Read to Succeed Initiative. Elements of the Literacy Plan include after-hours events such as Literacy Night, in which students and their families are invited to school to meet visiting authors and participate in literacy-based games and activities. Literacy is also supported through participation in the PTSA Reflections Contest each year. The PTSA Reflections Contest provides opportunities for students to receive national recognition for original works of artistic literacy, boosting their confidence and success in school and life. Students also compete annually on the composition team as a part of Quest, a local competition open to schools in three adjoining counties. Last year, RMSA held a school-wide poetry contest open to all students. Within their classrooms, teachers also encourage students to write for local, state, and national competitions as opportunities arise. These universal activities extend students' engagement in literacy beyond their language arts classroom, which supports the development of lifelong readers and writers.

### **1c. Mathematics**

The mathematics curriculum is rooted in the South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards so that students have the math skills needed for success beyond high school. Focusing on problem solving and real-

world connections, students learn to work both individually and collaboratively as teachers use a mix of direct explicit instruction, small group instruction, one-on-one instruction, and peer collaboration. Students consistently employ a variety of tools to support their learning of the math standards, including graphing calculators, Smart Boards, and a mobile computer lab, that teachers can reserve for use in their classroom.

Leveling students by math ability into the classes that serve them best, teachers work to ensure that this differentiated mathematics curriculum meets students at their individual needs. As part of a data-driven district, teachers use students' scores on district-created benchmarks, the Scholastic Math Inventory, and the state's annual SC Ready test as well as on common pre-assessments and post-assessments to focus on student weaknesses and to promote growth regardless of a student's ability. Beginning in seventh grade, mathematically gifted students may take high school credit courses such as Algebra I Honors and Geometry Honors. To further support the curriculum, tutoring available daily during the Independent Learning Time (ILT) period built into the middle of the school day.

Grade level counterparts meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) during planning periods to create common assessments and to create consistency across the curriculum. The math department also meets regularly to implement vertical alignment across the grade levels. Instructors use technology to create blended learning experiences with innovative, student-centered programs such as Illustrative Math, Apex, and Algebra Nation so that each student can learn at his or her own pace. As an additional resource, the mathematics textbook is available digitally so that students can access it when needed at home.

As noted previously, cross-curricular integration is a key to RMSA's success. Another example of implementation is through the integration of literacy into the mathematics curriculum. One of the ways this is accomplished is through activities such as journal writing, in which students respond to mathematical prompts through written dialogues, by corresponding with teachers through questions and feedback. Literacy is also embedded into the math curriculum when teaching math problem solving skills. At these times, students are given a variety of word problems and must apply close-reading strategies in order to correctly solve them.

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

RMSA utilizes the South Carolina Academic Standards and Performance Indicators for Science as its core Science curriculum. Science educators at RMSA take a three-dimensional approach to facilitating student learning. By addressing content standards, implementing science and engineering practices, and crosscutting concepts, students are exposed to relevant and evidence-based instruction to assist in developing their ability to solve current and future problems.

RMSA engages students with hands-on learning techniques, resulting scientific thinkers and collaborators. RMSA classroom experiences are designed to involve students in meaningful, active learning, while also integrating literacy and math. Active investigations provide exposure to science concepts and engineering practices through a variety of activities. Additionally, all RMSA science educators teach and use the scientific method, placing a heavy emphasis on the scientific process and the need to follow specific steps to arrive at conclusions.

Science students demonstrate their knowledge of content through guided discussion of their ideas with peers affording them the opportunity to defend their thoughts and contribute to the overall classroom experience. Leveling students by academic ability into the classes that serve them best, teachers work to ensure that this differentiated science curriculum meets students at their individual needs. Students synthesize information, collaborate to expand upon their ideas, and communicate their findings and understandings. Outside of the general curriculum, students are provided opportunities to grow their knowledge through activities such as Gateway to Technology, First Lego League robotics challenge, ROADS Mars Mission, Storm the Citadel STEM competition, and Quest academic contest. These extra-curricular programs, combined with the small group work, large group discussions, and constant synthesis of new ideas occurring within the classroom, ensure students learn the problem solving and critical thinking skills necessary to progress through future science courses successfully.

