

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

---

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Somerset Academy Silver Palms  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 23255 SW 115th Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Homestead                      State FL                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 33032-4505

County MIAMI DADE COUNTY

Telephone (305) 257-3737                      Fax (305) 257-3751

Web site/URL https://elementary.somersetsilverpalms.net/                      E-mail kosullivan@somersetsilverpalms.net

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 BMONTERO@SOMERSETACADEMY.COM  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Dade School District                      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, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

---

The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

---

Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
  - 246 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 81 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 79 High schools
  - 2 K-12 schools

408 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

- 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, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	96	87	183
<b>1</b>	89	107	196
<b>2</b>	96	104	200
<b>3</b>	92	96	188
<b>4</b>	96	94	190
<b>5</b>	92	97	189
<b>6</b>	140	143	283
<b>7</b>	136	156	292
<b>8</b>	115	119	234
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	952	1003	1955

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2 % Asian
  - 9 % Black or African American
  - 85 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 3 % White
  - 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 2019 - 2020 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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	8
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	1967
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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

Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 82 %

Total number students who qualify: 1607

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %

72 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>5</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>18</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>34</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>13</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: 9

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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<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.	66
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	16
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	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>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	96%	96%
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 2020.

<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.

Somerset Academy Inc. promotes a culture that maximizes and fosters the development of responsible, self-directed life-long learners in a safe and enriching environment.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

As of April 2021, Somerset Academy Silver Palms (SASP) is operating under three different educational delivery models. Students choose to attend Face to Face, on Remote Live Instruction, or Hybrid (two groups of students; one week in school, one week at home). Parents have the opportunity to choose between these options based on their current concerns and personal situations.

Beginning March 2020, the physical school building of SASP was closed due to Executive Orders issued by the State of Florida in response to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, wherein face to face academic instruction was prohibited at all Florida schools. SASP immediately pivoted to deliver 100% online instruction via implementation of a state of the art Live Instruction platform, termed “Remote Live Instruction (RLI).” The Executive Orders to cease face-to-face instruction was made on the Friday that preceded Spring Break and a week later when students returned from their spring break recess, they returned to their daily bell schedule and attended live classes (virtually) with their original teachers. The SASP leadership team worked diligently over spring Break to assess and address all their student’s accessibility needs and implemented the state-of-the-art technologies to ensure student learning continued, uninterrupted and no instructional time was lost. The single sign on platform utilized was called Colēgia, which is a secure digital platform and complementary suite of educational applications, content, and communications. This platform allowed for the safety of students and teachers while only allowing specific users with credentials to sign on.

Beginning October 2020, as the State of Florida began to open schools, SASP provided the aforementioned three options to parents; F2F (Face to Face), RLI (Remote Live Instruction) or Hybrid. SASP is currently continuing this same method via the SASP Classroom of the Future (COTF). COTF technology installed in classrooms enhanced the RLI for those who chose a full virtual or hybrid learning experience. The technology includes smart boards and large flat screen display panels in the back and front of the classroom. Auto-tracking cameras allow teachers to move around the classroom while students followed along at home. High definition microphones and audio have augmented the at-home experience. With the enhancements of Colēgia and Classrooms of the Future, SASP students learning under RLI have the ability to attend their classes, interact with other students, engage in lessons, take assessments from home and have a fruitful, real-time learning experience.

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

All Somerset Academy, Inc. schools, including Somerset Academy Silver Palms (SASP), implement the following enrollment/lottery policy:

1. Set and advertise a registration/lottery date.

a. The following groups of students will not have to participate in the lottery process and will instead gain automatic admission/re-admission assuming they complete the “Intent to Return” form prior to the lottery date and there are seats available in the respective grade level of the applicant.

i. Current students enrolled at Somerset Academy Silver Palms

ii. Siblings of enrolled or accepted students at Somerset Academy Silver Palms

iii. Children of teachers at Somerset Academy Silver Palms

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 Silver Palms, 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.
11. 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
  - 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.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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**

---

Somerset Academy Silver Palms, also known as SASP, opened its doors in August of 2007. SASP has been effectively operating for 14 years and currently serves 1,955 students. The school has earned a letter grade of “A” for several years, ranking among the top public K-8 schools in Miami-Dade County, Florida. The K-8 campus is currently comprised of 1,955 students of which 85% are Hispanic, 9% are African American, 3% are White, 2% are Asian. The charter school's English Speakers of Other Language population is 6% and the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) population reflects 10% of the total student population. The majority of students come from working class families, many of whom have parents that work several jobs in order to survive and maintain a middle-class lifestyle. A majority of students (82%) qualify to receive free or reduced lunch and the average attendance rate for the 2019-2020 school year was 96.8%. The community where the school is located is a transitional neighborhood that has recently had many metropolitan additions such as shopping centers, residential gated communities, Performing Arts Centers, and Medical Facilities.

With a core philosophy combining high expectations for both students and teachers, SASP stresses character development and self-esteem alongside educational excellence. The school provides its students with a rigorous curriculum, as well as an extra-curricular program of activities, including team sports and over 25 active school clubs such as - Student Council, Guitar Club, Chorus Club, Art Club, Dance, Cheerleading, National Junior Honor Society, National Elementary Honor Society, Robotics Club, STEM Club, Safety Patrol, Future Educators of America, Future City, Math Club, Science Club, Thespians Club, Book Club, Arts and Crafts Club, Meditation Club, Games and Strategies, Social Studies Club, Yearbook Club, and Yoga Club. Sports include Flag Football, Soccer, Basketball, Tackle Football and Volleyball. Somerset students have also competed in many athletic and academic competitions, including the Somerset Spelling Bee, the Future City Competition, and several Robotics Competitions. In addition, students at SASP participate in various community service projects and fundraisers such as the Scholastic Book Fair, World's Finest Chocolates, Chipotle Family Night, and the Harvest Festival. Students also participate in school-wide productions such as the Holiday Show, Career Day, Hispanic Heritage Show, Black History Month Show, and Spring Show.

