

ANNUAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT REPORT

FURMAN 2026

MIDDLE SCHOOL

WE WIN
TOGETHER.

WE LEARN
TOGETHER.

WE GROW
TOGETHER.



TOGETHER, BUILDING LIVES OF
EXCELLENCE, PURPOSE, & INTEGRITY

OUR MISSION IS TO EQUIP EVERY STUDENT WITH THE KNOWLEDGE,
INTEGRITY, AND SKILLS NEEDED TO THRIVE IN AN EVER-CHANGING
GLOBAL SOCIETY THROUGH RIGOROUS ACADEMICS, REAL-WORLD
EXPERIENCES, AND A CULTURE OF EMPATHY AND RESPECT.

WHO WE ARE

Located approximately 9 miles southwest of the city of Sumter, Furman opened its doors as a middle school in the mid-1990s after serving as a high school for countless years prior. Serving 725 students in grades 6-8, Furman serves rural areas and suburbs including the Cane Savannah, Cherryvale, Delaine, Lakewood, Manchester, Pinewood, Privateer, Sumter, Wedgewood, and Wedgefield communities, among others. Furman students are transported by bus or by car beginning at approximately 6:00 A.M. daily.

Sumter, nestled in the heart of the state, is the seat of Sumter County. Sumter lies 45 miles east of Columbia, the state capital. Offering major industries of manufacturing, military, and medical, Sumter is proud to be the home of Swan Lake Iris Gardens and Shaw Air Force Base (Shaw AFB). Swan Lake Iris Gardens is the only public park in the United States with all eight known species of swans and multiple varieties of Japanese Iris. The Iris Festival, held every May at Swan Lake Iris Gardens, is a multiple winner of the "Top 20 Events in the Southeast" Award. Shaw AFB, headquarters to the 9th Air Force and the 20th Fighter Wing, is one of the largest bases in the United States Air Force. Staff and curriculum are important elements of any educational system or institution.

Furman Middle School is a 6-8th middle school that, in conjunction with various arts and STEM initiatives, enhances teacher instructional practices and student-based strategies that are being incorporated into the curriculum. In addition to working with student engagement using proven strategies, we were awarded a STEM grant that provided training and necessary supplies for one of our teachers to provide STEM opportunities for students. In addition to the STEM grant, we were able to purchase other resources to promote STEM and added robotics to our offerings for students. We also have resources to provide opportunities for STEM activities throughout all subjects and are very excited to build on our current offerings. Furman Middle also implements the Advancement through Individual Determination (AVID) program. This program has been successful in reaching students who show potential but just need additional assistance in organization, studying, note-taking and various other skills. This program has been very successful and we are now in our seventh year of implementation. We also provide access to arts integration experiences through partnerships with Engaging Creative Minds (ECM) and the National Summer Learning Project to offer after-school tutoring and STEAM camp. We have partnerships with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and National Institute of Excellence in Teaching (NIET) to develop high-quality instructional strategies and practices. In addition, we are partnered with HMH to provide Read and Math 180 elective courses to support student progress in the areas of literacy and math, as well as Edmentum TSI to provide access to weekly live tutoring in math.

The staff of Furman Middle School includes dedicated, competent professionals who provide content and pedagogical expertise, guidance, and leadership to students thereby enhancing well-roundedness, competency, and responsibility as a way of life. To meet the needs of our varied stakeholders, we offer a wide range of experiences, resources, and supports to prepare students for success in and outside of the classroom, as well as when they make the transition to high school. The curriculum consists of the core academic subjects such as English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Additional courses include career and technical education, physical education, and fine arts. In addition to course offerings, we provide counseling and guidance services, special tutorials, and a variety of athletic and co-curricular activities to enhance the middle school experience for our students.

OUR BELIEFS

MISSION

Our mission is to equip every student with the knowledge, integrity, and skills needed to thrive in an ever-changing global society through rigorous academics, real-world experiences, and a culture of empathy and respect.

VISION

We aspire to be a supportive and innovative school community where every child is challenged, nurtured, and equipped to lead lives of purpose, character, and professionalism in a changing world.

2025 THEME-2026

“It’s Game Time”: we set the pace, model high expectations, and create the conditions for every student to succeed. Every decision, every interaction, and every effort counts—let’s show up and lead with purpose.

C.O.R.E. VALUES

C: CULTURE

We believe that a positive, inclusive school culture—built on high expectations for quality citizenship and scholarship—is essential for student success. When students strive for excellence in behavior and academics, and teachers, staff, families, and community partners actively support and model these expectations, students thrive in a safe, respectful, and motivating environment. Together, we cultivate a culture where responsibility, pride, and achievement are consistently reinforced and celebrated.