Science learning at RMSA is continually monitored for improvement through collaboration between teachers and other departments. Science teachers at RMSA plan their instruction as a grade level and as a department in their respective PLCs. The use of common assessments among teachers at each grade level is implemented to promote uniformity and consistency.

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

Social Studies classes at RMSA are designed around South Carolina's Academic Standards for Social Studies, as written by the South Carolina Department of Education. Using an instructional approach that provides students with an integrated curriculum, Social Studies classes at RMSA strive to develop students into citizens in a global community while also nurturing their potential and excellence in the arts. Throughout the social studies curricula, teachers seek to integrate the arts as well as embed rigor and real-world learning experiences to cultivate problem-solving and critical thinking skills. This integration recognizes the talents and learning styles of young artists and thinkers, while also providing many opportunities for collaboration, cross-curricular instructional planning, and enrichment. As a result, RMSA social studies students experience high levels of student engagement and academic achievement.

Teachers within the social studies department collectively plan instruction, create incentives, and coordinate team activities, both within the department itself, and throughout the other core academic areas. Grade level counterparts meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) during planning periods to create common assessments and to create consistency across the curriculum. The social studies department also meets regularly to implement vertical alignment across the grade levels. Social studies students are separated into gifted and grade level classes. The needs of the academically gifted are addressed in their social studies classes through a differentiated curriculum. While the academic standards do not change, GATE (gifted and talented) classes are differentiated through content enrichment, process (mode of instruction), product (evidence of student mastery), and learning environment. Students with academic weaknesses, identified through assessment data, receive targeted academic assistance so they can more successfully master the reading, writing, and critical thinking skills necessary to thrive in their social studies classes.

Instructional strategies used to deliver instruction in the social studies classrooms are robustly diverse. From the use of explicit direct instruction, inquiry-based learning, collaborative learning and technologically infused lessons, teachers strive to deliver relevant, engaging experiences that merge with the various classroom-learning styles. Lessons often consist of unique storytelling techniques, guest speakers, document analysis, argumentative writing/debate, research projects, re-enactments, and collaborative learning with the belief that students learn just as much from fellow students and others in the community as they do from teachers. In addition, arts are infused in the social studies lessons. Students regularly express what they have learned using music, visual artistry, and theater among others.

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

The faculty at RMSA focus on college and career readiness by using a developmental approach in helping students learn individual strengths, skills and interests. Through activities, assessments, work-based learning experiences, collaborating with professionals on service-learning projects, and field trips throughout the academic and career curriculum, RMSA students are actively engaged.

Students develop a Career Portfolio comprised of individual research they conduct throughout their middle school years. The curriculum builds and evolves and then eighth-grade students present an in-depth project to parents and counselors as they direct a student-led Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) meeting. Students lead these meetings after taking career and personality assessments, understanding their strengths and weaknesses, researching careers and choosing which high school coursework that aligns with their goals.

With higher-level teaching strategies, RMSA students learn theory behind assessments (The Holland Hexagon, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and the Enneagram). This also develops their social-emotional learning, as they understand individual differences at a deeper level. Through technology-infused lessons, students explore the 16 career clusters, research the level of education required, budget with average salaries, calculate cost of living to create future goals, and research specific requirements of careers.

RMSA offers unique student opportunities for career development with work-based, service-learning projects and job shadowing opportunities through the arts curriculum. Each core area takes multiple field trips relevant to growth and development in their particular area of art. For example, vocal students collaborate with a conductor to write a song. Art students create work for both local and national organizations and businesses.

The Career Buzz program brings additional career education into the classroom with video interviews, which allows professionals to educate and inspire students. Rotating each month, career cluster information slides show continuously on TV monitors throughout school. Eighth-grade students identifying Education as their career goal obtain training from a reading specialist and work with elementary students to improve reading skills in the Junior Teacher Cadet program. Students identifying as having an interest in a trade profession are offered the opportunity to visit the Dorchester Career and Technology Center to learn about available high school programs.

Just as the South Carolina Profile of the Graduate outlines, Rollings Middle School of the Arts educates each child into a career-minded focus with knowledge, skills and character development.

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

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

RMSA's core focus is the arts. The school's strength is offering strong development programs in Visual Arts, Dance, Piano, Strings, Band, Theatre, and Vocal. Often these programs not only intertwine with each other but also infuse the core academic subjects.