The facilities of Somerset Academy Silver Palms have also been recognized nationally for “Outstanding Elementary and Middle School Building Design” in *The American School and University Magazine*, a national publication on educational facilities. The campus includes three multi-story structures, that houses 114 classrooms, art, science and computer labs, a multi-media instructional area, a large and welcoming lunch room with an extensive food prep area. SASP have several indoor and outdoor activity spaces where children engage in meaningful activities. Examples include a College Prep multi-purpose room, a Robotics design room, Dance Studio and state of the art PE facilities. The school structure itself is a work of art that facilitates learning as a consequence of the building's design approach.

As a member of the Somerset Academy network of high quality charter schools, Somerset Academy Silver Palms is fully accredited by Cognia, formerly AdvancED, under the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS-CASI) division. As with all the schools within the network, Somerset Academy Silver Palms set rigorous and high expectations for all; engage students in the learning process by providing relevant and meaningful learning opportunities; and foster genuine relationships among students, teachers, families and community. SASP offers multiple opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a safe and nurturing environment. Key to achieving successful learning for all students is the school's implementation of research-based instructional strategies by a highly qualified instructional staff, and the use of innovative resources in a technology-rich setting.

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

---

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

At Somerset Academy Silver Palms, our educational philosophy is to promote a culture that maximizes student achievement and fosters the development of responsible, self-directed lifelong learners in a safe and enriching environment.

It is the school's goal to ensure the growth of the whole student, and therefore educators focus not only on academic development but also on the physical and social-emotional well-being of their students. Students are consistently exposed to topics that help foster discussion and evoke deeper understanding of how to address social emotional needs of both themselves but also others. Our goal is to produce well-rounded, intelligent beings who understand and embody the concepts of empathy, persistence, and self-awareness. The development of these concepts will encourage students to achieve their full potential not only in academics, but by developing student's interpersonal skills, we hope students will be led to responsible decision making.

In the elementary school setting, students follow a departmentalized schedule for their core classes. Students also receive special area instruction including Art, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish, as a means for students to explore other interests. This helps foster the creation of well-rounded individuals that have discovered new ways to problem solve, communicate, and make connections.

In the middle school setting, students follow a block schedule for their seven periods. Students have 90 minute classes which gives teachers the opportunity to promote cooperative learning, assist in making real world connections and also allows teachers to tailor instruction to meet the different academic needs of the students.

In order to reach all learners, students are exposed to a multitude of data driven learning strategies. In this manner, the needs and abilities of all students are carefully and consistently nurtured. The student then has the opportunity to take responsibility for both their strengths and also for their areas for growth, while also learning to track progress towards attaining their goals by making note of where they excel and where they can (and should) focus further effort.

At Somerset Silver Palms, there is a strong focus on Reading and Language Arts throughout the grades. The teachers use the Florida Pacing guides and engage in vertical as well as horizontal planning to help will ensure they address all required learning standards. The grade levels focus on the same Big Ideas to build knowledge from one grade level to the next, including but not limited to Cause and Effect, Theme, Compare and Contrast, as well as Adjectives, Nouns and Verbs. Many times students will feel confident when presented a new lesson because they already have built background knowledge on the topic, which helps them with mastery of the skill. Another focus of Reading and Language Arts instruction is not only to develop fluency but also to increase comprehension through development of inferencing capabilities and vocabulary building. There is also emphasis on visualization of what the student is reading to help them build a picture of the story and to organization information to increase what they comprehend. Through small groups, use of multiple learning modalities and hands on learning, we at Somerset Silver Palms are building proficient readers and writers.

The Reading/Language Arts department at Somerset Academy Silver Palms uses a building block approach to educate students to read critically so that they may write succinctly and accurately. Based on the curriculum set out in the pacing guide, teachers use extensive and varied resources to ensure they meet students' varied learning needs. The Wonders Literacy Program is used for students in grades Kindergarten – 5th and Collections and Springboard is used for students in grades 6-8. Novel studies and short stories are also often used as high-quality writing exemplars, to enable teachers to model analysis for how other writers create captivating and informative texts. Skill building resources such as Wordlywise, LAFS iReady and Performance Coach are integrated to develop students' vocabulary and technique. Students use reading strategies and graphics organizers to engage in critical thinking and to identify and analyze the deeper meanings of text.

Data is acquired through a variety of formative and summative assessments in order to identify learning gaps and inform differentiated instruction needs, such as students who have demonstrated deficiencies and/or have not demonstrated mastery of their grade/subject area learning standards and who may therefore benefit from one-to-one and/or small group instruction, are given targeted and individualized instruction to remediate their learning needs. In addition, the combination of visual, auditory, and tactile stimuli used in class ensures that students are exposed to a variety of learning modalities and approach facilitates active learning for all students, regardless of their preferred learning modality. Additionally, the use of technology engages students in a real world application that is relevant and useful, especially for today's students, and it provides an avenue for application/evaluation of content, that furthers higher-level thinking.

The i-Ready program also adds differentiated instruction that is tailored to address the needs of each student. Teachers add lessons and use the Teacher Toolbox as an additional technological resource to ensure standards mastery. In addition, teachers collaborate not only within their respective subject area and/or grade level, but also across various grade levels, in order to provide continuity and fluidity in the academic pacing of our school. In addition, sharing of best practices is shared amongst the faculty and celebrated as a means to encourage and reward outside the box thinking. All classrooms are print rich, colorful, inviting to all and inclusive of all students. SASP aims to provide an individualized learning path that fosters curiosity and appreciation of knowledge through active learning and SASP students bloom into whole citizens that want to contribute their gifts to society.

