

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 715 University Parkway  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Natchitoches State LA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 71457-3997

County Natchitoches Parish

Telephone (318) 357-2500 Fax (318) 357-3297

Web site/URL https://www.lsmsa.edu/ E-mail kkey@lsmsa.edu

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. Steven Horton E-mail shorton@lsmsa.edu  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Louisiana School For Math Science & The Arts Tel. (318) 357-2500

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 Mrs. Sharon Gahagan  
(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, write N/A in the space.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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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 2020 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 includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 0 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 1 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

2. 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

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

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	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	30	56	86
11	53	101	154
12 or higher	44	74	118
<b>Total Students</b>	127	231	358

\*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):
- 1.4 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 9.8 % Asian
  - 11.4 % Black or African American
  - 4.2 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.3 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 67 % White
  - 5.9 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 11%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	40
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	40
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	360
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.11
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	11

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %  
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12 %

Total number students who qualify: 44

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %

13 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. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |                                                |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <u>4</u> Autism                  | <u>10</u> Multiple Disabilities                |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>7</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5

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:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	5
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	40
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	0
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	8

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 9:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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 2019.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	113
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	98%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
Other	1%

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

Yes X      No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.      2011

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

LSMSA is a residential high school that offers competitive admissions for highly-motivated students and fosters lifelong growth through the exchange of ideas in a rigorous community.

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

The Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts will provide leadership in offering a world-class education to Louisiana’s high-achieving, highly-motivated students. LSMSA recruits from across the state, and regularly enrolls students from at least 75 percent of Louisiana’s parishes (counties). Qualified students are admitted from rural schools, urban schools, magnet programs, parochial schools, as well as from the home-school community from around the state. Because LSMSA is a public school supported by state funds, there is no tuition cost to attend, which allows students from all socioeconomic backgrounds to enroll. Admission is determined based on a holistic review of a student’s academic record, standardized test scores (both end of course exams and a nationally normed test, generally the ACT), recommendations of current educators, interviews by LSMSA staff, and review of an extensive admissions application. LSMSA enrolls students in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. All students receive a personalized transcript analysis and a personalized curriculum path through their time at LSMSA, and the school’s standards for admission reflect expected curricular knowledge associated with each academic year.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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The Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts holds an institutional belief in the importance of a free and appropriate public education. The school serves students in ways appropriate to their talents and abilities, empowering those students to meet the high expectations set by themselves, their families, the school, and the state. The institution is responsive to the ever-changing needs of students and provides an environment that is conducive to lifelong learning.

LSMSA was established by the state's legislature in 1983 as the nation's second public residential school for high school juniors and seniors; a model designed to serve the educational and social needs of students whose capacities and ambitions for learning could not be met in traditional, local high schools. Its early formative values are still at the heart of the school's success. Faculty members are content specialists who develop a college-level curriculum that engages bright students in learning. Additionally, faculty members serve as advisors/ mentors for students. Students accelerate through curricula based on abilities and interests, guided by the state's graduation requirements but with few limitations. Independent studies, mentored research, and self-directed inquiry are standard. In addition to the extensive math and science curricula, the humanities offer a rich array of courses in English and history; the arts provide introductory to performance level courses in music, theatre, dance, and visual arts; foreign languages include multiple levels of Latin, Spanish, French, German, Chinese and Arabic, with additional electives in Greek. All of this is in the context of a residential program that not only provides for socialization and extended learning opportunities, but also for students to learn about personal choices, to gain important self-management skills, and to develop leadership skills.

LSMSA draws students from 75 percent of the state's parishes, from communities both rural and urban, and from every economic category one might quantify. The school strives to maintain a diverse study body, and faculty and staff work diligently to help the full community of students to engage in the academic and social opportunities afforded by going to school with peers from across the state.

The LSMSA campus community is the result of our visionary founders who wanted an academic and residential experience designed to meet the needs of Louisiana's brightest and most highly-motivated students. As such, LSMSA's "Living-Learning Community" challenges students to engage with rigorous academics while also exploring the values of living in community and serving the institution at large. Every student on campus is asked to work at clerical and/or service tasks for three hours a week in order to 'give back' to the community. This service-minded aspect of the school's culture, when combined with the academic rigor and the 'guided independence' of living in residence halls on campus, all serve to create a space where students begin to rapidly mature into scholars and citizens.