O: OUTREACH

We believe that meaningful outreach—rooted in strong partnerships with families and the community—helps students thrive academically, socially, and personally. By reaching into the home, collaborating closely with families, and connecting students with community opportunities, we cultivate a sense of responsibility and service. When all stakeholders work together, students develop the skills, values, and mindset needed to become engaged, productive citizens who contribute positively to their communities.

R: RIGOR

We believe that academic rigor—anchored in high expectations and meaningful challenges—ensures every student reaches their full potential. Teachers, staff, and administrators provide purposeful instruction, resources, and feedback, while families support learning at home and encourage perseverance. When all stakeholders hold high standards and model a growth mindset, students develop critical thinking, resilience, and a commitment to excellence that prepares them for success in school and beyond.

E: ENGAGEMENT

We believe that engagement extends beyond academics, encompassing a vibrant student life culture that makes students excited to be at school. Teachers, staff, and administrators create meaningful experiences that foster connection and belonging. Families support these experiences by encouraging participation, and community partners enrich opportunities with mentorship and real-world connections. When all stakeholders collaborate, students feel valued, motivated, and inspired to be active participants in both their learning and the life of the school.

OUR TEAM

INDUCTION TEACHER OF THE YEAR

DR. MARICHU ALCANTARA

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

JOSEPH BETTINGER (7)

INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

OPERDELLA CHOICE-MILLER

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

WILLIAM DELAVAN

FINANCE

ALISTON DEW

MEDIA SPECIALIST

STELLA HALL

SOCIAL WORKER

TANYA HATTON

COUNSELOR

MURLINE INGRAM

MTSS COORDINATOR

TAMIKA JAMES

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

KRISTA JENNINGS (6)

OFFICE MANAGER

CHERYL JONES

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER

COLIE LEE

FACE COORDINATOR

ANGELA LETTERMAN

REGISTRAR

FELISHA MARTIN-BELL

MATH COACH

DIANA MCCLANAHAN

DIRECTOR OF COUNSELING

EDWIN MEEKER

NURSE PRACTICIONER

BRITTANY OSTEEEN

SPECIAL SERVICES CASE
MANAGER

PATRECE SCOTT

SCHOOL NURSE

MARLEE WELLS

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

SHEVONNE WESLEY-RICHARDSON (8)

INTERVENTIONISTS

**CLEMENTINA DUKES,
ALICIA HUTCHINSON, &
CHANTELLE ROGERS**

PRINCIPAL

J.TANNER.CURRY



FROM THE PRINCIPAL

As we close the 2025–2026 school year, we reflect on a year defined by growth, resilience, and a strong commitment to excellence. What began as our strongest baseline in recent history has translated into meaningful progress for our students.

Our Winter and Spring MAP results confirm what we have seen in classrooms—students are growing. Most notably, our Spring projected proficiency data shows clear improvement over the past three years. Through targeted instruction, strategic intervention, and a focus on standards, students are building the skills necessary for long-term success.

Equally important is our continued progress in school culture. We have seen significant reductions in disciplinary incidents, marking some of our strongest results in recent years. Our teacher-led “Training Camp” model continues to set clear expectations and reinforce a culture of consistency, accountability, and respect.

Instruction remains at the center of our work. Students engage daily in personalized learning through Exact Path, ZEAR, and ALEKS, while Read 180 and Math 180 provide targeted support for over 300 students. These efforts ensure that all learners receive the support needed to close gaps and grow—notably 1.5 years of growth in just one semester!

Our partnerships with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) have been instrumental in strengthening our instructional leadership team. Through coaching, collaboration, and data-driven planning, we are developing clear instructional models aimed at ensuring every classroom delivers consistent Level 3–4 instruction. This work is creating more rigorous, engaging, and standards-aligned experiences for all students.

In addition, our Special Education case manager has worked diligently to strengthen instruction in specialized settings, ensuring closer alignment to grade-level standards and expanding access to high-quality Tier 1 instruction for all learners.

In math, our partnership with the SC Palmetto Math Project has supported strong implementation of ZEAR. Through TSI and Edmentum, more than 300 students first semester have also received two hours of weekly live tutoring, reinforcing classroom learning and accelerating progress.

This progress is driven by a collective effort. Administrators, coaches, interventionists, and support staff work together to provide in-class support and targeted interventions, while our MTSS team, counselors, and social workers ensure students receive the academic and social-emotional support needed to succeed.

Beyond academics, we have strengthened family and community connections through consistent engagement opportunities. Our Tribe Pride Community Clean-Up events, in partnership with local organizations, have provided meaningful opportunities for students and families to serve and take pride in their community. Throughout the year, our “It’s Game Time” theme has helped foster motivation and engagement, encouraging students to give their best effort each day and take pride in their growth.

As we look ahead, our mission remains clear: to ensure every student experiences meaningful growth while preparing for success in high school and beyond. At Furman Middle School, when students are supported, challenged, and inspired—they rise. And this year, our students, staff, and community have done just that.