At SASP, the faculty is proud to explore and cultivate a love of math and also engage students through practice, hands on activities, engaging lessons and assessments. Beginning in Kindergarten by building the foundational skills of representing, counting, writing and drawing numbers, basic equations, and shapes. This focus on a strong number sense, sets the tone for 1st-5th grades as students gain confidence, practice problem solving, and learn the language of mathematics. As they progress through the primary grades, students build on that knowledge to expand their understanding to not only identify, but to also calculate equations and describe the attributes of shapes that build in rigor from 1st and up to 3rd grade. In the intermediate grades, our use of vertical planning focuses on student achievement and promotes collaboration amongst grade levels to set high standards. Students expand on their knowledge of numbers to include fractions, multi-step word problems and measurement/data to reason inductively so that they can explore relationships mathematically and draw relevant and accurate conclusions. Students in middle school are exposed to a variety of domains. For example, students are able to build their fluency within the Number System, expand their knowledge in the domain of Ratio and Proportional Reasoning, Statistics, and Geometry. In addition, students are able to develop a foundation in Algebra with emphasis on generating equivalent expressions, and solving real world problems by solving multi-step equations.

Historical data shows an upward trend in closing the achievement gaps from year to year. Mathematics instruction plays a huge role in building a strong foundation enabling us to focus on rigor and reap the benefits of student mastery. Our K-8 setting provides us the ability to engage in meaningful conversations and identify opportunities for student growth. Teachers collaborate to bridge learning gaps and address student deficiencies. Using data collected from iReady and Performance Matters, we are able to individualize and differentiate student learning, and for students who are not mastering or even meeting standards, we offer targeted intervention and tutoring in a small group (or individualized setting) if it is determined that is what the student needs.

District pacing guides, guide the curriculum in all courses. We use the Go Math series, as well as resources to help enrich our lessons, such as iReady Teacher Toolbox. We also incorporate technology using the programs such as Khan Academy, iReady, Reflex Math, and Carnegie. Regardless of the course level, there are numerous opportunities to use technology and project-based learning to promote real-world connections to Mathematics.

Our lessons are taught using a gradual release method "I do, we do, and you do." We begin with an introduction to the lesson as well as activating prior knowledge. We emphasize math vocabulary throughout the lesson to maximize the student's math literacy as well as develop their math word problem skills. Strategies are incorporated vertically throughout all grade levels, for example C.U.B.E.S (Circle the NBRS 2021

numbers, underline the question, box keywords, eliminate unnecessary information, solve) and interactive manipulatives that brings math to life. Next, we model and demonstrate lessons using a variety of methods to ensure that we are teaching students what meaningful work and successful outcomes look like. Lastly, we allow students to individually work out the problems to be able to assess mastery. Exit tickets are a key component in the evaluation of student mastery. These tickets allow our teachers to identify those students who might be struggling with a specific skill. Based on the student's outcome, we are able to differentiate instruction on an individual basis. This can be anything from basic math skills to enrichments provided through project based learning.

Additionally, enrichment is a key component in the success of our students. Using data collected, we are able to fill academic gaps and use a personalized approach when addressing a student's academic needs. Data driven intervention targets a student's individual needs and provides us a base for personalized remediation. Through differentiated instruction, small group learning, and intervention we are able to minimize the academic differences.

As a K-8, SASP also incorporates cross-curricular and vertical teaming alignment in the content subject areas. SASP strives continuously to use data assessments to drive curriculum and educational focus and to provide students with science inquiry based hands-on activities throughout content area lessons. Using data collected from Performance Matters, Baseline, Mid-Year, and Topic assessments, the faculty is able to individualize student learning and further develop students into citizens who are scientifically literate. The data is gathered throughout the school year and used to individualize the student's learning during differentiated instruction. SASP's focus is to provide rigorous opportunities for all students to learn through hands-on, inquiry-based experiences in all subject areas.

Somerset Academy Silver Palms builds a strong foundation, by teaching for mastery of Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) – Science, in all kindergarten through fifth grade science classrooms. The complexity of each standard is expanded from year to year. Teachers use of the Five E model is present when planning engaging project-based activities. These activities lead to student exploration of the practice of science, with emphasis on the explain and elaborate connection to the real-world. This culminates their mastery which is evaluated with research-based activities. For example, Kindergarten students learn patterns in the night sky as well as determine how to classify objects as living or non-living. Additionally, Kindergarten students begin to explore the concepts of matter and how energy can be identified as a push or as a pull. First grade students expand on these concepts as they investigate additional patterns in the night sky, particularly the phases of the moon. These students also learn the basic parts of plants and how these parts grow. Gravity is introduced as a force that can pull on an object and the knowledge of matter is broadened by the understanding that matter can be a solid, liquid, or a gas. Second and third graders continue to build on these skills by learning more about the night sky and how seasons and other weather patterns are caused. These learners are introduced to the concept that Earth is made up of rocks and minerals that undergo many changes. Matter is further investigated as each state can be changed from one to another. Forces and motion target more concepts like friction and relative force. Different forms of energy are also learned in the second and third grade and students begin to understand that energy is all around us and can be classified as different forms. Fourth and fifth graders build on all these standards by elaborating their understanding. Forces are now transformed into scientific laws that can be investigated and proven. Plants and animals are classified based on particular characteristics and adaptations. Students at this level begin to understand how energy is transforms from one form to another and produces change. Patterns in the sky are expanded to our unique solar system and all that resides within it. Weather patterns are associated with the water cycle, the altitude, and the position from a body of water. Earth's structures are understood as a complete system of continuous change through weathering and erosion. All of these standards and skills challenge our students to think like a scientist and investigate their understanding. In 6th grade, SASP's students begin building their foundational knowledge of cells. Students learn that each cell contains different structures, and students will distinguish the difference between a plant cells versus animal cells. As they move onto 7th grade, SASP students build upon their prior knowledge of characteristic cells and connect how plant cells provide a key role in the food web, and transfer of energy that is essential for a thriving ecosystem. In 8th grade, our students dive in depth about the actual process of photosynthesis versus cellular respiration and much of the lessons learned in previous years are tied together. The students are able to visualize and comprehend the vital need for plants and animals in our ecosystem and tie this knowledge to

another understanding taught in 8th grade, the Law of Conservation of Mass and Energy. The Science department works together, to ensure that while students may be in different grade levels, essentially the standards and concepts tie together to help students maximize their academic potential.