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

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

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

Students at LSMSA enjoy the challenges and rewards of learning and find numerous experiences that set us apart from the traditional high school. As an institution, LSMSA has been charged by the state of Louisiana with teaching a collegiate level, accelerated curriculum to our students. Students are required to take a minimum of six courses each semester, and graduates must complete a minimum of 26 academic units, including the full complement of State of Louisiana requirements alongside of our graduation requirements. These curriculum and academic requirements provide a broad-based educational framework from which a student can also achieve individualized academic and personal goals. As a survey of the course offerings below will show, this same model exists in every department of the school. In addition to content learned, this curricular model and our classroom expectations help students develop critical thinking skills. Ultimately, academic rigor at LSMSA is defined by small class sizes with extensive opportunities for individualized instruction utilizing a collegiate curriculum taught by a highly qualified faculty that is dedicated to student learning; all in a residential environment designed to foster academic, civic and personal responsibility and growth. Ranked by Niche in 2019 as the nation's third-best public high school faculty, all full-time faculty hold advanced degrees in the subject area in which they teach, and 70 percent hold a Ph.D. or other terminal degree (e.g. MFA). Faculty meet accreditation standards set by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools for undergraduate college faculty. Courses are taught on a traditional college semester schedule. All courses use collegiate textbooks. LSMSA has cultivated articulation agreements with 10 universities in Louisiana, and Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, GA, several of which award over 100 hours of college credit for core courses taken at LSMSA, depending on the student's curricular choices. Additionally, students are also, consistently, very successful on the State of Louisiana End of Course/LEAP2025 standardized assessments. Their successful completion of these curricular based exams allows the school to gauge curricular achievements within the state expectations.

**1b.** Reading/English language arts

The English Department at LSMSA has five members, all with Ph.D.'s in literature. Entering sophomores and juniors must take a year-long composition course centered on writing argumentative non-fiction essays. Juniors must also write a research paper from a casebook consisting of a novel or poems and a section of literary criticism published by professional scholars. These courses give students the chance to improve the grammatical, organizational, and stylistic components of their writing. Students are encouraged to bring rough drafts of their essays to writing conferences with their teachers. At least 10 essays are submitted by each student over the course of the academic year. While LSMSA's curriculum reflects a collegiate approach with learning outcomes, students consistently excel on the state level end-of-course tests, which reflect the standardized preparations they are receiving through our coursework.

When students transfer to LSMSA from their home high schools, the faculty finds considerable differences in their writing skills. Because of those differences, the English faculty has developed a very individualized writing curriculum that allows for one-on-one writing conferences to occur during faculty office hours. Students are encouraged to come by their teacher's office and bring a rough draft of their paper so that their teacher can show them areas that need improvement. Students are also invited to utilize the campus Writing Center, staffed by English faculty and by upper-class students who have been trained as peer tutors. The faculty has acknowledged that some differences in the ability to write are caused by learning disabilities, and faculty members work closely with the school's 504 committee to develop interventions that allow the students to use technology, have extended time on tests, or use teacher-provided study guides. Some students arrive at LSMSA with no experience in academic writing, and for those students, the rigorous writing curriculum provides the necessary foundation for them to become good writers. This increased emphasis on critical writing skills consistently comes to fruition in positive performances in upper-level elective courses, such as Folklore, Modernism, Gothic Literature, Transnational Fiction, Science and

Literature, and Southern Literature. Encouraging life-long reading and engagement in the literary arts is one of the English Department's top priorities at LSMSA.

### **1c. Mathematics**

LSMSA's Mathematics and Computer Science Department offers a diverse curriculum to accommodate a variety of student interests. Students receive rigorous instruction in a supportive learning environment. The faculty places an emphasis on conceptual understanding, analytical skills, problem solving, application, and appropriate use of technology. The mathematics curriculum at LSMSA includes Geometry, College Algebra (yearlong), Accelerated College Algebra (same material as College Algebra but in one semester) and the following one semester courses: Trigonometry, Precalculus, Probability and Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, Calculus I, II, and III, Chaos Theory, Linear Algebra, Modern Algebra, Topology, and Differential Equations. All students must take 4 units of mathematics, some of which they bring from their home school. Students are placed into math courses using transcripts, standardized test scores, and placement test scores. As is the case in other CORE areas (Math/Science/English/History), LSMSA's curriculum reflects a collegiate approach in scope and in content; however, students still participate in state standardized end-of-course exams, and they do very well in those assessments. Faculty review the data provided by the state to continue to help prepare students for those exams.

Many students take far more than the minimum requirements in math, and some take as many as 10 math courses at LSMSA. All math teachers schedule at least 10 hours per week where they are available to tutor and provide additional instruction. In addition, math teachers hold evening office hours so that students needing help can find teachers available every evening Monday through Thursday, and all students are welcome. LSMSA provides summer school where students may remediate or get ahead in Trigonometry and Calculus in order to advance deeper into the curriculum during the traditional school year. Students regularly compete in the MAA regional competition for colleges in Louisiana and Mississippi. LSMSA is the only high school that competes against LSU (often against LSMSA alumni), Louisiana Tech, Tulane, Ole Miss, Mississippi State, and others, and LSMSA's students do very well. They routinely win the Integration Bee and in 2018 won the overall competition. Additionally, students also do very well in the AMC10 and AMC12 competitions.