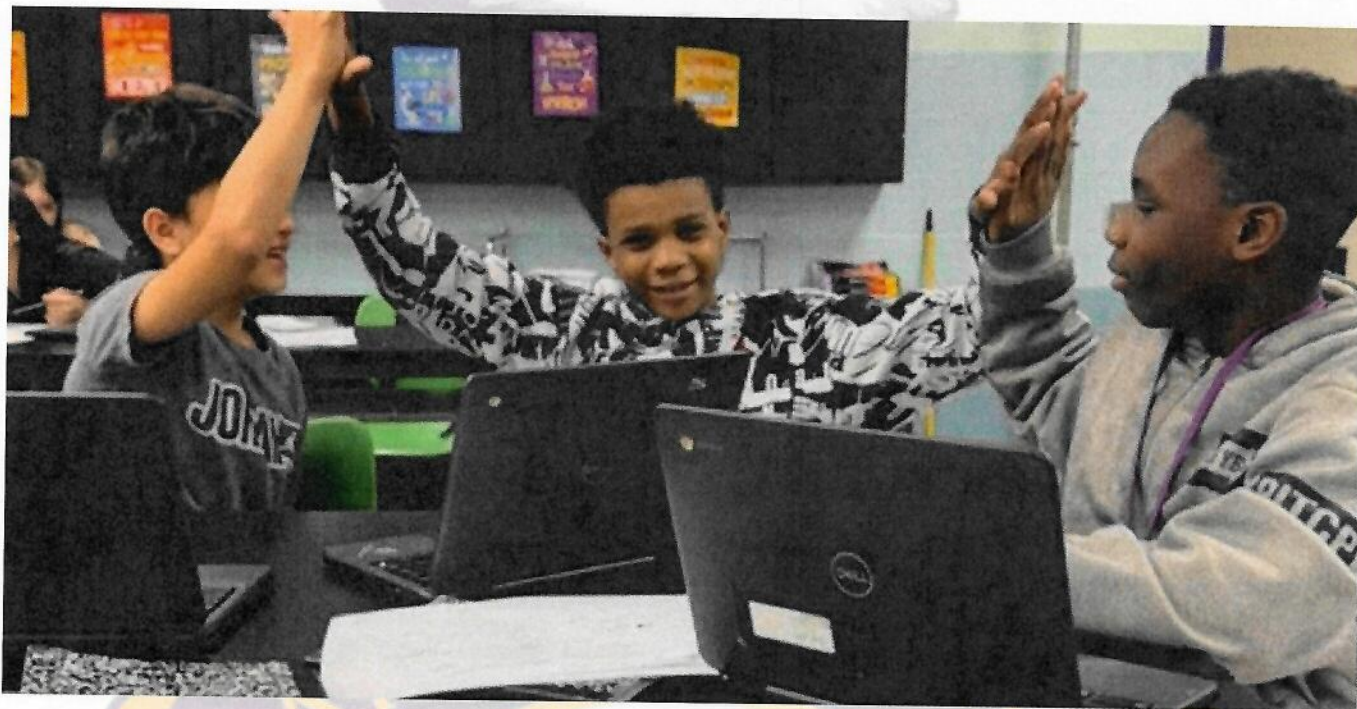


J. TANNER CURRY

“Learn all you can and be kind to others.”



INSTRUCTION



This year, our focus has remained on strengthening teacher capacity, aligning instruction to state standards, and accelerating student growth. Throughout the second half of the year, our instructional leadership team has actively guided teachers through a blended model combining our TAP-inspired gradual release approach with the Visible Learning framework. Teachers and leaders co-developed aligned, standards-based lessons, ensuring clarity and consistency across classrooms.

Standards-aligned assessments continue to drive planning, inform intervention, and guide weekly data discussions. A key area of growth has been the development of clear instructional expectations, with an emphasis on delivering consistent Level 3-4 instruction. This has resulted in stronger alignment between lesson design, student tasks, and priority standards. Additionally, focused efforts in specialized settings have strengthened access to grade-level content and high-quality Tier 1 instruction for all students.

One of the most impactful shifts this spring was the implementation of Remix 2.0. By staggering state assessments, we created intentional time for students to reset and refocus between testing days. During these breaks, teachers provided targeted spiral review and intensive preparation aligned to priority standards, including focused support for key student groups.

Moving forward, our focus will be on expanding peer-led professional learning, fully implementing ELA and Math learning labs, and continuing to refine our instructional model to ensure consistency and excellence in every classroom.

SHEVONNE WESLEY-RICHARDSON
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

INSTRUCTION CONT.



OPERDELLA CHOICE-MILLER
INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

As we close the school year, our theme-*It's Game Time*-has reflected the focused and collaborative effort demonstrated across our classrooms. Teachers consistently implemented data-driven strategies, refined instructional practices, and worked collectively to ensure students made meaningful progress.