The visual and performing arts programs are the heart of the RMSA magnet arts school. Students audition to demonstrate their potential or talent in Visual Arts, Strings, Vocal Music, Dance, Theatre, Band, or Piano. All of the arts program curricula are founded on the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards for Visual and Performing Arts Proficiency. The purpose of these standards are to give the students ownership in their learning and the objectives are written as learning targets that are "I can" statements.

Students attend their core art classes for 50 minutes every day. The instructional programs provide opportunities for students to develop and refine studio and performance skills, acquire new knowledge in their arts disciplines, and express their personal artistic voice as they practice, produce, and perform. With the connections that exist naturally among arts and with other academic core areas, and with integrated instruction that is promoted throughout, students are able to have authentic experiences that create a richer understanding, knowledge and skills. Student achievement in the arts is documented throughout the year and includes an End of Course (EOC) Exam for the eighth-grade artists. In addition to the art program, students may be eligible to join the National Junior Art Honor Society, a service organization in which students contribute their time, creativity, and energy to a school or community need.

The physical education program establishes a positive learning environment. Students attend classes on an alternate day schedule for 50 minutes each day. All students are enrolled in physical education for at least one year during their middle school career. Physical education instruction consists of cooperative activities, soccer, volleyball, basketball, floor hockey, tumbling, jump rope, baseball, badminton, and football, as well as, FitnessGram by The Cooper Institute. The available equipment supports the instruction and acquisition of skills and knowledge based on individual student goals and fitness levels.

World language is offered to eighth graders. Language classes have been offered in French and Spanish depending on teacher certification. During the 2019 -2020 school year, eighth grade students were able to choose to take a Spanish class that met daily for 50 minutes. The curriculum includes authentic applications as students gain knowledge and build skills. This Carnegie Unit course includes an EOC exam for Credit.

RMSA Technology and Media opportunities are rich and varied. Beginning in the 2020 -2021 school year, RMSA will have 1:1 computing and technology for students. This change in the instructional programs will

promote access that is more equitable, provide varied opportunities, and create authentic applications of knowledge, skills, and concepts.

The school media center and library provides resources and is open to students before school and during Independent Learning Time (ILT). In addition, units of study in ELA, social studies, and science classes utilize the expertise of the media specialists and resources. The media specialist designs, organizes, and presents special events to support student achievement and a collaborative culture for the entire school. Examples of these events are Family Literacy Night, book clubs for students and faculty, author visits, and book talks. The media center also supports SCReads.org and hosts book fairs.

Media and technology is also incorporated into the school curriculum in all visual art courses and Gateway to Technology, an encore class taught by a science teacher. The curricula for these classes engage students in design challenges, media literacy, and production using media and technology skills. Students work collaboratively to interpret, analyze, and solve design challenges.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

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

RMSA continuously monitors students who are failing to make adequate progress in the general curriculum. Data is collected from multiple sources such as, grades, teacher observations, and state and district assessments. It is then analyzed to identify those students who are performing below grade level. Students, who fail to make successful progress, may be placed into a math or reading intervention class. The intervention classes offered are Middle Level Literacy and Math Assistance.

The Middle Level Literacy class is a double the length of a regular education class, allowing for an uninterrupted 120 minutes of direct instruction in all areas of language arts. Specifically, the program is a comprehensive system designed to increase students' confidence and capabilities in reading. The system combines small group, direct instruction, from a reading specialist, with an on-line computer program to support and reinforce the lessons. Once placed into the intervention class, individual student data is reviewed on an ongoing basis so that adjustments can be made in programming and instruction.

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

Many of the students at RMSA perform above grade level. Opportunities are provided through the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) classes, allowing for acceleration and for a combination of multi-grade standards of instruction. For rising seventh-grade students, teachers analyze grades, Math Inventory Quantiles, and SC Ready test scores, and offer the top students the opportunity to take Algebra 1 Honors, a high school credit course. Select eighth-grade students are given the option of taking English 1 Honors, Spanish 1 CP, and Geometry Honors, which are all high school credit courses. Within the regular classroom environment, differentiation of instruction practices are implemented, allowing higher performing students to learn and grow at a level commensurate with their ability. Another way in which high achieving students are challenged is through the Apex Learning program. Apex is an on-line program that allows teachers to collect data on students' academic abilities. As students complete their current grade Apex curriculum, they are able to move into the next grade curriculum. This differentiation allows students to individualize their learning and move faster than their peers during computer lab time. It also provides teachers with an additional data point to drive their in-class instruction.

