

U.S. Department of Education
2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Seventy-First Classical Middle School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 6830 Raeford Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Fayetteville State NC Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 28304-2629

County Cumberland

Telephone (910) 867-0092 Fax (910) 487-8547

Web site/URL https://www.ccs.k12.nc.us/sfcms E-mail toddyardis@ccs.k12.nc.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* Dr. Marvin Connelly E-mail marvinconnelly@ccs.k12.nc.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Cumberland County School District Tel. (910) 678-2300

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 Greg West
(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 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 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 2016 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: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
 - 52 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 18 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 17 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

87 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 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
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	68	70	138
7	57	84	141
8	64	85	149
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	189	239	428

*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):
- 0.9 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 4 % Asian
 - 48.3 % Black or African American
 - 18.1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.7 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 17.5 % White
 - 10.5 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2020 - 2021 school year: 3%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	11
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	11
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	428
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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

Spanish, Arabic, Filipino.

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
7 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 45 %

Total number students who qualify: 192

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 10 %
42 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 with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>4</u> Autism | <u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>12</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>5</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>1</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>3</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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	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 14:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	94%	97%	96%	95%	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 2021.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Seventy-First Classical Middle School is committed to providing a safe, caring environment where students will learn, appreciate diversity, display good character, and become responsible citizens.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.ccs.k12.nc.us/domain/3740>

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

Seventy-First Classical Middle is a School of Choice in Cumberland County. Students must apply to attend, but there are no admission criteria. The maximum capacity for the school is 475 students. Once a student is admitted, students automatically remain enrolled through the end of eighth grade. Students apply during December through February for the upcoming school year. Applicants are selected on a lottery basis depending on how many spaces are available. The majority of new students each year are sixth graders, as most students choose to return.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Seventy-First Classical Middle School (SFCMS) is located in historic Fayetteville, North Carolina, in the western part of Cumberland County. The main building was constructed in 1924 and is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places due to the Collegiate Gothic style of architecture. It served as a high school until 1962 when it was converted to an elementary school. Additionally, a portion of the school, the Glendale Building, was originally constructed in 1897 and served at another location for many years as a one room schoolhouse. With the establishment of Seventy-First Classical Middle School in the fall of 1996, major physical renovations were made to prepare the buildings for their new mission.

Fayetteville and Cumberland County have the unique distinction of encompassing both rural and metropolitan areas. Cumberland County has a rich history and is a diverse, international community. A major contributing factor to the diverse population is the proximity of Fort Bragg, a military installation of the United States Army. Located within Cumberland, Hoke, Harnett and Moore counties, Fort Bragg is one of the largest military installations in the world, with over 50,000 active duty personnel working on the base. The military community has a significant influence on Fayetteville, Cumberland County, and surrounding areas and thus has an impact on public schools. Within its 89 schools, Cumberland County Schools serves 48,796 students, of which 13,172 are military-connected. Students in Cumberland County Schools represent 85 native languages. The city of Fayetteville prides itself for being a hometown community of heroes and embraces its diversity.

Cumberland County has an estimated population of 335,330, making it the fifth most populous county and school system in North Carolina. It is home to Fayetteville State University (one of North Carolina's oldest historically black colleges/universities), Methodist University (a private institution), and Fayetteville Technical Community College. The median income of Cumberland County as of 2018 is \$46,716. The student demographics of Cumberland County schools are as follows: Black (45.03%), White (28.22%), Hispanic (14.18%), Asian (1.88%), Native American (1.47%), Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (.53%) and Multi-Racial (8.70%). Students receiving free or reduced meals make up 78% of the students in Cumberland County Schools.

In addition to maintaining a focus on excellence in academics, the staff at SFCMS understands the unique needs of the middle school child and works to provide opportunities for students to learn, grow, and discover, and to find a sense of belonging both in and out of the classroom. Because of this commitment to students, SFCMS has an extensive array of clubs and academic competition teams. As a result of the success of these co-curricular programs, SFCMS has been awarded the Challenge Cup, sponsored by the North Carolina Association for Scholastic Activities, recognized for having the best scholastic competition program of all small middle schools in the state. Since becoming a member school in 2013, SFCMS has been awarded the Challenge Cup in 2015, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