Through targeted small-group instruction, rigorous lesson planning, and intentional feedback, we translated preparation into performance. Students remained actively engaged, and teachers demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous growth. Together, these efforts built the momentum needed to drive academic improvement and position our school for continued success.



DIANA MCCLANAHAN
MATH COACH

As we close the school year, our *It's Game Time* focus has guided the math team's strategic efforts to strengthen instruction and accelerate student growth. Teachers consistently engaged in data-driven planning to target priority standards, design rigorous assessments, and implement high-yield strategies that promote problem-solving and mathematical reasoning.

Through collaborative coaching cycles, model lessons, and targeted small-group support, we strengthened teacher capacity and expanded access to high-quality math instruction for all students. Our work this year has built a strong foundation for continued growth, with a clear focus on moving every student toward proficiency and confidence in mathematics.

INTERVENTION & SUPPORT

As we close the school year, our work in intervention and student services has remained focused on ensuring that every student is supported, engaged, and positioned for success. The transition academy for 6th graders proved to be a strong foundation for student success, helping students adjust to middle school expectations, build meaningful relationships, and develop the skills necessary for both academic and social growth. Schoolwide initiatives such as Student of the Day and other recognition programs reinforced a positive culture, motivating students to meet high expectations and celebrate success across all grade levels.

In support of academic growth, READ 180 and Math 180 were implemented with fidelity, providing targeted, adaptive instruction for students requiring intensive support in literacy and numeracy. These programs offered individualized learning pathways, frequent formative assessments, and structured rotations that allowed for real-time instructional adjustments. Embedded classroom interventions further ensured that students received immediate, targeted support without missing core instruction.

The impact of these efforts is evident in student outcomes. Midyear growth reports from January showed that students enrolled in READ 180 and Math 180 achieved an average of 1.5 years of growth from August to January, demonstrating the effectiveness of these interventions. Overall, students showed increased engagement, improved skill development in reading and mathematics, and greater confidence in their abilities.

Through coordinated supports, intentional interventions, and a continued focus on building a positive school culture, we strengthened our systems of support and created an environment where all students can thrive. This work has established a strong foundation for continued academic progress moving forward.

KRISTA JENNINGS
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

As we close the school year, our commitment to inclusive education has driven meaningful growth for all students. Special education teachers consistently pushed into general education classrooms-primarily in mathematics-to provide Tier 1 support, ensuring instruction was accessible, differentiated, and aligned to grade-level standards. This collaborative model strengthened core instruction and contributed to measurable growth across student groups, including significant progress among our subgroups.

We strengthened collaborative instructional planning between general education and special services teachers, resulting in more intentional alignment to grade-level standards and more effective delivery of specially designed instruction. This partnership ensured that students with needs had increased access to rigorous, standards-based instruction within the general education setting while receiving the targeted supports necessary for success.

Our work in intervention and student services played a critical role in accelerating student growth. READ 180 and Math 180 were implemented with fidelity, providing targeted, adaptive instruction for students requiring intensive support in literacy and numeracy. Midyear growth reports from January showed that students enrolled in these programs achieved an average of 1.5 years of growth from August to January, demonstrating the effectiveness of these interventions. Embedded classroom supports further ensured that students received immediate, targeted assistance without missing core instruction.

Our Special Services team remained fully staffed, allowing us to focus on developing and retaining high-quality educators through ongoing professional learning, coaching, and structured collaboration. Paraprofessionals played a vital role in supporting instruction, working alongside teachers to provide targeted scaffolding and ensure students remained actively engaged in learning. Their support strengthened Tier 1 instruction and reinforced consistency across classrooms.

Additionally, we made intentional progress in building sustainable systems that will continue to support student success beyond this school year. By refining inclusion practices, strengthening co-teaching structures, and increasing shared ownership between general and special education staff, we established a more cohesive and effective support model. As we look ahead, we are committed to continuing this work through our partnerships with NIET and SREB, with a focus on strengthening high-quality, grade-level instruction in special education classrooms. Through sustained collaboration and a continued focus on growth, we are building a stronger system to ensure success for all students.

PATRECE SCOTT
SPECIAL SERVICES CASE MANAGER

FURMAN MIDDLE SCHOOL'S STUDENT

TRIBE PRIDE

CHALLENGE

2025



WINNERS ANNOUNCED
QUARTERLY



HIGHEST POINTS
WIN PIZZA & A PARTY WITH
MR. CURRY

**WINNING 3RD
PERIOD CLASSES:**
MRS. DEMUNN
MRS. HOUSEY
MR. THOMSEN

**EARN THE HIGHEST AVERAGE
SCORE IN EACH CATEGORY:**

- 25 pts. ★ Attendance
- 25 pts. ★ Discipline
- 20 pts. ★ MAP Growth/Skill Assessment Scores
- 15 pts. ★ Mastered Skills (Edmentum)
- 15 pts. ★ Volunteer Hours/Event Attendance

PRIZES

pizza party plus your choice of:

Dance Party

Movie Party

or

Work Together to Win with your

3RD PERIOD CLASS



PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Established in 2022, these targets focus on student achievement, teacher effectiveness, student discipline, and school-home relations through 2027. We aim to enhance academic performance through personalized learning, support teachers with professional development, and create a safe learning environment with progressive discipline strategies. We prioritize building partnerships with our community through engagement events and outreach programs, fostering continuous improvement and success for all.