SASP's science curriculum aligns with Miami Dade County Public Schools. Teachers utilizes Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) Florida Science. Each student has a student book as well as e-book access. In addition, SASP faculty use resources to help enrich lessons such as J and J Educational Boot Camp and they incorporate technology using the USA Test Prep program. During crunch time, leading up to state assessments, students use the HMH Florida Science Statewide Science Assessment Review and Practice booklet. It provides annually assessed science benchmarks, content review, assessment practice, and student response activities. The Science curriculum utilized is a foundational tool to develop lesson plans based on state standards. Lessons are introduced by activating students' prior knowledge. Throughout the lessons, SASP encourages students to use strategies such as graphic organizers and note taking skills. Collaborative hands-on work is an essential component in our classrooms. To assess mastery, we use an assortment of assessments, varying from formative, summative, and/or performance based. In addition, Somerset Academy Silver Palms implements departmentalization beginning in first grade. Teachers are able to focus on a specific subject and this allows our students to receive specialized instruction in the different subject areas, early on.

SASP has developed a community partnership with Deering Estates and joined their N.E.S.T.T program (Nurturing Environmental Stewards of Today and Tomorrow) to enhance the Science curriculum and give SASP students hands on experiences aligned to the content taught. Experiments were also done to further enhance student's understanding; and students were given a chance to grow several native plants to Florida throughout the school year and subsequently plant those in the state park, leaving their permanent mark within the community. Furthermore, students participated and helped create pop rockets, volcanoes, as well as completed the culminating activity of dissecting a dog fish.

At Somerset Academy Silver Palms (SASP), it is our belief that all instruction should be data driven. In Social Studies, teachers create lessons based on student derived quantitative data gathered through test analysis as well as qualitative data is obtained in various ways, including but not limited to Socratic seminars. SASP seeks to nurture the development of students who will become exemplary members of society. This is achieved in various ways in each grade level.

Students in younger grades are exposed to various aspects of the community and educators demonstrate how the community works together to maintain a successful society. Students are exposed to a multitude of careers and how teach of those functions within the community. Students also participate in discussions regarding the meaning of various desired character traits, such as respect, responsibility, honesty, and cooperation. In fact, it is one of the preferred methods, for teachers to invite students to participate in various activities such as the creating rules for the classroom, which provides students context wherein it is the goal to kindle interest in being active citizens who participate in how they are governed. Students also learn the levels of government, how those interact with each other and how they can contribute and play a part in making decisions in and for their community, and at times advocating for a certain stance, such as by voting or through the creation of a petition.

As students reach Middle School, emphasis is given to Civics, and there is a concerted effort to ensure students receive preparation for the Seventh Grade Civics End of Course assessment. SASP prepares students for their exam by using the methods described above as well as other methods to stimulate the students' ability to think critically. For example, the school often engages students to discuss and analyze political cartoons, complete history labs, mock trials, virtual fieldtrips, and other activities to make history come alive for students. The most effective method to assist students' success is to utilizing different learning modalities and styles to reach all learners. In fact, SASP's social studies department works with other departments to infuse Social Studies content in various ways. For example, infusing Social Studies vocabulary and content into language arts classes.

In addition to using highly effective curriculum such as the textbook, Gateway to American Government, educators also use current news and relevant information to spark discussion and encourage student analysis

for deeper understanding. It is clear that the methods and curriculum being used are effective, as evidenced by the historical performance of SASP's students on the Civics End of Course Exam, which is similar in scope of success on the various examinations in which SASP students participate and consistently excel. Moreover, SASP students prove every day that social studies education has had positive influence in the lives of SASP's students, evidenced not only by their everyday choices, but also in their demonstration of community involvement and support, as well as earning a positive reputation in the community as being a helpful and altruistic student body year after year, soon after SASP inception.

**1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):**

Somerset Academy Silver Palms offers Dual Enrollment courses as early as 6th grade for students who demonstrate aptitude and have interest in excelling. As the emphasis on career planning increases, students are encouraged to select courses that align with their postsecondary goals. Students are advised based on individual needs and carefully monitored to ensure success. The school communicates information to students and parents, fostering a positive understanding of the merits of dual enrollment and developing collaborative relationships with college advisors and peers. In the elementary levels, students can take rigorous courses to prepare for this middle school opportunity.

In 8th grade, we not only offer History and Career planning as part of student curriculum, but we also offer My Career shines which is a career planning system that meets Florida statues and helps students explore options and plan for their future.

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Parents, students, and teachers know that education is much more than just learning and understanding the core academic subject areas offered in schools. Somerset Academy Silver Palms takes great pride in offering students the opportunity to participate in special areas and elective courses as early as elementary to middle school. This ensures that SASP's students not only quench their thirst of creativity, but that their needs with multiple intelligences are also met. Collecting data and resources might look different in each subject area within electives, but at SASP the main goal remains the same, student growth and well rounded individuals.

Elective courses are offered throughout the school day varying by grade level. SASP's offers Physical Education, Spanish, Art, and Music beginning as early as Kindergarten. These classes are embedded throughout the weekly routine. Physical Education is offered daily in the elementary grades to all students for 30 minutes, and in Middle School, Physical Education is a part of the student's schedule, as a means to ensure they receive basic understanding of sports as well as the benefits of physical activity. This also helps the students develop as individuals and learn the qualities of good sportsmanship.