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

Once placed into an intervention program, individual student data is reviewed so that adjustments can be made. When the data indicates that a student is failing to make adequate progress in an intervention, the school-based team or the parent may request that a comprehensive evaluation be conducted to determine if there are any previously unidentified disabling conditions. Students identified as having a disability may be placed into a special education program, in order to receive accommodations in the general education setting, as well as, specially designed instruction in the area of need, provided by a special education

teacher.

In addition, students with disabilities that substantially limit their ability to access the general curriculum may qualify for a Section 504 Plan. A Section 504 Plan is provided to students with disabilities who require that their needs be met as adequately as non-disabled peers. At RMSA, if a student is determined to need a Section 504 Plan, the needs are individually assessed and subsequent accommodations are prescribed.

The population of students with disabilities at RMSA is relatively small but greatly varied. The diverse educational needs of students served by the special education program range from those with low cognitive functioning levels, who receive their core instruction in reading and math in a special education classroom, to those who are identified as gifted and talented, and only require case management. RMSA's distinctively inclusive culture allows for students with cognitive and developmental delays, who possess a unique talent, to be educated for most of the day alongside typical peers. In traditional schools, students with global delays are often removed from the general curriculum, and educated in a separate classroom for much of the instructional day.

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

The English Language Learner (ELL) population of Dorchester District Two and RMSA has steadily increased in recent years. Twenty-five students qualify for ESOL services. The breakdown is as follows: 12- sixth grade, 8- seventh grade, 5- eighth grade.

In order to determine the level of support needed to meet their individualized goals, all identified students are administered the ACCESS for ELLs Assessment. At RMSA, two students require direct services. Those two students work with their assigned ESOL instructor for one class period per week. Within that period, the students focus on speaking skills, using academic vocabulary and writing. The goal of the program is to increase both English language proficiency and academic language proficiency in content-area subject matter.

ELL students receive formative assessments and academic monitoring in each content area by the ESOL instructor in order to differentiate instructional practices to ensure that the language development needs of students are met. The two ELL students receiving services are currently excelling in the general curriculum and require no additional accommodations or modifications in the general classroom. Continued monitoring will determine if adjustments need to be made on a yearly basis.

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

At RMSA, students of varying ability levels are provided an array of academic supports to challenge their thinking, to integrate them into the general curriculum, and to remediate any skill deficits.

One of the unique interventions provided to all students at RMSA is called ILT, or Instructional Learning Time. ILT is a positive, school-wide initiative, to encourage and support student achievement. More specifically, ILT is essentially an extended lunch period, during which teachers remain in their classrooms, allowing the opportunity for all students to receive additional instruction through individual and small group tutoring of material that students may be failing to master during regular class periods. If students do not want to meet with teachers during ILT, then they are free to use this time to eat lunch or to recess in a variety of designated areas throughout the school building and in the courtyard.

If students are failing a class, their teachers may order them to attend daily or weekly Structured Learning Time (SLT), which is an individual tutoring plan that is provided during ILT to improve grades and academic success. After students reach their goals in SLT, they are again permitted to participate in ILT. It is notable that RMSA is the only middle school in the district that is currently implementing ILT.

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

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

Engaging students at RMSA begins before they enroll. Each spring, newly accepted students visit RMSA during regular school hours for a student led Journey to the Middle event. Student Ambassadors escort the future Knights around the building to receive their perspective and insight. This event allows new students to experience what it is like to be a student at RMSA. In addition, students and families look forward to attending the Rising 6th Grade Parent Night, which is an opportunity to tour the school and meet teachers. Faculty, staff and current students highlight the arts programs, and instill a level of excitement and comfort in the upcoming school year. When school begins, students are greeted by faculty and staff as they arrive in the bus loop or through the front doors. Teachers stand outside of their classrooms to welcome students as they enter. Eighth Grade Advisory Council members monitor the hallways for any students that may need assistance located a locker or classroom.