+15%

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
ELA, MATHEMATICS, & SCIENCE (6TH)

+23%

TEACHER PROFICIENCY
SOUTH CAROLINA TEACHING STANDARDS 4.0

-5%

DISCIPLINARY INFRACTIONS
REFERRALS PER STUDENT

+15%

PARENT SATISFACTION
SATISFIED WITH HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

THE ROLE YOU PLAY

Students: Take ownership of your learning by setting goals, embracing challenges, and participating actively in class and school activities. Seek help when needed and support your peers—your curiosity, effort, and resilience drive your growth and inspire those around you.

Families: Stay engaged by monitoring progress, attending school events, and communicating with teachers. Encourage learning at home, reinforce positive behavior, and partner with the school to help your child thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Community Partners: Share your expertise, provide mentorship, and offer experiences that connect learning to life beyond the classroom. Your support strengthens our school culture and helps expand opportunities for every student.

PROGRESS MONITORING

Progress monitoring at Furman Middle School is essential for guiding improvement and celebrating growth. By examining historical and current data, we can identify trends in student achievement, teacher effectiveness, discipline, and school-community engagement.

Since the current leadership team took over in July 2023, this data has informed decisions, guided interventions, and helped us respond quickly to support students and staff. Progress monitoring allows us to understand where we've been, measure the impact of our actions, and chart a course for continued success. The chart below displays yearly performance data.

YEAR	ELA SCR	MATH SCR	SCI SCR	TEACHER PROF.	REFERRALS/ STUDENT	PARENT SATISFACTION
2024-2025**	39.8%	14.2%	21.2%	100%	48.05%	Data N/A
2023-2024**	36.0%	17.7%	Data N/A	100%	41.19%	Data N/A
2022-2023	35.1%	13.8%	27.1%	64.0%	47.71%	50.0%

Years marked with ** indicate school years in which Furman Middle School had 2/6 key instructional vacancies in ELA and Math.

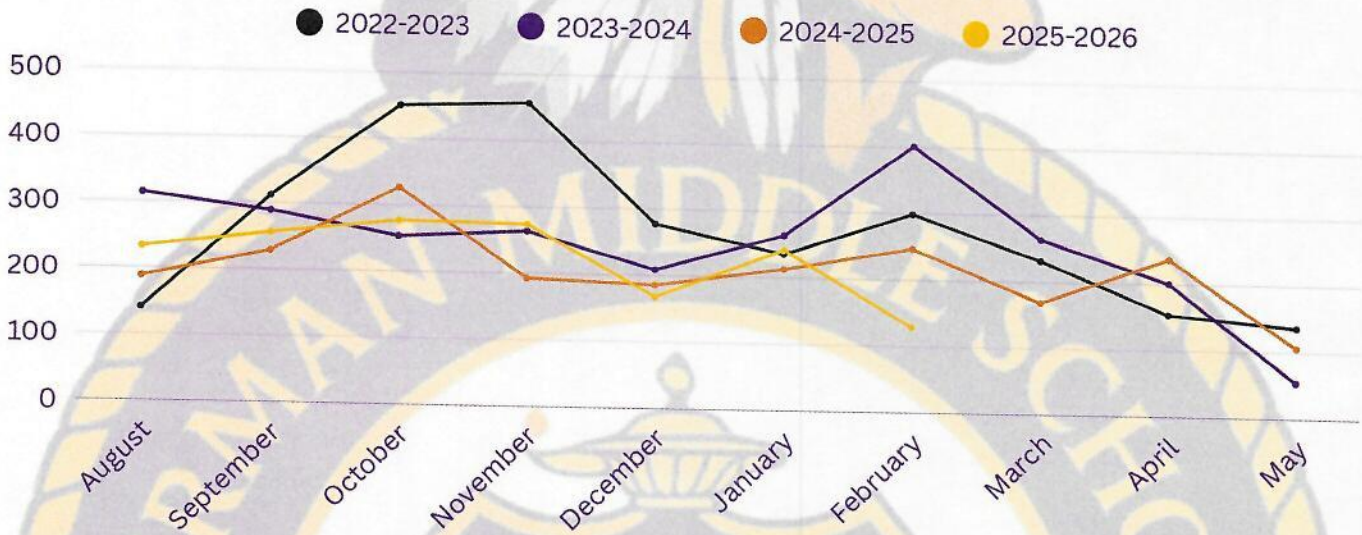
We recognize that over the five-year span of this Strategic Plan, numerous variables can influence progress. These can include changes in leadership, shifts in staffing, evolving state standards, changes in student and family demographics, varying enrollment numbers, resource availability, and other unforeseen circumstances.