SASP's Dance and Physical Education Department provides students the opportunity to develop their physical and bodily-kinesthetic skills. In Physical Education (P.E.), students are provided an opportunity to reduce anxiety and stress through daily exercises. In the beginning of the school year, students are timed to see how fast they can run a mile, and every nine weeks they are assessed again to measure progress. Students in P.E. are also taught numerous sports, constantly allowing them to build not only their motor skills, but their self-esteem and team building skills. In Dance, students are allowed to explore and solve challenges in technique and composition by visualizing and applying creative solutions. SASP students have numerous opportunities to express themselves through choreographed dances throughout the school year. Recitals take place during the Hispanic Heritage Showcase, Winter Showcase, Black History Month Showcase, and Spring Showcase.

SASP values the Arts and strives to create well rounded creative thinkers, therefore, beginning in the primary grades, students receive Art and Music instruction, integrated within their daily routine. As the students mature and approach middle school, instruction in the Arts progresses and students are encouraged

to explore their preferred artistic mediums and offered several opportunities to refine their creative skills. In Elementary, students receive an hour of music and art weekly. In middle school, students are able choose their own pathway through a variety of Arts programming. In music, art, and drama, SASP students are developing their visual-spatial skills and are given the opportunity to have a creative outlet. Music students are given the opportunity to build on and develop their cognitive skills. Assessment is based on the composition of a musical piece every nine weeks, giving them the opportunity to learn different musical instruments such as guitar, piano, clarinet, bells, and flute. Art students express themselves and use their creativity as a calming strategy. Art portfolios are created, updated, and assessed quarterly based on given prompts and teachers ensures student's skills are progressing through each piece. SASP's drama students are given the opportunity to build their confidence while developing speaking skills and social skills and students recite famous monologues, develop, and create costumes and set designs for future plays.

With South Florida being such a diverse community, SASP places emphasis on developing bilingual students and encouraging them to become bilingual. Spanish classes start as early as First Grade and continue through middle school. In elementary school, our focus is on basic vocabulary, phonics, and proper sentence structure. In middle school, students branch out into conjugation and conversational speaking. By completing their middle school Spanish courses, students fulfill their high school language requirements and more importantly; become better communicators in the melting pot that is our country.

Spanish classes are offered to students beginning in First Grade, with elementary school students receiving 150 minutes of Spanish instruction throughout the week. In middle school Spanish is offered as one of the seven courses they can choose to take as an elective. Overall SASP's students are supported to pursue their passion and are thereby offered a variety of pathways wherein they choose an artistic, linguistic or physiological pathway, they are supported and encouraged.

In addition, SASP offers a Robotics program that provides students the opportunity to develop their Mathematics and Science skills through vertical learning. Students use Lego resources to learn about coding as well as they attend field trips to the Apple store to further their coding experiences. Robotics club members have competed in local and state competitions and they have won an Engineering and Robot Design Award.

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

Somerset Academy Silver Palms follows the MTSS/RtI process in working toward meeting the needs of all students who are struggling. Tier 1 is everything from the types of curriculum selected to how teachers implement differentiated instruction, which is addressed at the beginning and then throughout the school year. In Tier 2, students receive daily support both during academic classes delivered by interventionists pushing into classes, as well as through pull-out groups during approved elective class time in 30 min increments. The students are taught curriculum in a small group to reinforce what is being taught in class. Every Friday students engage in a progress monitoring assessment and the data is recorded in individual student folders and subsequently drives monthly RtI meeting discussions. Tier 3 includes hand selected lessons from a digital platform that addresses the individualized needs of each student in this tier. The plan, at all tier levels, is shared with interventionists, teachers, parents, and administrators who are present for monthly RtI meetings.

Parents are important members of this intervention team. The team reviews with parents what they can specifically do at home with their child, in detail, as well as provides resources and gives brief tutorials on how to use these resources at home. All conversations about where a student should be in the RtI process are data-driven. This includes those conversations where the team is considering referring a student for a psycho-educational evaluation, which will subsequently lead to determining if the student is eligible for Special Education Services.

Somerset Academy Silver Palms also collaborates and analyzes data for the high performing

students. The MTSS/RtI team meets to discuss students' performance in regard to gains or losses. Administrative data chats and yearly articulation meetings coincide with the MTSS/RtI meetings as teachers aim to ensure students are properly placed in classes. As a result of these meetings, students are identified for enrichment or remediation courses. In grades Kindergarten through 5th grade, students are placed in both homogenous and heterogeneous classrooms where students with disabilities are able to blend with their like aged peers. Gifted students in the elementary setting are serviced through Science utilizing STEM manipulatives and experiences and middle school students follow an honors or Pre-AP track. These tracks allow students to participate in advanced classes and/or high school level courses, such as Algebra 1, Geometry, and Biology. This acceleration effort affords the students who participate, the opportunity to work on upper level courses, meet graduation requirements and become eligible to access college credit bearing courses.

Teachers engage students in differentiated instruction, STEM and project-based activities to extend learning beyond the classroom. These activities meet students "where they are" in hopes of bridging educational gaps and closing the divide to promote learning. Enrichment activities are aimed at not only activating student's prior knowledge, but also cultivating an atmosphere to promote higher-order thinking skills. Teacher and student data chats are conducted quarterly to review data, assess goal attainment and set new goals. The set goals ensure students the opportunity to make learning gains and also teach them to take ownership of their learning. Through the use of multimedia applications, teachers also invite parents to take an active role in their child's education. Parents and teachers communicate on a regular basis in regards to not only educational progress, but also to work on improving their social-emotional skills.