Since its establishment in 1996, Seventy-First Classical Middle School has earned many awards for its innovative and challenging academic programs. As the original School of Choice in Cumberland County, SFCMS is based on the philosophy that children learn best when distractions are minimized and emphasis is placed on academics. Seventy-First Classical exceeds basic curriculum requirements and focuses on extending learning beyond the classroom by providing stimulating and rigorous interdisciplinary projects, incorporating technology to problem solve and engage students, and by continuously focusing on literacy as the gateway to all learning. The school motto is "We learn not for school, but for life." This reflects the genuine desire of the administration and staff to provide students with the skills and discipline to pursue their goals and to become lifelong learners. High expectations with support for all are an integral part of the culture. This results in a highly structured educational program that focuses on core subjects as well as cultural arts, 21st century skills, and character development. A uniform code of dress is prescribed for all students. Students initially apply during the winter for the upcoming school year and are offered to enroll at SFCMS on a lottery basis. There is no admission criteria and students enter SFCMS with varying degrees of abilities and academic performance. Though the demographics have changed over the years, having become more representative of the surrounding community, SFCMS has had perennial success ranking as the top middle school in Cumberland County for proficiencies on standardized tests and has met or exceeded

growth expectations for the past eight years. Seventy-First Classical Middle School remains a popular school of choice in Cumberland County with a waiting list for admission at all grade levels.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, SFCMS worked hard to maintain connections to students and ensure students continued to achieve at a high level academically. The daily attendance for each class continued to be in the 95% range, even when school was online. This was accomplished through daily phone calls by teachers, administration and school counselors, and through virtual student activities designed to increase engagement. Daily morning announcements (led by our students), virtual lunch tables and afterschool virtual clubs were just a few examples of the activities that ensured students remained connected to school and to each other during the pandemic.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Since its establishment in 1996, Seventy-First Classical Middle School has maintained a reputation for high standards of academic excellence. This is evident through meeting or exceeding growth goals each year and by student performance data which ranks SFCMS at the top of all eighteen middle schools in the district. As a data-driven school, teachers collaboratively use historical standardized test data, current benchmark data, common assessments, and classroom performance to plan programs and target instruction. This approach facilitates enrichment and intervention opportunities, to include differentiation and tiered support whether in whole group, small group, or individualized instruction. The primary focus for instruction at SFCMS is to build relationships, make learning relevant, and provide rigor to grow students. Interdisciplinary units, hands-on activities, collaborative practices, and academic discourse are evident across grade levels and subjects. Each grade level team of teachers meet weekly to find avenues to connect subject areas and create interdisciplinary activities.

The core curriculum at SFCMS consists of English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies. Beyond the standard level courses, ELA and mathematics offer gifted and special education classes for eligible students. In addition to targeted classroom instruction, in-school remediation is available for students identified by assessment data and teacher recommendation, as well as after-school tutoring, where any student needing academic support may participate. Certain math and foreign language classes allow students the option to earn high school credit, thereby meeting the unique needs of accelerated learners.

Instructional strategies are based on a high level of active student engagement and include a variety of approaches to include hands-on activities, collaborative learning, interdisciplinary units, and the integration of technology in all disciplines. A focus on literacy, critical thinking, collaboration, and real world problem solving is evident across all disciplines, to include core subjects as well as elective courses.

1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

English Language Arts engages students through reading literature, reading for information, listening, speaking, and writing with increasing rigor at each grade level. Students are introduced to a balanced variety of student relevant and complex works, including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama, to challenge students through text dependent activities in all five strands. The texts students read and discuss also incorporate complex social issues, including bullying, citizenship, and individual's rights, as well as social-emotional learning skills and strategies.

During the summer, students engage in a thoughtfully chosen reading assignment. Students read a book selected by each grade level team which focuses on different issues and themes that will be further explored through interdisciplinary units. These interdisciplinary units are a collaborative effort between ELA, math, science, and social studies teachers. This grade-level unit sets the tone for academic expectations early in the year and creates relevance by helping students make connections between the disciplines.

Interacting with the text through close reading strategies and annotation are a key component to success in ELA. Students are taught a method for these strategies and utilize them on every piece of work they receive, whether in print or online. Students must be able to defend their thinking and understanding in both written and verbal form. To accomplish this, students participate in academic discourse. Students are provided with model sentence starters they may use to help them share their thoughts and understandings, respectfully disagree with peers, or ask follow-up questions. Structured academic discourse is utilized to engage students in class discussions based on text. Students are required to use textual evidence to defend their answers.

Additionally, students collaborate to complete a variety of activities to assess understanding of literary

skills. When working in groups, students must function together to complete the task, which requires listening and speaking skills to process information received and synthesize all the input into one final answer. A variety of assessments, both formative and summative, are implemented to gauge student progress. These include historical data, benchmarks, common assessments, and teacher-made tests to monitor student growth and mastery. By analyzing the student data, teachers are able to target instruction and identify individual student academic needs. This results in planning activities that address whole group, small group, and individual instruction.