Despite these dynamics, we have intentionally designed a system of action steps that supports both teacher development and student growth. This framework is structured to be adaptable, responsive, and focused, allowing us to maintain momentum, address challenges proactively, and continue moving toward our long-term goals.

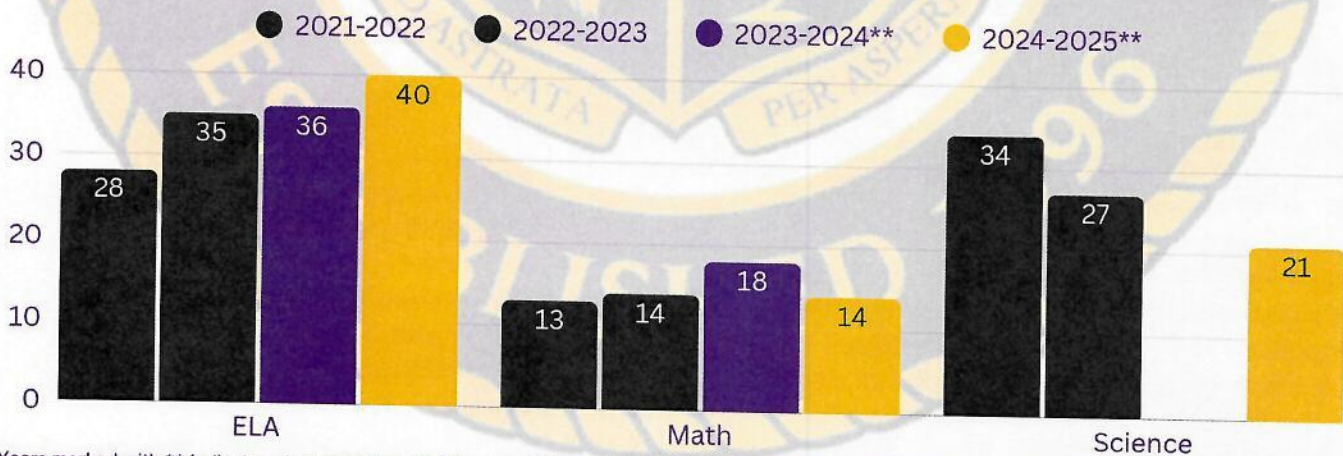
By aligning our actions with best practices, fostering collaboration among educators, engaging families, and leveraging community partnerships, Furman Middle School is equipped to provide consistent support and meaningful opportunities for all students and staff—ensuring that every year builds on the success of the last.

ATTENDANCE = ACHIEVEMENT

Since 2022, student attendance at Furman Middle School has shown measurable improvement, along with continued areas of focus. In 2022-2023, monthly absences were especially high during the fall, with October (452) and November (458) representing peak instructional loss. In 2023-2024, we saw a significant reduction in fall absences, with October decreasing to 254 and November decreasing to 264. This improvement reflects stronger attendance monitoring systems, clearer expectations, and more consistent family communication. While 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 show continued stabilization in some months—particularly December and February—early semester absences (August through October) remain higher than desired, indicating that the start of the school year continues to be a critical leverage point for improvement.



Our SC READY trend data makes the connection clear: student attendance and academic outcomes move together. Over the past four years, ELA performance has steadily increased from approximately 28% to 40%, reflecting sustained improvement during a period when attendance systems strengthened and instructional consistency improved. Consistent attendance ensures access to grade-level instruction, small-group supports, interventions, and reteaching opportunities. When students miss school, they miss critical learning that compounds over time. Improving daily attendance is not just an operational priority; it is one of the most direct and controllable levers we have to accelerate academic growth and improve student outcomes across all content areas.



Years marked with ** indicate school years in which Furman Middle School had 2/6 key instructional vacancies in ELA and Math.

MAINTAINING FOCUS

In July 2023, several key disciplinary infractions were identified by stakeholders as top priorities for improvement. Since then, we have seen dramatic decreases in these incidents—a testament to the growth and commitment of our students, as well as the dedication and vigilance of our staff. We commend our students for rising to the high expectations we have set and extend our gratitude to parents for their continued support of our progressive methods and responsive actions.

At Furman Middle School, our sole focus is on teaching and learning. Misbehaviors are addressed swiftly and consistently to ensure disruptions to instruction and the progress of our student body as a whole are minimized. By maintaining high standards, clear expectations, and a culture of accountability, we create a safe and focused learning environment where every student can thrive.