Somerset Academy Silver Palms follows an inclusion model for students who have an IEP or 504 Plan. Our Exceptional Student Education (ESE) population primarily consists of students with Specific Learning Disability. We implement the inclusion model by offering special education services where an ESE certified teacher pushes-in, at specific times during the day, to teach along with the General Education Teacher in a variety of subject areas, (instead of pulling students out of class to a separate room). It is important to keep the bar high for all students, including students with disabilities (SWD), and by having students track their own progress, they have ownership over their learning process. SASP takes pride in meeting children where they are in their academic/behavioral skill set and working from there. SASP also offers the service of monthly to bi-weekly monitoring of SWD's progress in all necessary academic classes and/or to assess progress of any identified behavioral concerns. The SASP ESE Team keeps an open line of communication with General Education Teachers regarding best practices in implementing all accommodations. SASP takes communication with parents very seriously because it is key in ensuring buy-in and in students owning their progress. Parental support could be the difference between the student feeling success or not.

Somerset Academy Silver Palms works as a team to figure out how to best support students with exceptional needs. To meet the needs of all SWD's, thinking outside of the box and finding innovative, individualized ways to keep students motivated to learn and complete their schoolwork is the key to success. The SASP ESE Team focuses on building a relationship with the student first and foremost. Making the process of building a relationship with students with special needs is a first priority, makes long-term, steady growth more feasible and likely for the student. Understanding where a student is coming from, as well as what kind of hardships they are facing in their individual lives (both in and out of the school campus), allows the student to feel comfortable enough to make mistakes, fix them, and move on to the next set goal. The SASP aim is to "Set Goals and Crush Them." This is different for each child.



Somerset Academy Silver Palms provides a Mainstream/Inclusion English classroom setting for English Language Learners (ELL). English Language Learners are grouped into Reading/Language Arts courses and grade-level core content subject area courses with non-ELL students. Instruction is delivered using ESOL strategies to ensure that instruction in the subject area is comprehensible.

In addition to providing the specific services listed in the student's ELL Plan, any student in need of remediation because of inadequate progress participates in appropriate interventions. This is done through the MTSS/RTI process and support strategies that include pull out interventions, tutoring (e.g. after school, before school, Saturday mornings, or other assistance, such as that which is offered to non-ELL students). Teachers differentiate instruction as necessary and ESOL/Reading strategies in the content areas are facilitated throughout the curriculum to provide additional practice.

English Language Learners who are not making progress in their home language, are struggling academically within their core courses and ESOL Courses and are not responding to changes in instructional strategies or program model or modification, interventions via Tier 1-3 RtI models should be assessed in the student's native language, if possible, and subsequently referred to the school's School Support Team, as applicable. When a potential English Language Learner is identified an ELL committee meeting is convened. This committee determines alternative strategies that include a referral to the School Support Team (SST).

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

---

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

Engaging, motivating, and providing students with a positive environment is our daily goal at Somerset Academy Silver Palms. Throughout the school setting, staff consistently discuss the “whole child.” This approach is the center of what SASP provides as a support for SASP students. When staff engage in conversations with students regarding grades, they also discuss their current feelings about the culture in school; their feelings about after school activities/clubs; their status in attendance and/or tardies and many other factors affecting their lives (that is, before and now during Covid-19). Connecting with children on an ongoing basis allows the school to be aware of student’s wants and needs which in turn allows the school to continue to improve and engage students and keep a positive outlook on the future of SASP.

To recognize accomplishments, students are recognized for high achievement during each quarter and invited attend a recognition ceremony with the Principal. In addition, students are also recognized for exemplifying positive character traits. A weekly newsletter is provided to parents where students are recognized for these actions. Students are also highlighted on the morning announcements as well as on the school’s website. Students who score above average on the state assessments are taken on an all-expense paid field trip to a theme park during the following year to celebrate their accomplishments.

Some new challenges have arisen during this time of school closure/remote learning. Somerset has tackled these new challenges with great enthusiasm and teachers have learned new ways to handle learning. The school as a whole has become extremely creative and now offers multiple ways to motivate all students. For example, staff offer opportunities for students to participate in: drive-up textbook distribution days; remarkable graduation ceremonies; home visitations of eighth grade graduates, and drive-up yearbook pictures, are some of the new “think-outside the box” opportunities SASP has offered in the past year.

Nothing has stopped SASP from creating new ways to ensure students get the very best, no matter from where they are physically learning.

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

Somerset Academy Silver Palms has used a unique approach to ensure parents know they are a continuing part of SASP’s daily success. As part of the school community, Somerset continues to promote a three-point approach to success. In this approach, Somerset recognizes that for the child to be successful, the three parts must act consistently and in tandem: the child, the family, and the school. During parent orientations, parent conferences, student orientations, and student conferences, this approach is discussed and shared. Students understand that ultimately, they are responsible for their success; however, support comes in many forms and is a vital part of their overall achievement.

As an integral part of the student’s success, parental involvement is key. Parents are afforded opportunities to participate in the school’s activities and events.

Due to limited physical interactions during the Pandemic, Somerset has offered Zoom meeting participation for parents on multiple occasions. SASP was blown away with great turnouts in excess of 1,000 parents at a time showing their ongoing support of their children. During parent zooms, Somerset is able to discuss options for learning ahead of time, as well as options for after school activities, and is therefore able to offer solutions to concerned parents that ease their burden and alleviate their concerns. This form of communication has proven to be extremely successful.