As the year progresses, information about events is disseminated through morning and afternoon announcements. Positive culture is a core value of RMSA, announcements always close with a reminder to "Have a great day and be kind!" Some of the activities that unite all RMSA stakeholders include student versus faculty volleyball games, spirit days, pep rallies, the annual faculty play, and flash-mob dances. At RMSA, you never know when music will come over the intercom, encouraging everyone to drop what he or she is doing and dance to the familiar song in unison. Service-oriented programs such as National Junior Beta Club, Toys for Tots, Holiday Food Fight, March of Dimes, American Heart Association Hoops for Heart basketball tournament, and the Health and Wellness club are designed to help students enhance their school and their community. Although RMSA is the smallest middle school in the district, its athletic teams fiercely compete with the other middle schools in baseball, softball, volleyball, boys and girls basketball, tennis, football, and wrestling. Academic competitions are available through Quest (social studies, math, science, public speaking, visual art, and composition), Math Counts, Spelling Bee, and Geography Bee, allowing students to highlight their academic excellence. Essentially, there is something to capture and engage the interests of everyone at RMSA.

At RMSA, students' social and emotional growth is a priority. This is promoted through school-wide interventions such as Character Education, 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens, Red Ribbon Week, National Kindness Day, Get Smart, Career Day, and the Critical Care Children program. This initiative identifies students at the highest risk for academic failure. A list of those students is then pushed out to faculty and staff so that they may select a student or two to "adopt" and foster a positive relationship in the hopes that this connection will improve student achievement. Targeted interventions such as guidance counseling, suicide risk assessments, and threat assessments are provided as preventative measures. Finally, RMSA is assigned a school-based counselor, employed by the Department of Mental Health, to provide on-site clinical counseling and psychiatric services to students and their families. This is particularly important for those with transportation issues preventing them from receiving services outside of school.

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

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 Coronavirus, engaging students and families in learning has been more important than ever before. RMSA has been vigilant in its efforts to maintain a solid connection between students and their teachers while learning from home. The school used its school website, email blasts, phone dialers, personal phone calls, and social media posts to ensure information was communicated effectively. After the first two weeks, when it was determined that approximately five percent of students had not completed any work and had not been in contact with their teachers, school staff succeeded in reaching every student to discuss their barriers to learning and to help rectify them. In addition, the school counselors have reached out to every family at least once and have made on-going contact with a small group of at-risk students, to support their social-emotional and mental health needs. Despite the need for isolation, RMSA has attempted to conduct "business as usual" through virtual faculty meetings, special education meetings, and parent-teacher conferences.

Typically, engaging families and communities is carried out through more traditional methods, but RMSA has embraced technology and social media as one of its primary means for engaging and communicating with students, families, and the community. RMSA's Facebook and Instagram pages each have over one thousand followers. Social media posts range from serious matters such as how to access distance-learning assignments, get a flu shot, or attend a sporting event to more creative and personable information such as student performances, photo collages, and flash-mob dances.

As already noted, acceptance into RMSA is considered an honor and those selected to attend demonstrate the highest level of artistic talent. This has resulted in an unfair reputation of being a school for the elite and a feeling that underprivileged students or those from diverse backgrounds may not be accepted. In order to diversify the student body, to pique interest in the school, and to subsequently increase the level of talent, school administration makes it a priority to visit every elementary school to educate those families on the application process and to inform them that there are no academic requirements for acceptance.

When students are selected to attend, their parents also become a part of the culture. RMSA has a high level of parent and family engagement in all activities and events throughout the school day, after school, and in the community. In addition, the PTSA and School Improvement Council are instrumental in awarding the school with grants, organizing volunteers, and sponsoring events such as dances, career fairs, and the annual health and wellness fair. Other ways in which RMSA forms and develops their bonds with families are events like Open House, Meet the Teacher, Military Appreciation and Literacy Nights.

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

RMSA is not only a place where students want to be, it is a place where teachers want to be. Once teachers are hired, they do not leave, unless their departure is due to circumstances beyond their control. In fact, the turnover rate at RMSA is approximately fifteen percent, far below the national average. In addition, the teacher attendance rate is ninety-five percent, much higher than the national average. RMSA's culture is based on positive regard and kindness for all members of the school family. The small size of the school fosters opportunities for personal relationships on many levels. These relationships form the caring atmosphere innate to the school.