The progress we have achieved at Furman Middle School is the result of the roles we each play in maintaining a safe, focused, and productive learning environment. Our strong administrative and staff presence serves as a constant deterrent to potential issues, while our clearly communicated and consistently enforced consequences discourage poor decision-making before it escalates. Additionally, our MTSS coordinator and school counselor work proactively with students to intervene before poor decisions turn into negative behaviors, providing support and guidance that keeps students on track.

These efforts have driven dramatic cultural shifts since 2022, resulting in notable outcomes such as a 63% decrease in fights, 52% decrease in bus violations, 54% decrease in threats, and 81% decrease in confrontations, along with an overall 20% reduction in total disciplinary infractions (from 1,740) across the school, to name just a few.

Equally important are the roles of students and families in this success. Students demonstrate responsibility by meeting expectations, making positive choices, and contributing to a safe learning environment, while parents reinforce these expectations at home and partner with the school to support growth. By working together, we ensure that our high standards are not only understood but embraced, creating a school culture where every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

ACTION STEPS CONT.

LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE BUILDING

As proud members of Cohort 8 of the Collective Leadership Institute of South Carolina, our leadership team is deeply engaged in redefining our school's core values around Culture, Outreach, Rigor, and Engagement (C.O.R.E.). This initiative has empowered staff to collectively shape a vision that drives both cultural transformation and academic excellence. To return school leadership to teachers and strengthen shared ownership, we have established teacher-led action teams in the areas of our core values, allowing staff to lead initiatives, guide cultural growth, and support strategic decision-making across the school. Alongside this, the integration of MTSS into our disciplinary process has enhanced our ability to intervene early, support the whole child, and maintain a school culture that balances high expectations with compassion. These efforts, combined with schoolwide competitive initiatives and attendance challenges for staff and students, reinforce a culture of consistency, accountability, and collective ownership of success.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMPETITIVE LEARNING CULTURE

We believe growth extends beyond the classroom walls. By opening our doors at least once every three weeks for Family and Community Engagement (FACE) events, we've strengthened trust, collaboration, and transparency with families. These events—both instructional and non-instructional—foster community pride and shared investment in student success. To keep learning exciting and competitive, we host quarterly quiz bowl tournaments that fuel academic spirit and celebrate knowledge across grade levels, helping students build confidence and readiness as we approach state testing.

STUDENT LIFE AND HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Furman Middle School prioritizes a vibrant and supportive student life to foster personal growth, engagement, and a sense of belonging. Programs like Student of the Day, schoolwide competitions, and quarterly quiz bowls recognize achievement, encourage healthy competition, and build school pride. The Transition Academy for 6th graders and STEP UP program provide targeted support to ensure students acclimate smoothly to middle school and regain grade-level proficiency when needed. Our embedded MTSS support, proactive guidance from counselors, and behavior intervention strategies ensure that all students receive social-emotional support alongside academics, helping them make positive choices, improve attendance, and thrive in a safe and structured environment.

INNOVATIVE ENRICHMENT & SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES

We provide a range of innovative courses and enrichment programs to foster academic growth and student engagement. Sixth graders participate in STEM extensions of the science curriculum, while older students can take Personal Finance for high school credit. Arts offerings include theatre, show choir, and piano 1 & 2, with additional fine arts courses planned. Students who need academic support have access to STEP UP, Content Priority Recovery, and tutoring programs, keeping them on track for grade-level success.

By combining rigorous courses with dynamic enrichment opportunities, Furman ensures all students can explore interests, strengthen skills, and build the confidence needed for long-term success.

2026-2027 TEACHER OF THE YEAR: MRS. JESSICA STEPHENS



We are proud to announce that Mrs. Jessica Stephens, 7th Grade ELA teacher, has been selected as Furman Middle School's 2026-2027 Campus Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Stephens exemplifies instructional excellence, high expectations, and unwavering commitment to student growth. Her classroom reflects strong standards alignment, purposeful engagement, and a deep belief that every student can achieve at high levels. She consistently builds meaningful relationships with students while maintaining a sharp focus on academic rigor and progress monitoring. Mrs. Stephens is a collaborative leader among her peers and a champion for literacy across our campus. We are honored to recognize her dedication, professionalism, and impact on student achievement as she represents Furman Middle School as our Teacher of the Year.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

SETTING THE TONE

Students begin their day at 7:50 a.m., greeted at the entry by countless staff members in the parking lot and inside the building, offering smiles, encouragement, and affirmations to help students start their day positively. After receiving breakfast, students report to first-period classrooms for Exact Path intervention until formal instruction begins at 8:25 a.m., providing targeted support to build academic readiness. At approximately 8:40 a.m., after most buses have arrived, our administrators lead the school in a motivational “Song of the Day” and words of encouragement tied to the day’s theme. Every morning begins with a message of belonging and value: “You are loved. You matter. You belong here. And we are truly glad you are part of our school family.” Students are reminded to learn as much as possible and show kindness to others, followed by a SC Ready Prep “Word of the Day” challenge to reinforce academic skills. Student leaders then guide the school in the Pledge of Allegiance, the Furman Pledge, and recitation of the school mission statement, establishing a purposeful, welcoming, and positive start to the day that reflects our culture of high expectations, academic growth, and community.