Small group tasks not only include collaboration with peers but can also include focused practice with the teacher in deficient areas. These small groups are formed using data from class performance and benchmarks. The performance data guides teacher instruction and differentiation to address specific areas of deficiency or to provide enrichment to students who demonstrate proficiency in the specific concept.

This structure applied in ELA classes models a framework for engaging in collaboration and academic discourse to increase rigor, engage in problem solving, and apply critical thinking skills. This framework is replicated throughout other subjects, encompassing content-specific material.

1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Mathematics engages students in number systems, expressions and equations, ratios and proportions, statistics and probability, and geometry. Eighth grade math also includes functions. SFCMS offers accelerated mathematics courses at all grade levels, including Math 1 in eighth grade, offering students the opportunity to receive high school credit. Students are placed in appropriate levels of math classes based on historical test data. Students who score in the 80th percentile or higher on standardized tests are placed in accelerated math sections. Small group in-school tutoring is provided to students based on teacher recommendations. Peer tutoring is a valued resource and is implemented when appropriate in support of learning for all. After-school tutoring is offered to all students.

Math instruction uses real world, relevant applications incorporating technology to expand mastery and practical understanding of math processes. This instruction requires students to become critical thinkers and problem solvers. Students explore the math curriculum using practices such as Three Reads, Think-Pair-Share, Notice and Wonder, and Compare and Connect, in addition to other mathematical approaches.

Students also explore through teacher-facilitated hands-on activities and learning, such as Break Out Boxes, graphing stations, building projects, and gallery walks. Students utilize close reading and annotation skills to understand questions and communicate using content-specific vocabulary, not only describing what the answer is, but explaining how to solve the problem and interpret the answer. Students often demonstrate understanding by writing step-by-step explanations to reveal thought processes. Teachers utilize concrete manipulatives to showcase real world problem solving, as well as online programs to further comprehension. Math classes also incorporate music, movement, and art, allowing students to make cross-curricular connections and furthering student understanding of concepts.

Teachers collaboratively use historical data, benchmarks, formative and summative assessments, and classroom observations to identify areas that need additional focus. Teachers use this data to compare results, search for trends, and determine effective strategies to help students master the concepts. Math teachers plan collaboratively and share best practices to create optimum success for students.

Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, SFCMS implemented a block schedule to allow for more additional time in mathematics classes and provide for personalized learning opportunities. The math teachers use formative assessment data to constantly review each student's progress and determine what skills need to be focused on as a group and individually.

The math curriculum encompasses cross-curricular, as well as content-specific applications. With effective classroom practices and a schoolwide program of intervention and support, SFCMS standardized test data indicates students continue to improve in their overall math proficiency.

1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The science curricula consist of physical, earth, and life sciences. The approach to teaching is focused on exploring, learning, and applying. Students explore the bigger picture by asking questions related to science and brainstorming answers with peers. These content relevant conversations set a tone of inquiry and create connections to the real world. Meaningful and personal connections foster high student engagement and promote success. Additionally, students explore through hands-on labs and other activities, such as nature walks and scavenger hunts, to synthesize information from student-created questions, research, and exploration.

Student centered learning is a priority. Students participate in a learning style survey at the beginning of the year to determine the way he or she learns best. Students are charged with teaching certain topics in science, and knowing types of learning styles enables students to be aware of their own needs as well as to address the learning styles of others. Knowledge of learning styles is also beneficial while students collaborate in table groups. Academic discourse allows students to articulate understanding, present different points of view, and ask questions of their peers. Students learn through direct instruction, as well as supplemental online resources, field trips, labs and experiments, and guest speakers.

Learning is applied in a variety of methods incorporating close reading skills and discussions, classroom labs, hands-on activities, group problem solving, and debates. Data from these activities is tracked by students and teachers to aid in targeting weak areas and to monitor progress in mastery of science concepts. Science provides a rigorous platform to incorporate literacy and math skills while synthesizing and applying new knowledge.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Social studies focuses on five strands consisting of history, geography, economics, civics and government, and culture. Sixth and seventh grades cover world history. The sixth grade curriculum begins with the origins of man through the 1500's. Seventh grade begins with the late Middle Ages through modern history. The eighth grade curriculum includes United States and North Carolina history, and a unit on financial literacy. Students engage with understanding each social studies strand, and articulate the impact each strand has on the other. Students are encouraged to investigate and learn their rights and responsibilities as a citizen, promoting an understanding of their local rights, and their rights within the United States and globally.