### **1d. Science**

The Sciences Department seeks to educate and inspire all students in a dynamic environment that recognizes individual student needs and interests while teaching a collegiate curriculum, using college level-textbooks and fully realized bench labs in all areas. LSMSA provides all students with access to standard college-level laboratory equipment and activities. These laboratories are important tools that the Sciences Department uses to help students gain hands-on experience and reinforce important concepts. In Sciences, students participate in end-of-year exams designed by the state's Department of Education. LSMSA students regularly excel in these exams, reflecting an understanding of the state standardized curricular goals alongside the school's collegiate coursework.

In biology classes, students are able to use a state-of-the-art genetics lab, examine bone models, and study ecology outdoors. Many biology labs utilize Vernier laboratory sensors to collect and analyze data. In chemistry, both weekly labs and independent student research projects are aided by a new Infrared Spectrophotometer, a UV VIS spectrophotometer, gas chromatography, a rotary evaporator, and a bomb calorimeter. In physics, students have access to two labs equipped with PASCO Science Workshop 750 computer interfaces together with measuring instruments and sensors. Astronomy equipment includes binoculars, telescopes, and Virtual Astronomy (a program containing many computer-based Astronomy labs). Students can take electives such as Modern Genetics, Analytical Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Biochemistry, Quantum Mechanics, Electrodynamics, and Astronomy. Course offerings are presented through college/career paths such as Medicine, Environmental Science, Genetics, Materials Science, Chemical Engineering, Biochemistry, and Physics. The Sciences faculty looks for opportunities to mentor students in individualized work and research, as does the entire LSMSA faculty. Faculty offer students several special science opportunities, including Future Scientist Program, LSMSA Science Fair, Science Speaker Series, science clubs, competitions like Envirothon, Science Quiz Bowl, Science Olympiad, and NBRS 2020

student research projects. Summer research opportunities may be available as faculty actively work to match students with opportunities to participate in research laboratories and science programs during the summer.

**1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

The mission of the History Department is to prepare students for the intellectual demands of the university experience; to foster and encourage students to become better writers and readers; and to instill awareness of the complexities of history and cultural studies. In addition to traditional collegiate surveys in American History and World History, faculty are able to offer intensive elective coursework in the areas of Religious Studies, Women's Studies, Disability Studies, the histories of the World Wars, the American Civil War, Latin American Revolutions, and the Making of Modern Asia, among many other elective options. In each historical classroom, scholars are encouraged to read seminal texts and scholarly commentary alongside of the lectures provided by their faculty. Each history course is built on the premise that close readings and careful research can produce, not just a well-educated historian, but a strong critical thinker and writer. In this regard, history coursework at LSMSA serves as foundational to the full curricular experiences – students who are able to think critically and communicate well can expect to flourish more fully in courses across the curriculum. LSMSA's history/social studies curriculum reflects a collegiate approach in scope and in content; however, students also participate in state standardized end-of-course exams, and they do very well in those exams. Faculty review the data provided by the state to continue to help prepare students for those exams.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

The College Counseling Center offers an array of programs, workshops and services. The center provides students with a fully integrated and comprehensive college counseling program. Each counselor is licensed by the state of Louisiana and certified by the National Board of Certified Counselors to offer confidential personal counseling to students. The College Counseling Center provides students with semester-long, weekly seminars in the spring semester of their junior year and in the fall semester of their senior year, each designed to explore student interest, values, aptitude and background. The curriculum presented in these seminars is designed specifically for LSMSA's highly-motivated and high achieving students. Ultimately, the team of counselors work with students in matching their developing interests with college choices and career fields that are intrinsically interesting and satisfying. Counselors provide information about colleges and scholarships through the College Planning Seminars, College Fair, individual college visits, College Speaker Series, financial aid workshops and individual appointments upon request. Counselors individually advise and collaborate with students on issues of college admissions and scholarships beginning in the spring of the junior year. During the students' senior year, counselors write individual letters of recommendation for each of their students, complete multiple evaluations and school reports, and support students in the decision-making process. Students are encouraged to work closely with their counselors to assure that applications and supporting documents, including transcripts, are sent in a timely fashion. In a given year, between 30 and 40 percent of LSMSA students identify as first-generation students. The school's college counselors, and the CCC Curriculum, both address the unique needs of first-generation students with attention to family needs as well.

