



P. 1 Organizational Description

The Hillcrest motto, "Responsible, Respectful, Ready for the Future," permeates nearly every aspect of our campus. It is the goal of our faculty, staff, and community to ensure our students not only receive a stellar education, but that they also become high quality contributors to society.

As of the 2014-2015 school year, Hillcrest has been recognized as an Arizona A+ School of Excellence in 1998 and 2008. Additionally, we have had sixteen of our teachers recognized as a Deer Valley Unified School District Teacher of the Year. One of our teachers was named the AMLA's, Arizona Middle Level Association Educator of the Year, and another was awarded the Air Force Association Arizona and Frank Luke Chapter - Aerospace Teacher of the Year.

Hillcrest received an 'A' Letter grade from the Arizona Department of Education, which means that our students have demonstrated scores and growth that are above average based on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards. It is our goal to continue this long-standing trend of growth and development and earn an 'A' label in the coming year.

P. 1a Organizational Environment

P. 1a (1) Educational Program and Service Offerings

Hillcrest Middle School offers a wide array of educational opportunities and courses of study for our roughly 1,000 students in grades 7& 8. Our teachers work together in core teams, comprised of a math, science, social studies, and English Language Arts (ELA) teacher; they share approximately 160 students. The core group of teachers work together on a regular basis in order to support the growth and development of their students. The students benefit by being able to transition from the elementary environment into the high school setting with the appropriate scaffolding and support; in addition, this builds their self-awareness and independence.

Each classroom at Hillcrest is equipped with a Smart Board, an interactive white board that students and teachers alike use on a daily basis to facilitate increased engagement and 21st century skills. The curriculum in each content area and grade level is structured to challenge students to go beyond basic recollection and description, instead requiring them to develop high-level critical thinking and evaluative skills, as well as the ability to synthesize information to create new conceptualizations and ideas. We believe that critical thinking and problem solving abilities are two necessary skills to prepare students for a successful future, and we strive each day to further develop them

in every student on our campus. The wide variety of exploratory course offerings help our staff to support the development of well-rounded students who are prepared for great success in high school and beyond. These courses provide a meaningful supplement to core instructional content, allowing students to develop a wide range of skills and knowledge in many exciting areas.

Teachers and students at Hillcrest utilize a wide variety of technological tools in their daily lessons, from interactive Smartboard presentations, to the 3-D printer in our STEM classes. The digital age requires students to be familiar with and capable of utilizing many forms of technology; therefore, it is the belief of our campus that it is best to provide our students with as many opportunities as possible to work with new and relevant technology and programs.

P. 1a (2) Vision and Mission

Hillcrest Middle School is committed to its vision: *challenge students to think critically, communicate effectively, and achieve competitively*, and its mission: *provide extraordinary educational opportunities to every learner*. We strive for these goals by creating a learning environment dedicated to the specific developmental needs of the middle level student. This unique dynamic is evidenced by the integration of two defining characteristics: our "mini high school" setting, in terms of opportunity, and the sensitivity, nurturing and support of a true middle school.

In order to achieve this balance, Hillcrest houses student teams. Each of these teams, comprised of approximately 150 students, shares four common teachers, who assist and advocate for their shared pupils. This more personal relationship allows core teachers to nurture their students' emotional and academic growth. Hillcrest supports these key priorities through the implementation of the following campus-wide objectives:

- Deploy a guaranteed and viable curriculum in every classroom
- Support all employees in the deployment of continuous improvement practices
- Provide opportunities to involve and engage all stakeholder groups in key curricula, programs and initiatives
- Identify, document, deploy, and monitor key processes across all campuses, departments and levels with fidelity

P. 1a (3) Workforce Profile

Hillcrest Middle School has 83 total employees holding a variety of degrees **Figure A**. All certified employees are Highly-Qualified (HQ) in the content that they teach. The educational requirements for employee groups and segments are varied as mandated by State and Federal law. All certified employees must hold at least a Bachelor's degree, but may have obtained higher degrees. Administrators are required to hold a Master's degree or above. Our 29 classified staff all have the required high school diploma or GED. The number of employees in classified positions are as follows: office, 3; media center, 1; in school suspension, 1; maintenance, 5; lunch monitors, 3; paraprofessionals, 5; cafeteria, 7, and crossing guard, 4.

Figure A

Level of Education *2014-2015		
Administration	Number	Percent
	2	
With Master's	2	100%
With Doctorate	0	0%
Certified	Number	Percent
	50	
With Bachelor's	50	100%
With Master's	16	32%
With Doctorate	0	0%
K-8 Certification	31	
7-12 Certification	27	
Added Endorsements	73	
# of Years Teaching	718 combined	Average of 14.36 years teaching

The entire staff of Hillcrest Middle School is dedicated to our vision and mission. Our campus participates fully in the Continuous Improvement model, in that each department or team has written a mission statement to guide and facilitate procedures and decision making. Mission statements are strategically posted throughout areas of campus conveying and promoting our focus on providing extraordinary academic and social opportunities for all stakeholders. Additionally, the HMS staff is encouraged to join committees to help support and further develop the campus goals. Teachers regularly participate in campus-based, district provided, state, and national organization-facilitated professional development opportunities. Our classified staff are an integral part in achieving in our mission as well. They support the campus by preparing and cleaning facilities for extraordinary events, such as charity drives, school plays, and assemblies.

In terms of organized bargaining units, Hillcrest supports a strong interdependent, reciprocal relationship with DVEA representatives, ensuring the advancement of outcomes that matter to all stakeholders.

P. 1a (4) Assets

Hillcrest students and faculty have access to a multitude of resources to assist instructional practices. Through a grant from Honeywell, Hillcrest was able to equip a STEM classroom with 36 student computers, a printer, Lego Robotics kits, and was the first school in the Deer Valley Unified School District to acquire a 3-D printer. The campus currently houses one computer lab, six laptop carts, and several student laptops that were acquired by teachers who have written grants. Every classroom on the campus is equipped with a Smart Board and a mounted LCD projector. Some classrooms also have student responders/clickers, laptops, document cameras, student computers, and iPads.

Our Media Center is equipped with desktop computers and a laptop cart with enough seating to accommodate an entire class of students for research and other technology-based projects. Additionally, Hillcrest has a data room which contains a ceiling mounted projector and an Apple TV. In our science department, the classrooms are equipped with ceiling outlets for lab experiments, sinks, lab tables and chemical showers.

Hillcrest has a state of the art gymnasium with hard wood floors and locker rooms. Inside of the building there is also a wrestling room, a weight room, and a health classroom. Outside, we have basketball courts, two soccer fields, four diamonds for baseball and softball, and a large multi-use grass area. These facilities are used for our sporting programs, community rentals, and community education courses.

P. 1a (5) Regulatory Requirements

DVUSD is accountable to numerous legal and regulatory agencies, and state and federal statutes. The primary regulatory agency is the US Department of Education (ED), and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). The district must meet standards established by the state and is accountable for ensuring students meet AZ proficiency levels. HMS is mandated to assess students in grades 7 & 8 annually, using the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). Students who meet or exceed on the AIMS assessment may place in Honors English Language Arts and Advanced Math at the high school level. During the transitional period between the AIMS assessments and the AzMERIT assessments, Hillcrest has utilized multiple data points, such as the DVUSD common assessments, SRI lexile scores, and continued use of AIMS science data. Curriculum mandates by the state ensure all districts align their curricula to the AZCCRS. The district was awarded AdvancedED accreditation for continuous improvement in PK-12 education. The AdvancedED process helps the HMS leadership team analyze school practices in relation to a set of research based quality standards, resulting in a proactive educational focus in both health and safety. Examples include, but are not limited to: diabetic health management education for students; seizure protocol education

for teachers; safety/OSHA training for all staff; lab equipment safety training for students and staff; cyber-safety and anti-bullying educational training for students, parents.

P. 1b Organization Relationships

P. 1b (1) Organizational Structure

The Hillcrest leadership team is defined in very specific terms and includes members from all levels and content areas, to ensure a collective voice is maintained, representing all stakeholders effectively. Leading our team is the school Principal, Mrs. Estela Hazelton, and the Assistant Principal, Mrs. Colleen M. Weeks. The remainder of the leadership team is comprised of the Campus Improvement Team (CIT) and the DL/TL, which is a committee of Department Leaders and Team Leaders.

The CIT includes Department Leaders, Administration, student representatives, and parent representatives. This group is responsible for key decision making regarding funding for initiatives and programming. It is an open committee, so any stakeholders who wish to attend and participate are welcome to do so. This team also collaborates to determine campus goals in the CIP, Campus Improvement Plan, as well as to monitor progress toward them.

The DL/TL meets monthly and works together to make decisions regarding policy and procedure, as well as to disseminate information to the respective teams and departments as necessary. This group works together to support the CIP through effective instruction and communication.

Hillcrest administration attends all PTSA meetings and supports the exchange of information between parents and campus staff via newsletters, Twitter, Facebook, and through links housed on the Hillcrest website, as well as through on-going verbal communication.

P. 1b (2) Students, Other Customers, & Stakeholders

We are a “true” middle school in that our key market segments are focused on students in grades 7 & 8. Our key stakeholder groups, with their requirements and expectations, are summarized in **Figure B**. The Hillcrest student population is composed of a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds as shown in **Figure C**.

Figure B

Key Stakeholder	Key Requirements	Expectations
Students	Safe & secure environment; Rigorous & engaging learning environment; 21 st Century skills	Quality of education; Embedded use of technology; Program choice; Activities (co-curricular and extracurricular); Positive relationships
Parents	Safe & secure environment; 21 st Century skills; Highly qualified workforce; Fiscal responsibility	Quality of education; Embedded use of technology; Program choice; Positive relationships
Employees	Competitive Salary & benefits; Safe working environment; Technology; Resources & tools required for the job	Relevant & embedded professional development; Shared leadership; Communication; Ethical leadership; Conditions conducive to student learning
Governing Board	Sound procedures to support policy; Fiscal responsibility	Execution of policy & procedures with integrity; Pro-active communication
Community	Well-educated students; Social awareness & responsibility; Operational accountability; Fiscal responsibility	Communication; College and career ready graduates
Business Partners	Workforce ready; 21 st Century skills	Minimal retraining; Efficient student work habits & ethics.

Figure C

Student Population Ethnicity *2014-2015				
	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total # of Students	Total Percent
White	445	394	839	85%
Hispanic	31	46	77	8%
Asian American	15	18	33	3%
African American	13	20	33	3%
American Indian	3	0	3	0.3%

Hillcrest invites parents and students to actively participate in campus committees and programs, such as our Campus Improvement Team (CIT) and our Parent, Teacher, Student Association (PTSA). We value the feedback and support of all stakeholders as we strive toward excellence in all areas. Such opportunities for engagement benefit all stakeholder groups resulting in increased student achievement and civic responsibility. Departmental communication forums, which include staff, students, and parents, provide these groups with a voice in campus matters, with a focus on campus climate, culture, and community. All stakeholders are important and recognized for the valuable feedback that each party is able to provide.

We are committed to cultivating a strong and effective partnership with our community. A Publicity and Community Outreach committee was implemented on our campus in 2013. This committee was able to build viable relationships with approximately a dozen businesses and organizations. These positive relationships continue to increase our efforts to expose students to a larger perspective of the community to whom they belong.

The student population at Hillcrest, including Student Council, Yearbook staff, and National Junior Honor Society, participates in a multitude of community support and outreach programs each year. These efforts include Adopt-A-Family, Emily's Toys for Joy, and various collections of items to support local and global programs in need of support.

P. 1b (3) Suppliers and Partners

Hillcrest Middle School offers classes in which advanced students may enroll to earn high school credit. In order to do so, our teachers in these areas participate in extensive articulation with the high school into which our students feed, and the district, to ensure the quality and rigor of these courses is well-aligned. Current offerings include: Algebra 1-2, Geometry and Spanish. We presently have the most students at the middle level in the district enrolled in our high school credit courses. These opportunities place our eligible students at a distinct advantage when entering the high school. Aside from our classes that offer high school credit, Hillcrest also offers advanced level courses in science, social studies, and English Language Arts (ELA) that are designed as further enrichment of the content for students that qualify.

An area of great celebration at Hillcrest is that of our Exploratory Department's offerings. These classes are the precursor to the high school electives that students will take. Currently, these offerings include Computer Applications, Public Speaking, S.T.E.M., Career Explorations, Band, Chorus, Spanish, Creative Publications, Yearbook and Art. Some offerings encompass an entire school year, some only a semester, and others are included

as part of a quarterly rotation schedule to expose students to the various curricula available.

At the onset of the 2013-2014 school year, a Publicity and Community Outreach committee was created to build meaningful and purposeful relationships with our community and surrounding businesses. Throughout the year, we were able to cultivate over a dozen business partnerships through our "Got Business, Get Connected" initiative, supporting our goal to "help prepare today's students to become tomorrow's responsible, self-confident, and successful leaders." Today, we continue to utilize face-to-face and digital communication to foster and sustain these relationships.

Also at the onset of the 2013-2014 school year, our parent stakeholders reorganized to form a PTSA chapter on our campus to support campus programs, activities, and initiatives. The PTSA continues to thrive and has become an invaluable partner with our school.

P. 2 Organization Situation

P. 2a Competitive Environment

P. 2a (1) Competitive Position

Hillcrest boasts a large student population that spans the Mountain Ridge and O'Connor regions respectively. In proximity of our school are several charter and private schools that compete with us for students, most by utilizing advanced, back-to-basics curriculums. In that vein, Hillcrest remains highly competitive, teaching a wide variety of offerings, from arts to high school courses. We average upwards of 70 students who attend our school through open enrollment each year, which equates to roughly 6-7% of our total student population. Historically, in terms of open enrollment, our school ranks among the highest in the district yearly, outside of the high schools.

In recent years, the surrounding community has undergone changes in alignment with the housing and job markets, which have provided our school with opportunities to improve and rise to the occasion. The changes have resulted in an increased number of students meeting the federal qualifications for the free and reduced lunch program. Throughout these changes, Hillcrest's students have continued to perform well on state assessments, ranking notably above the state and district averages in both Reading and Mathematics.

P. 2a (2) Competitive Changes

The significant shift we have experienced in our demographics has necessitated innovation to come to the forefront. We are finding new ways to engage learners of all backgrounds and increase student achievement among our diversity of learners – it is improving our instructional practice as we now have studied and implement research based strategies to meet the needs of all learners.

We have been able to increase rigor in the face of emerging student diversity due to tandem initiatives in our Multi-Tiered System of Support, MTSS-A (Response to Intervention – Academics), and MTSS-B (Response to Intervention – Behavior), which differentiate academic and behavioral support. We provide Academic Prep Time (AP) and Math Academic Preparedness (MAP) during school hours, five days a week, so that all students, including bus riders, have equal access to interventions and supports within the school day.

Meaningful collaboration occurs on a daily basis at Hillcrest. The team approach allows a group of core academic teachers to share students, which helps to meet their academic, behavioral, and social needs. These teachers share a common preparation and planning period that allows them to identify students in need of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, in order to guarantee equal access to rigorous curricular opportunities.

In the 2013-2014 school year, many certified and classified staff members chose to participate in our new student support program, *Check-in, Check-out*, which has been continued this year. This intervention pairs one staff member with one student who is identified as having a difficult time assimilating to our school. This staff member “checks-in” at least once a week with his or her charge, and also with the student’s team of teachers. Together, these adults support and encourage the student to reach his or her full potential.

P. 2a (3) Comparative Data

Within our educational sector, at the middle level, we have site-level common assessments and district-level common assessments in which students participate. These assessments allow us to compare student achievement and identify learning needs in the priority areas of Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Science. HMS consistently exceeds district averages in all testing areas.

Other norm-referenced data, allows us to compare our students with middle level learners across the state and even nationally. HMS utilizes data from the AIMS science assessment, AzMERIT (reading, writing, and mathematics), as well as district common assessments for comparisons. Hillcrest’s internal data points include district assessment scores, common assessment scores in all core content classes, and the Scholastic Reading Inventory. Affective data are evaluated from the incident management system, positive behavior support system measures, and the Gallup Poll, which assures us that our students feel safe and hopeful about their educational experience while on our campus. This data is utilized to drive instructional practices and strategies to meet the needs of all students.

P. 2b Strategic Context

The middle years pose the challenge of increased need for crisis and response counseling and services, teacher mentoring, and Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. To that end, an advantage is that our campus is exclusively focused on 7th and 8th grade students. This allows us to concentrate our tangible and intangible resources to best meet the unique needs of this age group.

What began on our campus as the integration of S.T.E.M. principles across disciplines, now includes the arts as an integral component, transitioning us from a S.T.E.M. campus to a S.T.E.A.M. campus. This comprehensive curricular approach more effectively supports the development of student talents and interests.

We offer a full continuum of services, including advanced and high school level coursework. We are the only non-high school campus to offer Geometry on-site for our qualifying student population. This unique opportunity allows these students to remain on our campus, a feature the parents of our community strongly support. In order to prepare our teaching staff to meet the diverse needs of our students, a challenge for us has been the design and deployment of differentiated professional development to augment the skillset of every teacher.

Staffing and hiring continue to pose a challenge, as teachers require multiple certifications and endorsements to meet the needs of our learners.

P. 2c Performance Improvement System

Hillcrest joined the Deer Valley Unified School District’s Continuous Improvement initiative, utilizing the Baldrige approach, during the 2011-2012 school year. This process, which is in full alignment with the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards (AZCCRS), drives the improvement process on our campus. From visuals, which are displayed on our office and data room bulletin boards, to our meetings and training sessions, the CIP is absolutely one of Hillcrest’s points of pride. The CIP process has transitioned from a year-long summative approach to a quarterly formative approach, and reflects the tandem deployment of the Baldrige/CCI and AZCCRS initiatives.

The DVUSD implemented the Stronge teacher evaluation tool in the 2013-2014 school year. To deploy this evaluation instrument with quality and fidelity, all certified staff members received extensive professional development and training on its features and foci, including thorough rubrics utilized to determine levels of proficiency.

The staff of Hillcrest Middle School uses these programs to continuously improve in our quest to deliver a world-class education to our students.