Once hired at RMSA, efforts are made to ensure all staff receive the support and materials they need to be effective. As a result, teachers and staff feel valued as treasured members of the team. At the beginning of each year, every staff member is provided a school shirt that can be worn on designated days throughout the year. New teachers are assigned mentors to help ease the transition into a new school. A continued effort is made throughout the year to let all staff know that they are appreciated with staff parties and surprises such as candy bars, pie days, treat carts, scavenger hunts, and cookouts. These events and activities help bond the administration, faculty, and staff together into a cohesive group of professionals who support and learn from one another.

High expectations form the foundation of the professional culture; however, opportunities are provided to build upon the skills each professional brings to the learning environment. Within the school, staff is able to learn from each other through in-house offerings by master teachers on critical thinking and how to instruct all students through a gifted and talented lens. In addition, due to the rapidly changing use of technology in education, ongoing professional development on the latest programs, websites, and tools is offered by the school's Instructional Technology Support personnel. Teachers who have expertise in an educational platform teach their peers so that capacity among all stakeholders can grow. At RMSA, teachers participate in peer teaching and peer observation to build practices. In this way, professional development can be meaningful and personalized to each teacher's needs. Finally, on one special day every year, all district professionals come together to enhance their craft and to be informed on the most essential topics in education during a free event called Learning By Design.

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

RMSA administration believes in working as one cohesive team to provide its students with an integrated curriculum that develops maximum academic potential through creative expression and exploration of the

arts. The hand-selected administrative team consists of a principal and two assistant principals. The team was thoughtfully made-up of people from different backgrounds, who complement one another. A collaborative approach is used to address separate grade levels, and assigned roles and responsibilities, based on individual strengths and talents. Personalities and roles are intertwined in such a way that they provide an effective counterbalance. This ongoing balance of help and support and is what makes the team successful. RMSA's administrative team maintains a relentless focus on student achievement to implement the philosophy and vision of learning through arts integration throughout the school community.

In addition to school administration, there is a group of individuals that comprise the school Leadership Team. The Leadership Team meets once a month and consists of administration, grade level chairs, the guidance director, school psychologist, nurse, and media specialist. This team functions as the primary group through which all updates, announcements, and information is disseminated. Information is also shared through bi-monthly faculty meetings, weekly grade level team meetings, daily PLC meetings, and during common planning time. Every grade level team meets weekly, with the last item on the agenda being student concerns. If teachers have a concern about a specific student, they may call the parent, schedule a conference, or develop an individualized plan. The common thread connecting all of these teams and meetings is constant data analysis. Administration uses data from grades, state and district assessments, and student, teacher, and parent surveys to assign staff, schedule students, provide interventions and availability of high school level classes, and develop the master schedule.

School leadership is further supported by extraordinary district leadership that can be called upon at any time for additional supporting measures. Every month, the RMSA principal provides a snapshot of the school to their direct supervisor on grade distribution reports, faculty meeting agendas, and classroom observations. Monthly principal meetings and separate monthly secondary principal meetings allow an opportunity to discuss core values, to gather information on new initiatives, and to collaborate with peers. The district consists of a tight network of principals, who learn and grow by sharing their experiences and ideas. Finally, district interventionists visit regularly to observe instruction and offer feedback. Placing emphasis on sharing, planning, and ongoing reflection best educates each child intellectually, socially, artistically, and emotionally.

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

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The factor that is most influential to the success of Rollings Middle School of the Arts is what defines the school family--the arts. The RMSA family is made up of students, parents, educators, administrators, staff, and community members that are connected through a passion for the arts and the dedication to every student's success. Students benefit from the support of their peers as they grow as artists, students, and contributors to the community.

The RMSA teachers and staff promote each student in the classroom, the studio, and beyond the walls of the school. Integration of curricula and instruction occurs among arts classes and across the school curriculum. Students are able to demonstrate what they know and are able to do through processes that respect different learning styles and artistic disciplines.

Success breeds success and confidence. When students find success in their core arts area, they gain confidence when approaching challenges in other classes. When students feel part of the RMSA family, they find support when needed and opportunities to celebrate each other's successes. Once a member of the RMSA family, students inherit a rich history of success and a lifetime connection.

Through the arts, there is a common "language".