The community plays an essential role in the Somerset family, and we thrive on building relationships with businesses as well as organizations throughout the neighborhood. We have established several partnerships with local businesses and vendors. These businesses vary from after school enrichment programs like Bricks4Kidz, that offer STEM enrichment activities, to Tuff Martial Arts that facilitates after school tutoring, transportation, and character development courses. SASP has also welcomed nonprofit

organizations like Deering Estates, that presented students science enrichment quarterly and Wild Animal World. They also brought an animal encounter and informative presentation on campus and delivered it virtually, ensuring the participation of all SASP students. These experiences are imperative to continue the social emotional growth of our students, as well as bring them a sense of normalcy during these historic times.

During the school year, working relationships were also developed with large business chains, as well as small community businesses. These include companies such as Target, that has provided support for our students in need by covering costs and offering gift cards for them to purchase school supplies. Another company that has supported SASP is All Uniform Wear, that sponsored families in need, who were unable to purchase uniforms for the school year. We have also established relationships with businesses that are local, such as family owned restaurants that have donated food for family nights and event planning services that have supported SASP during activities.

Annually, SASP hosts a Harvest Festival where local businesses are invited to participate and promote their trade. The purpose of this event is threefold: to support local family businesses; bring the school's families together; and raise supplemental funds to benefit the school. In lieu of a Harvest Festival this year, due to Covid-19, SASP had a smaller event, with a limited number of participants through a "Trunk or Treat" event. Families came together to collect prepackaged candy, decorate the trunks of their cars and a local party planning business adorned the parking lot with balloon art.

Somerset Academy Silver Palms is a pillar for the community. SASP not only educates students, but it also boosts the morale of the community. SASP do so by including ourselves in community meetings and local events and promoting the local aforementioned businesses to help keep our school and community an ongoing success. SASP is proud to host Miami Dade College students to intern at our school, this in an effort to continue growing interest in the profession of teaching. SASP even had college interns join in on zoom calls to watch Remote Live Instruction in action. As a community we learned together and became better and stronger through problematic times of a pandemic. By working hand in hand, we as a community and school became stronger, more resilient, and learned that we are better together.

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

Somerset Academy Silver Palms recognizes that for students to excel in the classroom, the school must provide children with high quality instructors. At Somerset, professional development (PD) and respect for the profession of teaching are a priority. During the course of a normal school year, professional development is provided in the form of leadership workshops within classrooms; in group settings; hands-on activities and many other PD opportunities for professional educator enhancements. The teaching profession is ever-changing and we are always educating our staff on new learning techniques that can be incorporated in their very own classrooms. SASP prides itself on the love and dedication our teachers put into their classrooms and we support them through workshops on small group centers, data analysis, technology in the classroom, to name a few.

As the world began to shut down due to the Pandemic in 2020, Somerset transitioned into a new educational phase called Remote Live Instruction in March 2020. Our teachers worked tirelessly during their Spring Break to learn the single, sign on platform of "Colegia" and the interaction video conferencing service platform, Zoom, to ensure they would be ready to deliver content seven days later to their students. Teachers perfected their lesson plans and practiced delivering their plans using Colegia and Zoom with their colleagues until they were masters at their new crafts. Some teachers went as far as having their students practice logging in for daily read alouds with their teachers during the transition period, in an effort to bring some normalcy during uncertain times. The Leadership Team worked alongside each department as the teachers were learning their new platforms to guide, support, remedy and troubleshoot during their Spring Break. As the roll out began, the students were shocked and pleased to learn there was no interruption in teaching and learning.

Additionally, data and differentiated instruction are an integral part of Somerset's professional culture. Teachers utilize data to drive their instructional decisions and create small groups for individualized

instruction. These groups are fluid and students are given small group instruction during each class session for improvement both in their physical classroom as well as through Zoom.

Continuous opportunities for professional development and constant improvement of technology also provide for healthy professional culture. At Somerset, teachers are offered the most up to date technological resources to use in the classroom. Teachers received their ClearTouch Interactive Boards and were provided professional development on how to use this new resource in their classroom. The PD course provided an interactive lesson where teachers could ask questions and even remote in and practice using the controls with guidance from experts. Most teachers enjoy trying new and innovative strategies, resources, and techniques within their classroom and the administration is always willing to support these new endeavors. Professional development opportunities are afforded to teachers and staff in house, online, and through the local school district. Through in house professional developments, teachers from several grade levels are able to vertically plan and focus in on the areas for growth from one grade to the next as well as share resources within the community of educators. Teachers working together, collaborating as a family, and sharing best practices is what has helped them to further perfect their craft and successfully pivot to deliver remote live instruction to their students virtually.

Just as the teachers did all they could to help support their students to feel safe during the difficult transition period of Covid-19, administration also went above and beyond to provide similar support(s) to teachers. Administrators helped teachers obtain essential goods during the pandemic such as hand sanitizer, masks, and cleaning supplies. They also supported teachers in use of the new learning platform and also helped to provide technology to those in need. Additionally they helped and supported teachers as they learned and implemented the new teaching format and were patient even though they were tasked with ensuring instruction was delivered without interruption. Furthermore, administrators were also tasked with supporting staff morale, and even conducted drive-by staff checks to employee's homes, placing teacher appreciation signs on their lawn to thank them for their service. The administrators also created daily encouraging affirmation cards to promote positive mental health and keep everyone's spirits up during uncertain times.

As the future approaches although much remains uncertain, the one thing that is certain is that at Somerset Silver Palms, we are better together. As long as we continue to work together with support from our community, our families, and each other, there is no doubt we will continue to have the success.

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

Somerset Academy Silver Palms recognizes that in order to be a successful school, we must incorporate the strengths of all personnel. SASP is made up of many small entities and together we make an amazing team. Collectively, each department shares the same mission and vision of Somerset. Alongside the Principal is the Leadership Team. This team consists of Assistant Principals, Lead Teachers, and Curriculum Support. This team meets regularly to ensure processes are in place for students to be successful. When challenges arise, the team meets to discuss and implement solutions.

The leadership approach at SASP is one of continuous improvement. Teacher leadership is fostered through opportunities for all teachers to lead clubs, activities, and extra-curricular events. Opportunities for professional growth and development are abundant, which has promoted teacher retention, continuous growth, and the development of strong leaders.

Over the years many teachers have been promoted to positions within the leadership team. This provides a sense of continuity and dedication to the school's vision to promote collaboration and continuous improvement. Teachers therefore have close relationships with the administrative team, as they have worked as colleagues in the classroom, and through a multitude of school events. The Assistant Principals and the support team are involved in the entire educational process, and offer teachers support in all areas. They provide resources, share links, highlight instructional websites, and share ideas for improvement in the classroom and in building relationships with students/families.

This unified culture pervades the entire structure of the school building. Parents, families, students, and the community are well-connected with the school via the leadership team. As a community-oriented school, the

leaders at SASP have invested abundant time and resources into forming relationships with the community. The Principal and Assistant Principals know all students by name, as well as the vast majority of parents. These close connections allow the leadership team to support families in need, by donating resources, uniforms, supplies, and in some cases transportation to parents who are experiencing extreme hardship. Overall, the relationship between the leadership team and the school building can be summarized as one of empathy. The teachers, students, and all stakeholders feel supported by the leaders at SASP and always able to ask for support or assistance to be successful.

During the past year, while handling the Pandemic, relationships have become more important than ever. Faculty and Staff communicate regularly, often on Zoom, and their wellbeing is at the forefront. Support for faculty and staff, including their families, is ongoing. We firmly believe happy teachers make for happy classrooms; thus, the school invests considerable time in nurturing its teachers. These conversations have been held at the school site, in the community or at staff member's homes. A commitment to the staff is expected and very evident at all levels of SASP, and in turn, morale amongst faculty and staff has remained high, all feel supported, and in turn their interactions with students has also remained supportive and very familial. Creating this positive, supportive culture among teachers makes them more effective and motivated instructors, consequently making students excited about their education.

At SASP, the Principal is the instructional leader of the campus, and it is the job of the Principal to oversee, guide and support academic program delivery; to encourage faculty and staff to engage in effective teaching methodologies and decision making; and to instill the mission and vision of the school throughout the learning environment both for student's learning through Remote Live Instruction as well as those present at the Brick and Mortar site. The Principal has been an educator for 27 years and an administrator for 23 years, she is an incredible motivator, who has set high expectations for all stakeholders, herself and provides the necessary support for all stakeholders to achieve their goals. The Principal encourages staff to utilize new and innovative teaching methods and she ensures teachers are preparing students to excel at their next level of education. The staff at SASP has consistently stated along with high expectations of teaching and learning, there is a "family" feel and team concept approach throughout the campus.

Throughout the past 12 years, the Principal has implemented a "hands-on" approach to improving the use of data. In January of each year, during data discussions, Leadership Team members are paired with at risk students, and they are tasked with providing additional support to the teachers of those students, specifically. Team members are paired with teachers in grades K-8 and they utilize a side-by-side teaching/mentorship type support experience to guide and support instructional improvement. This co-teaching method continues until the testing period begins. Although initially this method was foreign to teachers, over the past 12 years, this method has become a best practice norm at SASP which is consistent with the "Family" feel and team concept approach.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

At Somerset Academy Silver Palms, we are constantly addressing the needs of students, families, and staff. Culture is central to learning at the school. One of the ways we reach our families is by hosting informative evening events with topics relevant to our community, which would include culture sensitivity and awareness on social media. Students are exposed to diversity through lessons which are embedded in their curriculum. Teachers use different teaching styles to reach all learners. Staff participates in professional development geared for all students from diverse backgrounds. Staff is broken up into groups to model what is expected in the classroom.

We take the time to get to know our students and their needs to help them feel valued. Every year the students participate in a survey which addresses issues that are currently relevant to them. This gives a better understanding of students' values and habits as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Our counselors meet with students who are struggling with being accepted to help create a more inclusive environment. Students also participate in Black History as well as

Hispanic Heritage activities and assignments to help promote awareness and understanding of different cultures.

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

---

During the month of March 2020, as the world began to change, educational delivery models were immediately impacted. SASP, along with all Somersets, were challenged with the task of continuing, without interruption, excellent education to all. As students and teachers began to explore new ways of delivering learning, the philosophy of “doing what’s right for kids” became ever more prevalent. A renewed focus on making choices around this philosophy began to drive every decision.

Each day, while trying to provide guidance on Zoom or the new platform of Colegia, it was clear that if we reminded ourselves to “do what’s right for kids,” we could not make a wrong decision. Although we could no longer see or interact in person with kids, we knew we could accomplish the same task through live virtual means; this was what was right for kids.

Multiple different strategies were used to ensure we were “doing what’s right for kids,” To ensure students were provided what they needed, teachers needed to be supported. It all began when the Leadership Team visited all 80+ instructional staff members, by social distance, at their homes. Yard signs were installed in their front yards. This allowed the staff to feel encouraged and appreciated as they delivered the same curriculum but in a new way. Another way SASP embraced this philosophy was supporting students. Students who were struggling to acclimate to the new learning environment were provided tutoring during the school days or on weekends, and via Zoom in chat rooms or in person at their homes. Staff members were going to provide whatever means possible to lessen the burden and provide student support. Kindergarten students were visited and brought manipulatives to ensure they could accomplish their goals. Eighth grade students had a drive thru graduation to provide closure to their middle school career. These examples proved to the entire community of SASP that we would continue our journey to education excellence even in difficult times.

This philosophy has only strengthened over time, throughout the Pandemic. Although providing education has been difficult during this time, focusing on this goal has proved successful. Instructional and support staff have refined, reviewed, and reevaluated this philosophy and now use it to drive everything we do daily. This is the philosophy SASP now guides all principles upon.