ON THE MOVE

During every class change, students have four minutes to travel between classes, and during this time, teachers, staff, administrators, and instructional coaches are strategically present throughout the hallways and lunch to provide a visible, supportive presence. Students are greeted with high-fives, words of encouragement, and affirmations, reinforcing positive behavior and engagement as they move from class to class.

This consistent, schoolwide presence not only helps maintain a safe and orderly environment but also fosters a culture of high expectations, motivation, and support. By actively encouraging students during every transition, our staff ensures that learners remain focused, confident, and ready to engage fully in each instructional period, reinforcing the values of respect, responsibility, and personal growth that define our school community.

IT’S GAME TIME

Once students enter the classroom, they are greeted by their teachers with smiles, encouragement, and a welcoming presence, setting a positive tone for learning. Every teacher consistently reinforces high expectations while providing support to help students reach and exceed their academic goals. Throughout the lesson, the focus remains firmly on teaching and learning, with instruction designed to engage all students, promote critical thinking, and ensure mastery of state standards. By combining encouragement, clear expectations, and intentional instructional strategies, our teachers create a classroom environment where students feel supported, motivated, and empowered to achieve their full potential.

FINISHING WELL

Each day closes with words of affirmation and encouragement, reminding students they are valued, capable, and an important part of our community. Teachers, staff, and administrators help students reflect on their successes and prepare for continued growth. Students also take pride in their campus by maintaining their own clean and organized learning environments before departing. Combining affirmations with stewardship, students leave each day feeling motivated, confident, and empowered, reinforcing responsibility, respect, and our culture of excellence.

CALL TO ACTION

We believe that student success is a shared responsibility. Our teachers, staff, and administrators are committed to creating a culture of high expectations, academic growth, and personal development—but we know that meaningful partnerships with families and community members are essential to achieving our goals. Together, we can ensure that every student feels valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential. Below are five ways you can actively contribute to the success of our students and help build a stronger school community.

PARTNER IN ACADEMIC GROWTH

SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING AT HOME BY REINFORCING READING, MATH PRACTICE AND STUDY HABITS, AND BY CELEBRATING STUDENT PROGRESS ON INTERVENTIONS LIKE ALEKS, EXACT PATH, AND ZEARN.

PROMOTE ATTENDANCE & ENGAGEMENT

WORK WITH STUDENTS TO PRIORITIZE CONSISTENT ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL EVENTS, AND ARRIVE READY TO LEARN, HELPING MAINTAIN THE POSITIVE CULTURE AND ROUTINES THAT SUPPORT HIGH EXPECTATIONS.

SUPPORT POSITIVE BEHAVIOR & CULTURE

ENGAGE WITH OUR SCHOOL BY MODELING AND REINFORCING OUR CORE VALUES OF CULTURE, OUTREACH, RIGOR, AND ENGAGEMENT (C.O.R.E.)—INCLUDING KINDNESS, RESPECT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY—BOTH IN SCHOOL AND IN THE COMMUNITY.

VOLUNTEER & SHARE EXPERTISE

CONTRIBUTE TIME, SKILLS, OR MENTORSHIP THROUGH SCHOOL EVENTS, TUTORING, ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS, OR ACTION TEAMS, HELPING PROVIDE ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENT GROWTH AND EXPOSURE TO REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCES.

ADVOCATE FOR & CELEBRATE SUCCESS

HELP RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS, WHETHER ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, OR BEHAVIORAL, AND SPREAD AWARENESS OF FURMAN'S PROGRAMS AND SUCCESSES TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND INVESTMENT IN OUR STUDENTS' FUTURE.

Together, as families, community members, and school partners, we can ensure every Furman student feels supported, valued, and empowered to reach their full potential. Your involvement makes a real difference in building a culture of excellence, growth, and opportunity for all.

EXCELLENCE, PURPOSE & INTEGRITY

We are proud of the progress we continue to make as a school community, yet we recognize that the journey toward excellence is far from over. We celebrate every win—big or small—because each reflects the dedication of our students, staff, and partners. Through rigorous instruction, meaningful outreach, and a culture of engagement, we strive daily to prepare students to thrive academically, socially, and as responsible, empowered citizens. In an age of school choice, we are especially grateful to our families for trusting us and **choosing** to partner with us in their child's education.

OUR PARTNERS:

