Dr. James A. Forrest Career & Technology Center

Student Handbook

2026-2027

"Value Added Education"



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WELCOME

The Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center (Forrest Center) is part of the St. Mary's County Public School System (SMCPS). It affords high school students the opportunity to learn the information and skills used in one of twenty-one specific career areas. The instructors are certified teachers who have worked in the industry or have degrees in the field. Students who attend the Forrest Center gain real world experience in a career field of their choice. They work with industry standard tools, equipment, and technology to develop marketable skills.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The St. Mary's County Public Schools System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, marital status or sexual orientation, national origin, religion, or disability in matters affecting employment, admission to, or treatment in providing access to programs.

For inquires related to this policy, please contact:

Director of Human Resources
St. Mary's County Public Schools
P.O. Box 641,
Leonardtown, Maryland 20650

Forrest Center Vision Statement

At the Forrest Center, we offer “Value Added Education!”

Value Added is…...

- ✓ Technical Attainment – Students can earn real industry certifications.
- ✓ Articulated / Transcripted College Credit – Students can earn college credit while attending the Forrest Center.
- ✓ Apprenticeship / Clinical Experience – Employers are now looking for individuals with real on the job experience.

GRIT

Our students have GRIT. They are determined, courageous, tough, and never give up. GRIT is also an acronym that identifies four essential components of our school’s Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Using the matrix on the following page, students will understand the behavioral expectations that are in place for them at the Forrest Center, in the school building and beyond.

The Forrest Center staff will teach this matrix, refer often to the components of this matrix, and hold high expectations for students to demonstrate these behaviors throughout the school year. Forrest Center students will learn about each of the four components as they apply themselves to being a successful student and better prepare for a career after graduation.

MTSS is a framework to help build relationships between our staff and students. The Forrest Center staff will often recognize a student for their successes by awarding them with a GRIT ticket if they are “caught showing GRIT.” Likewise, if a student strays from demonstrating the tenants of GRIT, they will be reminded of these expectations and encouraged to review the matrix. In addition to providing the GRIT matrix in the student handbook, students will find this document in classrooms and public areas throughout the Forrest Center.

Please review this matrix with your student so they can arrive at the Forrest Center prepared for greatness.


Growth Mindset
Responsibility
Initiative
Tenacity
FORREST
TECHNOLOGY CENTER

RESOURCES

School Counseling

The school counseling program is an integral part of the school. A counselor is available to all students at the Forrest Center. The counselor assists students with career decision-making skills, job seeking skills, and post-high school education and training information. In addition, the social and emotional needs of students are addressed. Students may utilize the resources in the career center to seek additional scholarships, financial aid, or career information.

The Vocational Support Service Team (VSST)

The VSST identifies and assists students with special needs who are in vocational education programs at the Forrest Center. The VSST staff assists students in identifying vocational interests, aptitudes, or potential for training to facilitate access in appropriate and desired programs. They ensure equity so each student has access to all vocational programs.

In addition, VSST staff provide support within classes so students can become competent in programs, thus developing entry-level skills for today's job market. In cooperation with students, parents, counselors, administrators, and program classroom teachers, the VSST ensures that students enhance their opportunity for success in career and technology education.

2026-2027 Bell Schedule

8:00 Early Classes Begin
8:15 **AM Session Begins**
9:15 CHS-GMHS Dismissal
9:20 LHS Dismissal
10:05 **Mid-Day Session Begins**
12:08 Clean-up Bell
12:13 Dismissal of Mid-Day Students
1:02 **PM Session Begins**
2:15 Clean-up Bell
2:20 CHS-GMHS Dismissal
2:43 LHS Dismissal

FORREST CENTER CERTIFICATES

The Forrest Center awards Certificates of Excellence or Certificates of Achievement to students who have successfully completed a program and have met certificate criteria.

A certificate is not required for a student to be a program completer and receive a passing grade; however, all students are strongly encouraged to meet the requirements for the Certificate of Excellence.

The awarding of certificates is based upon grades, attendance (lawful or unlawful) and completion of competencies. The criteria for each certificate are listed below.

Certificate of Excellence

Earn an A as the final grade in each year of the program.
Complete the entire program with the following attendance requirements:

2 year programs – 14 absences
3 year programs – 21 absences

Certificate of Achievement

Earn a B as the final grade in each year of the program.
Complete the entire program with the following attendance requirements:

2 year programs – 20 absences
3 year programs – 30 absences

Certificate of Completion

Earn a minimum of a D as the final grade in each year of the program.

ATTENDANCE

Students at the Forrest Center are learning important skills that will enable them to enter the workplace and continue their education upon graduation. One of these skills is good attendance. Employers place a high value on regular school attendance, and so does the Forrest Center.

Lawful Absences

After an absence from individual classes or the entire school day, an excuse must be provided to the Forrest Center within three days. The documentation may be provided by the student's home high school or the FCTC website Student Absence Reporting System, email, or by a written note from the parent or guardian. The following reasons are deemed lawful absences:

- Death in the immediate family
- Student illness, for which the principal may require a physician's note
- Court summons
- Hazardous weather conditions
- Work if approved or sponsored by the school
- Observance of a religious holiday
- State of emergency
- Suspension
- Lack of authorized transportation
- Other circumstances which, in the judgment of the principal or designee, constitute a good and sufficient cause for absence from school

Parents, legal guardians, and emergency contacts listed in students' school records are the only people authorized to check students out of school without prior notice. Students are not allowed to check themselves out *even if they are 18 and over* without parent/legal guardian permission. If a student needs to be picked up by a person not listed in their school record, please contact the FCTC main office.

Unlawful Absences

An absence for any reason other than those cited above is considered unlawful.

Tardy to School

Students who are tardy to school must report to the main office and sign in before going to their Forrest Center class. They will be given a pass to present to their classroom teacher.

Make-Up Work Policy

Please refer to the SMCPS Student Handbook.

Home Hospital Teaching

Home Hospital Teaching eligibility will be determined through a coordinated effort with Forrest Center, Home High School, and Department of Student Services staff.

Student Withdrawal

Students who apply and accept a seat in a program are expected to complete that program. With limited seats available, students who drop a program leave an opportunity and a seat unoccupied for the following year/years. Students on the waiting list did not get in because that seat was taken. If a student feels they have a valid reason for dropping the program – usually to pursue a program of equal or greater challenge – they must write a letter to the Forrest Center counselor who will submit it to the principal for approval or denial.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Educators Rising

Students enrolled in the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM) program are offered membership in Educators Rising, which is a national membership organization for aspiring teachers and their mentors. Educators Rising is a student organization that cultivates highly skilled educators by guiding young people on a path to becoming accomplished teachers, beginning in high school and extending through college and into the profession. As members of Educators Rising, students will have an opportunity to participate in community involvement, as well as regional and national skills competitions.

National Technical Honor Society

Membership in the National Technical Honor Society is based upon excellence in four areas:

1. Scholarship
2. Leadership
3. Service
4. Character

Each category is judged independently. Candidates must have a grade point average of 3.2. After students are accepted into the National Technical Honor Society, they must maintain standards, including the grade point average, to remain a member. Faculty members will keep the sponsors informed of any drop in criteria.

SkillsUSA

A chapter of SkillsUSA has been established at the Forrest Center to give students the opportunity to develop leadership skills through participation in educational, vocational, civic, recreational, and social activities. SkillsUSA is an international organization that assists students in establishing realistic vocational goals and developing their abilities to collaborate, organize, and carry out worthy activities and projects through the use of the democratic process. SkillsUSA also gives students an opportunity to participate in competitions that are related to their programs of study and/or employability skills. Students who compete or serve as officers will be required to fundraise or pay the amount required for travel expenses.

This organization is available for all to join. Announcements will be made during the year regarding meetings and activities.

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

Classroom Equipment

Teachers will notify students during the first week of school of the equipment and materials that may be purchased for use in the classes.

Storage, Lockers and Personal Devices

Students may be assigned lockers in their work areas. Students are urged to keep their lockers locked. Lockers are for the storage of classroom supplies and materials. Please do not store food or any unauthorized materials in lockers. Locker areas and lockers are subject to search by school administrators within the framework of Maryland law. **The school will not be responsible for personal items left in the lockers.**

St. Mary's County Public Schools assumes no liability for lost, stolen, or damaged personal items of any student, including portable electronic devices. The school system assumes no responsibility for injury or damage related to malfunctioning equipment. Therefore, parents and students are encouraged to take special care of portable electronic devices that are brought to school.

FCTC Cell Phone/Ear Bud/Personal Device Policy

Devices may be carried by students but are to be off and not visible during the instructional day. Students may access their devices on the way into the building, on the way out of the building, and during FCTC Tech Hold, but should be off and put away upon arriving to their classroom. Devices should remain off and always be put away once instructional time begins, including in the hallways and restrooms.