Students explore using primary and secondary sources, speeches, and other works to immerse themselves in their investigations of history and its impact on culture. Research is encouraged through a variety of projects and assignments. Project-based learning with peers allows students to collaboratively research, organize, apply understanding, and present utilizing content specific vocabulary. Additionally, students participate in creative assignments such as rewriting pop songs or TV show theme songs to highlight historical events and key figures in history, or original news broadcasts that re-imagine and relay news-worthy events of the past and present. Lessons in financial literacy include lifestyle income, budgeting, paying bills, and dealing with unexpected expenses. Academic discourse promotes the application of learning, offering students the opportunity to debate issues, ask others' opinions, and investigate the impact of events throughout history. Students are able to showcase learning in a way that draws on individual strengths and promotes high student engagement.

Interactions within social studies are an opportunity for students to explore their role in today's world applying historical and modern perspectives. Critical thinking, problem-solving, financial literacy, collaboration, and research are practical skills students need to function as productive citizens.

1f. For secondary schools:

Students are offered opportunities to explore colleges and careers that suit their goals and interests. Throughout the middle school years, students research professions and careers through various subjects, whether it is via a career interest inventory in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) course, working as a

library assistant in the school media center, volunteering in the community, or researching authors, historical figures, scientists, or specific professions. As students form a deeper understanding of themselves and their goals, they begin to understand the credentials needed to aspire towards that career.

SFCMS' CTE program is packed with coursework connections to STEM fields. Our focus is to inspire all students to become 21st-century ready and aware of all opportunities within STEM. The offerings range from audio-video technology and communications, information technology, STEM career awareness to exploring, coding, technological design and innovation, engineering design and modeling. These courses are taught using a student-engaged instructional approach by integrating high-level academics and technology.

SFCMS has also joined the STARward STEM program. The goal of this program is to provide America's future STEM leaders with enriched educational opportunities to lead in modernization, discovery, and technological innovation and culminates by sending students' actual projects to the International Space Station for experimentation as payload aboard a scheduled rocket launch. The STARward approach aims to balance the wonder of cutting-edge scientific discovery with real-world applications that ignite students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

In addition to the career readiness focus which empowers students to apply concepts in the context of real-life scenarios we incorporate 'soft skills'. The interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that support entrepreneurship, critical thinking, creativity, communication, computational thinking and design thinking. We encourage hands-on competencies, the ability to learn new skills, continuous learning and innovation.

The SFCMS staff in conjunction with the Parent Teacher Association and Fayetteville State University sponsors an annual STEM Night. Where the entire community is invited to come and experience STEM. Our STEM student's work is spotlighted, FSU professors present amazing technology and STEM activities are provided for all ages, The Parent Teacher Association sponsors an annual Career Day, where local professionals, entrepreneurs, military personnel, technical and trade specialists are available to spotlight their work, answer students' questions about their chosen field, and to share what education or credentials may be required.

SFCMS provides a foundation for the future by practicing 21st century job skills, exploring career options and requirements, and providing role models and resources to prepare students for success in future endeavors. We are changing the narrative and making education more accessible and relevant by imparting knowledge and skills indicative of the world outside the classroom.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The role of the elective department is to provide cross-curricular enhancement and enrichment. Its mission is to ensure the whole child is nurtured academically, physically, socially, and emotionally.

Visual Arts is a semester class for sixth graders and a year-long class for seventh and eighth graders. Students are introduced to the fundamental elements and principles of art and design. Using a variety of mediums including drawing, painting, sculpture, and digital media, students create original works through inquiry-driven art-based practices. Students boost their critical thinking skills while building a tolerance for ambiguity through the creation of open-ended interdisciplinary projects.

Sixth, seventh, and eighth graders participate in band, chorus, or orchestra. These performing arts classes focus on a wide range of music from a variety of genres and cultures. Music skills are sharpened through activities designed to improve skills such as sight-reading, intonation, pitch, memory, phrasing, blend and balance, and etiquette. Music comprehension is taught through the understanding of text, historical context, and the personal perspective of the composers. SFCMS also offers Introduction to Musical Theater where

students will further their expressive and receptive communication skills through the process of reading plays, analyzing musicals, improvisation, and creating their own short two-act plays.

Health and Physical Education (PE) is offered as a semester course for all sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. Students alternate between Health and PE. The complete three-year program enables students to gain knowledge and skills about age-appropriate healthy living topics relevant to their lives. The health curriculum targets issues that affect students' immediate and long-term health while focusing on a balance of physical, mental-emotional, and social well-being. PE activities target health benefits, encouraging each student to develop a commitment to regular exercise and physical activity.

SFCMS offers one world language course to students, Spanish. Students may take Spanish as an elective in sixth, seventh, and/or eighth grades. Students acquire a knowledge of basic Spanish in four areas: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Eighth grade students who complete a year-long foreign language course may earn high school credit.