Offense and Consequences:

1st offense: Device confiscated; students' pick-up phone at the end of their FCTC class session from the office. Incident recorded in student discipline record as Code 802 Inappropriate Use of Personal Electronics, additional codes if warranted. Student refusal will lead to additional codes/discipline
.
2nd offense: Device confiscated; parent/legal guardian pick up phone during school business hours from FCTC office. Incident recorded in student discipline record as Code 802 Inappropriate Use of Personal Electronics, additional codes if warranted. Student refusal will lead to additional codes/discipline.

3rd or more offense: Device confiscated; parent/legal guardian pick up phone during school business hours from office. Incident recorded in student discipline record as Code 802 Inappropriate Use of Personal Electronics, additional codes if warranted. Additionally, Code 702 Insubordination and 1 day ISI will be assigned. Student refusal will lead to additional codes/discipline.

All students are issued a school laptop, which should be used in the classroom to complete assignments. Students must have prior approval to use their personal laptop/iPad.

DRESS CODE

It is evident that there is a close relationship between pupil dress and behavior. Proper dress is important in setting the pattern for school, social, and career conduct. The Forrest Center follows the dress code established by St. Mary's County Public Schools (see SMCPS Student Handbook) and any industry-appropriate clothing as required by the instructor of the program. If appropriate, students may wear headgear in a shop area where it is part of the uniform.

ATRIUM AND HALLWAY ETIQUETTE

The safety and well-being of our students is the number one priority at the Forrest Center.

Students should never prop doors open or let anyone in the building from outside.

Students are permitted to use listening devices in the atrium and tech hold areas.

Throughout the building, students are expected to be respectful, clean up after themselves, and help take care of our building.

SNACK POLICY

Students may use the snack machines with staff permission. Students may also use the snack machines during tech hold time unless otherwise directed by the Forrest Center staff; however, tardies caused by going to the snack machine before class are considered unlawful.

Students are permitted to consume snacks and beverages in the tech hold areas and in classroom spaces with their teacher's permission. Students are expected to clean up after themselves in all areas of the school. Bottles or cans carried into or out of the building may be confiscated.

OFF-CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

Periodically, students will be involved in work activities at off-campus work sites. Students must have written/electronic permission from parents authorizing them to be off-campus and engaged in worksite activities. This permission must be on file with the teacher. Authorization should be indicated for either single or multiple-use activities. Verbal permission over the phone will not be considered as a means of securing permission. Some classes are scheduled for the entire class period to be held at work sites, and it is necessary for students engaged in such activities to be prepared to attend class at the site. Following professional protocol, if students are unable to attend class on a worksite scheduled day, students need to report their absence to their teacher in a timely manner. These details should be discussed with a student's teacher before scheduled worksite days.

Transportation to worksite activities will be provided by the Forrest Center.

VOLUNTEERS / CHAPERONES

Volunteer service to our schools supports student learning. SMCPS strives to encourage volunteerism in our schools. **Only Registered Volunteers/Visitors/Chaperones are permitted in the classroom when students are present.** A background screening is required **at the beginning of each school year** for all volunteers to ensure a safe and secure learning environment. For more information about becoming a school volunteer and volunteer resources, please visit https://www.smcps.org/offices/safety-security/volunteer-sign-up.

DRIVING / PARKING

All CHS and GMHS students are required to ride the bus to and from the Forrest Center unless granted a permanent or temporary parking permit from the Forrest Center Administration. The parking lot is off-limits during the school day except for students who are lawfully permitted to drive to the Forrest Center. Students with valid permits should only be in the parking lot during arrival and departure. A link for the permit applications is available by request through our main office.

Permanent Parking Permits

FCTC students may obtain a permanent parking pass to the Forrest Center under the following conditions:

- FCTC Parking passes are approved for CHS and GMHS students for the purpose of after school employment or FCTC internships only. Job location and start time, student behavior, and grades will all be taken into consideration. Proof of Employment, such as a letter from the students' place of employment or a pay stub will be required. A student's work permit is not proof of employment.
- Student is attending the Virtual Academy for their core classes.
- Students requesting a permanent parking pass must have a parking pass from their home school, except for Virtual Academy Students.
- A Forrest Center Parking Pass application must be submitted electronically in advance with a parent/guardian signature and proof of a home school parking permit.
- Only a Forrest Center Administrator can approve permanent parking permits.

- A fee of $31.17 must be paid to the Forrest Center for a permanent parking permit.

Temporary Parking Permits

All FCTC students may obtain a temporary, one-day parking pass to the Forrest Center under the following conditions:

- Student has an appointment that would prevent them from riding the bus to/from their home school.
- FCTC event/field trip that starts or ends beyond the regular school day.
- Students requesting a temporary parking pass must have a parking pass from their home school. Some exceptions will apply.
- A Forrest Center Parking Pass application must be submitted electronically at least 2 days in advance with a parent/guardian signature and proof of a home school parking permit.
- Only a Forrest Center Administrator can approve temporary parking permits.

Students who do not secure a valid permit may be required to leave their vehicle at the Forrest Center and return to their home school via bus.

Parking Permit Rules

- Valid Forrest Center permits must be displayed on the rear view mirror of the vehicle at all times.
- Vehicles must park in the lot directly in front of FCTC in the posted Tech Center Parking area, unless otherwise instructed upon approval of parking pass. Students are not permitted to park in Leonardtown High School or Leonardtown Middle School parking lots.
- Vehicles should be locked at all times. FCTC and SMCPS are not responsible for the vehicle and/or its contents.
- Vehicles may not display inappropriate language or pictures.
- Student drivers must obey the posted speed limit on the school grounds, which is 15 mph.
- Vehicles and property therein are subject to search by the school administrator if there is reasonable cause.
- Students must obey all traffic laws.

Failure to follow driving and parking rules may result in parking fines, loss of driving and parking privileges, and/or disciplinary actions. Additional rules will be stated on the parking application.

DISCIPLINE

All students referred for disciplinary reasons will be subject to the St. Mary's County Public Schools Code of Conduct. However, in order to create opportunities for Forrest Center students to receive services that will assist them with their specific behavior problems, students may be required to work on Character Education Activities as well as review our GRIT policy.

ISI (In School Intervention)

A student assigned to ISI by the home school will serve ISI at the home school and may report to the Forrest Center unless directed otherwise by an administrator.

A student assigned to ISI by the Forrest Center will serve ISI at the home school and will not report to the Forrest Center.

Students may be asked to complete additional Character Education Activities as a part of their ISI work.

Suspensions

Students suspended from the Forrest Center may not attend classes at their home schools during the period of the suspension.

Forrest Center students who are suspended from their home schools may not attend classes at the Forrest Center during the period of suspension.

School Service

Students may be asked to perform school service in lieu of ISI or suspension.

SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Students must practice proper safety procedures in order to participate in a program at the Forrest Center. Students hereby agree to abide with the rules and regulations and fully understand that failure on their part may result in being required to withdraw from the course.

1. **Conduct** – Student misconduct in a shop may endanger the safety of others. Any thoughtless or careless act such as running, tripping, pushing, or horseplay may cause an accident and result in serious injury. Students must always conduct themselves appropriately.

2. **Dress** – For student safety, proper attire may be required. Safety shoes and other personal protective equipment may be required in the shop areas. Ties, jewelry and rings may need to be removed; hair may need to be tied back.

3. **Tools** - Students must be properly instructed in the use of all tools utilized in the shop prior to using them. In addition, some tools may require specific permission from the instructor prior to each use. Students are not to utilize any broken or damaged pieces of equipment or any equipment that does not have the proper safety guides, and report any irregularities, defects, deficiencies, or breakage to the instructor to avoid injury.

4. **Safety Glasses** - Education Bylaw 13.05.06 requires students to wear protective eye devices while engaged in activities in the shop area that involve hot molten metal or solder and milling, turning, shaping, cutting, or stamping of solid materials. In addition, all work in welding and/or the use of chemicals require appropriate protective devices.

5. **"Right to Know"** - Information regarding hazardous, toxic and dangerous materials and chemicals is available through the school's office. Students are responsible for updating information and reporting to the school nurse any medical conditions (including pregnancy), or allergies that may be aggravated by these materials and chemicals.

6. **Precaution** – Students are responsible for taking necessary precautions to protect their safety and that of their classmates. This is to include good house-keeping activities, taking care of tools and equipment, and disposal of scraps and waste materials.

7. **Accidents** – Students must report to the teacher any accidents, providing all information necessary to complete the county's accident report.

8. **Safety** – Students understand that failure to comply with these rules will result in disciplinary action.

SUMMARY

All students who are part of the Forrest Center family have the advantage of learning real-world skills in the classroom. Students should take full advantage of these terrific resources and respect the privilege of this unique learning experience.