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department offers Business, Technology, and Computer Science courses to all sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. These elective courses are designed to teach students fundamental business application software. Digital literacy and keyboarding classes provide students with the skills needed to effectively and safely navigate an ever-changing technological society. Computer Science and Coding classes aim to teach the fundamental concepts of programming. Students design computer programs that will help them collaborate with others, develop problem-solving skills, and persist through difficult tasks.

The STEM elective is offered as four quarter classes for sixth graders, a year-long class for seventh graders, and two semester classes for eighth graders. STEM empowers students to collaborate, compete, and succeed in an increasingly interconnected world, fostering a learning environment in which students produce original ideas, objects, and structures according to certain specifications incorporating skills from science, technology, engineering, and math.

The media coordinator teaches the seventh and eighth grade Library Science elective. These students are trained on responsible use of information and technology. Library Science students aid in the management of the library and fill leadership roles throughout the school as student Library Assistants. Library Assistants also help manage a Makerspace where students are encouraged to explore and create through activities ranging from arts and crafts, origami, coding, and more.

The elective department supports the overall academic program. It encourages exploration and skill development, building confidence and self-expression while encouraging collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and communication in its various forms.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

The MTSS coordinator and administration meet regularly to review the progress of all students and identify students who are not meeting expectations for growth and/or grade level proficiency. When interventions, tutoring, and parent contacts do not result in improvement, a referral is made to the Student Services Team (SST). This team consists of a counselor, the MTSS coordinator, school psychologist, Exceptional Children (EC) teacher, regular education teacher, and an administrator. The SST meets regularly to identify reasons why the student is performing below grade level and to suggest interventions that may increase academic performance. The SST disaggregates individual student data, including historical test data and grades, current class performance, attendance and social and health issues. Specifically-targeted interventions are implemented through a personalized education plan and progress is monitored.

A school counselor meets with low performing students individually to assist with organizational and social skills that may contribute to low performance. Teacher mentors are assigned to create weekly behavioral and academic goals for students and to provide strategies, encouragement, and support.

School counselors form small groups to enhance rapport and foster positive social connections to certain students whose behaviors hinder school success. These small "Lunch Bunch" groups are created to teach members how to identify, verbalize, and manage their emotions. During weekly sessions, students engage in exercises that model healthy communication patterns, decision making skills, and conflict resolution skills.

Over a period of approximately six weeks, as interventions are put into place and progress is monitored, if adequate progress is not indicated, the SST, in cooperation with the parent, may decide to refer a student for educational testing to further identify the causes for below grade level performance.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Academically/Intellectually Gifted (AIG) students and other students performing above grade level, based on standardized test scores and grades, are placed in cluster classes for ELA and Math. In these classes, teachers build on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and modify it to match the needs of the accelerated learners. Modifications may include curriculum compacting, problem-solving activities, tiered assignments, research projects, and enhanced curriculum. Teachers of these classes function as facilitators of instruction and allow students to work alone, in pairs, or in small groups. Students are frequently given a choice as to the types of products used to demonstrate what they've learned.

In certain cases, where students demonstrate unusually gifted performance in math or foreign language, an individual curriculum pathway is developed, providing access to advanced high school courses via the North Carolina Virtual Public School, accessed during the regular school under supervision by a staff member.

The AIG coordinator reviews the performance of the AIG students each nine week grading period. Students who fall below the 80th percentile in their identified area(s) meet with the AIG coordinator, and together develop a specific action plan to identify and address the causes of the lowered performance. Parents are made aware of this process and are invited to discuss the action plan with the AIG coordinator. All high performing students are offered courses for high school credit in math and foreign language. Individual counseling and coping strategies are also used as interventions to help manage challenges that are unique to high performing students, such as struggling with anxiety from wanting to be the best and feeling pressured to perform at high levels.

3c. Special education:

Students who are identified and qualify for services through the Exceptional Children (EC) program are served in inclusion classes and through consultative support. Students whose area of identification indicates their needs can best be served in an inclusion class, are served by a full time EC teacher who specializes in learning disabilities. Students who receive related services, such as behavior, speech, vision or hearing, are served by itinerant specialists who work one-on-one with the student and collaborate with regular education teachers.

The Exceptional Children's teacher works with all grade levels in reading, writing, and math, working in small groups within the inclusion classroom. The EC teacher works one-on-one with struggling students to reinforce concepts as needed. Inside and outside the classroom, the EC teacher monitors student progress through observation and data. During whole group instruction and independent work, assistance is provided to students to promote on-task behaviors and quality engagement with the course material. Collaboratively, regular education teachers work with the EC teacher and specialists to ensure that all Individual Education Plan (IEP) modifications and accommodations are implemented. The EC teacher completes informal assessments in reading, math, and writing to monitor student progress and conducts informal interviews with students who have an IEP and are transitioning between grade levels or transitioning to high school. An interest inventory is completed by students to help plan for a career path after high school. Close contact with parents through phone calls, emails, student planners, and regular meetings.

As a specific goal of the School Improvement Plan, focused effort has been made to ensure this subgroup

makes adequate progress. Standardized test data from 2018-2019 indicates that the Students with Disabilities subgroup met growth expectations.

3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:

English Language Learners who do not yet demonstrate proficiency in English are served by a support program provided by Cumberland County Schools, where these students meet weekly with an English as A Second Language (ESL) teacher who assists classroom teachers with strategies and modifications to make access to learning equitable for these students. Currently, all SFCMS students for whom English is not a first language, have demonstrated proficiency. These students are supported in a consultative role by the ESL teacher, who in collaboration with classroom teachers, monitors the progress of these students.

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

SFCMS operates a special after-school program solely for students from active duty military families. This federally-funded program, Army Youth Programs in Your Neighborhood, operates daily and functions as a student union style setting to provide a safe and enriching after-school program for military youth. Students who participate enjoy physical activities, games, snacks, special celebrations, arts and crafts, as well as an option for study hall or tutoring. Due to the often unpredictable and demanding roles of active duty military parents, this program offers a convenient option for after-school care and enrichment, free of charge to active duty military families.

As a part of the school's partnership with the military community, SFCMS also has a school counselor trained and provided by the Department of Defense to aid military connected students and provide additional supports to those families. The counselor works with the military population, helping those students with their unique needs and challenges.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Seventy-First Classical Middle School strives to maintain a positive, safe, and orderly environment that promotes learning for all. The staff understands that each student is an important individual with unique intellectual, emotional, social, and physical needs. High expectations and clear goals are placed on students, however, through an engaging curriculum, appropriate support, and opportunities to be involved in scholastic activities, students are able to meet or exceed these expectations.

Building appropriate rapport is an essential component for engagement. Before school begins, staff and students participate in a virtual Open House allowing students to introduce themselves to their teachers. At the beginning of the school year, staff and students take the time to get to know each other through various classroom activities which include conversations to share opinions and points of view. Rules are also discussed and created within the classroom, allowing students to have input and take ownership of their educational environment. During the 2020 - 2021 school year our Media Coordinator met with students virtually daily to help them with any technology and Canvas issues that occurred while they were home. Additionally, guidance counselors are available to students, through individual encounters, groups, and online platforms, and provide students with a safe space to talk, whether the concerns involve education, social, emotional, or family matters.

The staff at SFCMS welcomes students' ideas and embraces collaborative learning. This often comes from high interest, interdisciplinary projects that include a variety of mediums and topics. Students are encouraged to read novels, articles, and other publications of relevant, relatable experiences, such as racism, bullying, and growing up, in order to see the world through a different lens. These readings apply in all disciplines and allow students the opportunity to engage not only with the text, but with the teacher and their peers, promoting a culture of support and providing a safe space to take risks within the classroom.

SFCMS offers many clubs, competitions teams, and afterschool activities to engage students beyond the classroom. Opportunities are available for students to explore activities, pursue new interests, and build relationships with peers and adults, fostering a positive climate and helping students feel connected to school in various ways.

Student achievements are recognized throughout the year and are celebrated through grade level ceremonies once per semester, PBIS recognitions, a digital Boast Board for schoolwide morale, a schoolwide celebration in May, and a formal schoolwide ceremony at the end of the year all help to build morale and camaraderie.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Seventy-First Classical Middle believes staff, parents, students, and community members share in the responsibility of providing a cohesive learning environment. SFCMS focuses on creating a shared vision and sense of unity so that these groups are all working together. This sense of community is established through providing Campus tours, virtual meet and greets, parent conferences, both virtually and in person, and monthly parent technology sessions.

SFCMS promotes character, service, and leadership among students while also focusing on academic excellence. The National Junior Beta Club volunteers with outside agencies such as local animal shelters and local food drives. The students involve the entire school through donation boxes and host school wide activities to raise awareness for these causes. Gentlemen of Distinction is a group for young men who would benefit from an extra level of support. Instead of traditional methods of punishing students who are off task, these young men are provided with monitors who facilitate access to resources and strategies to help conduct themselves as one of our Gentlemen of Distinction.

Parents and community members are encouraged to become involved in SFCMS through the Parent Teacher

Association (PTA). The purpose of PTA is to empower and engage families and community members to advocate for all children. The PTA plans and implements numerous events at school and within the community including Open House and various Spirit Nights at local restaurants.

A local church serves as an active partner with the school, sponsoring a popular after school club, Campus Life, and serving as volunteers for other school events. The Green Schools Coordinator for Cumberland County Schools partners with SFCMS to run the Go Green Initiative which includes a recycling program, connecting community guests, poster contests, and student awareness of ecological issues. SFCMS also partners with neighboring schools to promote reading by having the middle schoolers read to the elementary students.

SFCMS communicates and interacts with families and the community through the SFCMS webpage, PTA monthly newsletter, school marquee, flyers, mass text messages, an online presence, and public performances. A yearly Choice Fair Night allows incoming students to see all of the different clubs, electives and academic rigor SFCMS has to offer. During the 2021 - 2022 school year, SFCMS also held an Arts Informational Night which provided current parents with information about all of the different arts programs offered. SFCMS continues to build a relationship with stakeholders, working together to support success for all students.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Seventy-First Classical Middle School operates under the belief that the most important offering to students is a quality classroom experience. To that end, SFCMS places great value and importance on recruiting, developing, and retaining the highest caliber teaching and support staff. During the interview process, potential candidates participate in team interviews for any position within the school. This practice sets the tone for high expectations and demonstrates high levels of involvement for the candidate, allowing staff to have input in choosing their colleagues. The team interview process involves stakeholders in creating a collaborative and cohesive work environment.

Professional development is ongoing for certified and classified staff. Teachers are required to have specific professional goals each year, developed through a self-assessment and through guidance from an administrator. These goals are periodically reviewed and reevaluated. In support of these goals, professional development is tailored to meet specific individual needs. At the beginning of the school year, faculty is surveyed to determine areas deemed most important for professional development. During the 2020-2021 school year this professional development continued virtually through weekly help sessions called Edibles and Edifications and the establishment of Canvas trainers.

During the 2021-22 school year, staff professional development focused on the middle school teaming concept. Central to the work of any middle school, the teaming concept is based on the idea that the unique needs of middle school learners are best met when the school is divided into interdisciplinary teams who work collaboratively to support students and ensure their success. SFCMS' professional development in this area included a book study, a collaborative process to develop a master schedule that will allow for teaming, and weekly follow up meetings to practice and implement the teaming concept. Especially considering the unique circumstances our students faced (returned to in-person school after learning virtually the previous year), the extra level of support provided by the implementation of the teaming concept was a crucial step towards meeting our student's needs.

The practice of colleagues teaching colleagues furthers the collaborative atmosphere and creates a climate of support and autonomy for faculty. Staff are expected to participate in professional development provided by the district as it relates to their subject area or other best practices that improve teaching and learning. Professional development opportunities beyond the local level are made available to staff and can be funded through a process requiring approval from the School Improvement Team (SIT). Classified staff also participate in ongoing training and assist each other in learning new skills. It is expected that these support staff members are cross-trained so that a community of support is in place for any task.

During the 2020-2021 school year administration conducted weekly virtual faculty meetings which allowed

staff to share different virtual resources and share best practices for virtual teaching and model these for their peers.. Teachers visit colleagues' classes to learn from each other or to offer suggestions. Celebrating success in both professional and personal matters is a regular item on each faculty meeting agenda.

These practices create a professional culture that contributes to a low staff turnover rate, high level of morale and job satisfaction as indicated in the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey, and an atmosphere of shared vision, collegiality, and support.

4. School Leadership:

The administrative team at SFCMS consists of a principal, an assistant principal, an MTSS coordinator, and a school improvement team. The leadership philosophy can best be described as distributive. Administrators strive to build capacity within the school and to create an environment where individuals and teams share a mission to sustain a culture of learning that creates positive change and results in increased outcomes for students.

Operating under a shared vision, the School Improvement Team (SIT) members are elected by grade levels and departments and include representation of faculty, support staff, and parents. Administrators serve in an advisory role on the SIT, as ex-officio members. The SIT meets each summer to develop goals and strategies to create a comprehensive plan for school improvement. All staff members vote on the final plan. Goals are reviewed and progress is monitored during monthly meetings. SIT members represent their constituents, monitoring progress towards meeting schoolwide goals and addressing issues and concerns that arise during the school year. Staff is invited to make proposals to SIT in request of funding for special activities and needs outside of the normal budget. SIT determines the appropriateness and feasibility of these requests and the potential schoolwide benefit before making a decision.

Administrators function as supportive leaders and strive to maintain a regular presence in classes, team and department meetings, and school events to demonstrate support and reinforce school goals and expectations. Administrators provide ongoing support to teachers by conducting informal walkthrough observations. Administrators conduct formal evaluations and meet face-to-face or virtually with teachers to summarize, review, and coach teachers on instruction, leadership, and continuous improvement goals.

Each grade level has a chairperson to coordinate grade level programs and to facilitate communication within the grade level teams. The grade level teams, composed of core teachers, meet weekly and focus on ways to improve student outcomes, including collaborative planning, parent meetings, and daily procedures. Same subject grade level teams work each week to develop common lessons, units and assessments to ensure each student at SFCMS is provided with the highest quality lesson imaginable, regardless of who is teaching their class.

Department chairs are assigned to provide leadership related to specific subjects to include electives. The departments meet to share best practices, maintain communication vertically between the grade levels, and target professional development that may be helpful in support of school goals.

Students, staff, and parents have easy access to administration via an open door policy. Stakeholders understand that their concerns and contributions are valued and that administration is willing to take risks and explore new ideas to promote continuous improvement and ensure student success.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The SFCMS mission statement is to provide a safe and caring environment where students will learn, appreciate diversity, display good character, and become responsible citizens. Consistent steps are taken to ensure that these characteristics are learned and applied in school, home, and the community. Staff participate in professional development that address equity, cultural awareness and inclusion. From the time our students arrive, they are greeted with morning announcements that include the pledge of allegiance, cultural awareness knowledge, respect/kindness tips, and Boast Board student/staff equality recognition among all. Tangible steps are those that include direct contact of mediation, classroom daily advisory times,

Student Services Second Step (socio-emotional skills) weekly classroom guidance lessons and afterschool clubs which address all the above mentioned.

Our belief is to provide a learning environment that will enable the students to be global citizens and independent thinkers. To foster this belief, SFCMS teaches the students to use critical thinking in past, current, and future events. Students are encouraged to identify, research, educate and build upon the current event and/or social movements, while examining their own personal beliefs, values and biases. Each month represents a specific event or social movement. For Kindness month, there were over 10 diverse hands-on, school-wide activities planned and successfully completed. The impact was so great that kindness activities have continued as a key element for our school; ongoing activities for the remainder of this year. Other examples include Native American Month, Black History Month, Women's History Month and The Month of the Military Child.

It is widely known that our children need mental, social and emotional support, especially due to the challenges of the last few years. To provide adequate care, staff attends social-emotional learning workshops, county professional development trainings, in-State/out of State conferences, and in-house training. SFCMS provides surveys that help identify the needs of students, staff and families. This ensures that we address and apply learned skills, whilst providing needed resources of support. Students are supported by means of crisis intervention, individual, group and classroom guidance. They are also supported through clubs of diversity and inclusion (Q&A, Gentleman of Distinction, Campus Life and American Sign Language). The clubs promote equity, safety, and community involvement for all students. Staff support includes free mental health services and acknowledgement in the weekly "Kudos" section of the staff newsletter. Families in need are provided resources to support any areas of need. Referrals to community health and financial services, targeted groups, and food banks are provided.

In response to the pandemic and the challenges of returning to in-person learning, SFCMS has increased the available services and level of support to our students and families by adding an additional school counselor and increasing the time our school social worker is on campus. These dedicated professionals work closely with the classroom teachers to ensure that supports are provided wherever needed.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

As a School of Choice in the Cumberland County School system, Seventy-First Classical Middle School is different by design. Created to give students and parents an option for a middle school experience that minimizes distractions and has a strong academic focus, the school was founded on the belief that a climate of consistent, clear, and high expectations is critical to success. Pairing our high expectations with equitable and strong support for students and staff is our defining practice.

By far the most important component of the climate of high expectations is personalization of learning and support. SFCMS ensures the success of all students, regardless of ability level and their previous level of achievement, by ensuring teaching and learning activities are relevant and adjusted to the individual's needs. Both face-to-face and digital components for subjects are incorporated, and the school provides one-to-one access to devices and Internet for students who may not have this access at home.

The current schedule is designed in block format to ensure teachers have the time to conduct small group lessons based on the varied data sources they have available. Our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) coordinator works daily with classroom teachers, administrators, students, and parents to track the progress of each student, compares that progress to their previous work, and develops plans of action where necessary to ensure every student continues to move forward.

The personalization of learning extends to our staff members as well. The administration collaborates with staff to develop professional growth goals. Each staff member has at least one personalized goal. All staff work together on one additional goal that will drive their coaching and improvement efforts that will also facilitate one of our school improvement goals. While whole school and department-level professional development still occurs, SFCMS works to provide individualized learning experiences for each staff member to ensure they continue to improve their instructional practices.

As a result of the climate of high expectations with targeted individual and group support, SFCMS consistently ranks as the top performing middle school in the district and has been recognized for student achievements at the state level, resulting in recognition for being in the top 10% for growth in North Carolina in September 2019.