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

In addition to an intentionally rigorous curriculum in mathematics, science, and English, LSMSA offers collegiate level coursework in languages, the arts, and health and physical education . These courses are open to students at each of our grade levels (10, 11, and 12), and students self-select in which semesters they wish to take these courses, with an eye toward completing state graduation requirements in each area. A student interested in any of these areas may do a deep dive in the subject during their tenure at LSMSA. It is not unusual for students to take Arts courses each of their six semesters with us as part of their Artist-in-Training program. Likewise, students may progress to a 4th or 5th year in our Languages if they arrive on campus prepared to continue the curriculum.

LSMSA firmly believes that the successful study of world languages can not only expand a student's own individual potential, it can better equip them for college entrance, prepare them for unique job opportunities, and outfit them with an important tool in a global society. LSMSA is able to offer introductory to advanced learning opportunities in six languages: Latin, French, Spanish, German, Chinese, and Arabic. All students must meet the state requirement in Foreign Language—two units (and two levels) of the same language. LSMSA students are encouraged to enroll in at least three years of a language. Students can also take introductory courses in Greek as an elective. Additionally, language faculty offer elective culture studies courses in each of the offered languages and the classics.

LSMSA's Creative and Performing Arts Department allows students to develop an appreciation for the creative and performing arts; fosters and encourages creative exploration and development; facilitates a cooperative learning environment; teaches the value of our cultural heritage; and instills a sense of creative discipline. Students enrolled at LSMSA have opportunities to study and perform in music (voice, piano, and instrumental), dance, theatre, and the visual arts. Both introductory and upper-level coursework is available in each discipline with advanced arts courses in architecture, printmaking, and graphic design; advanced music courses in four levels of music theory, private voice and piano lessons; advanced dance courses include Choreography, Composition, Modern Dance, Jazz forms, and Ballet; advanced theatre courses include Script Analysis, Improvisation, Stage Production and Directing and are complemented with traditional offering of acting courses.

LSMSA understands that students working in such a rigorous academic environment need a physical outlet for their sometimes stressful lives. The Health and Physical Education Department's motto is "healthy minds thrive in healthy bodies." Students are given opportunities to learn or refine skills in lifelong sports like tennis, team sports, yoga, boxing or karate. The state-required course in health and wellness contains both physical and academic rigor while providing a solid base from which students learn to make good decisions about nutrition, exercise, and wellness.

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

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

Due to the rigorous nature of the school, as demonstrated in its selective admissions geared toward highly-motivated, high-achieving students, many of whom have been designated as gifted by their home school districts, LSMSA does not encounter this concern regularly. All students are exceptional in their academic abilities, but LSMSA does, on occasion, have students who are unable to meet the academic or residential expectations of the living/learning program offered. In those cases, faculty and staff attempt to support and/or redirect the student through the school's academic support team (including the Assistant Director of Academic Services, the faculty advisor, and student's faculty) or through the student's Student Life Advisors and the residence life support staff. Student academic support regularly takes the form of individualized meetings with our Coordinator of Student Support or the Assistant Director of Academic Services. These individualized meetings consist of a standard review of study skills, a projection of future assignments and concerns, and a mediation between the student and the impacted faculty. We will often create student academic contract and will require additional guided study meetings with tutors or with faculty in office hours. If students are unable to complete our curriculum, despite their efforts and the support offered, they are required to return to their home school.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

While students progress through accelerated courses for the state's graduation requirements, LSMSA also invites them to pursue academic coursework beyond the proscribed traditional courses. This might include courses such as Quantum Mechanics, Vector Calculus, Emerging Infectious Disease, Musical Theatre Cabaret, History of American Science, or Literary Theory. When students indicate interest in courses that are not offered, LSMSA seek to find ways to facilitate independent study opportunities and research projects that allow for that interest to be pursued. On the occasions when students completely exhaust our curriculum in an academic area, they are given the option of taking advanced level collegiate coursework at LSMSA's partner institution, Northwestern State University. Many students are designated as "gifted" by

their home schools. School districts throughout the state have recognized the school's entire curriculum as a gifted curriculum, and the state allows LSMSA to code coursework as such in terms of reporting and assessment.

**3c. Special education**

LSMSA's faculty also provides differentiation for students who experience academic difficulty due to physical or learning disabilities. The 504 Committee recommends appropriate accommodations to ensure that these students are able to access the curriculum. Examples of individualized accommodations include extended time on exams; distraction free testing environments, the use of assistive devices like voice recorders and laptops for note-taking; audio text books; text to speech software; peer tutors; designated note takers; oral testing; homework or project modifications; graphic organizer software; repeated directions; special courses in study skills, note-taking; advising to take courses to strengthen a student's academic background; social or emotional counseling.

**3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered**

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

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

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

As noted earlier, LSMSA’s campus operates as ‘Living-Learning Community’, combining efforts of both the academic and residential areas of campus to serve the whole student. Faculty and staff ask a lot of LSMSA students, regularly challenging them to stretch well beyond their previous experiences. They are asked to take college-level coursework (six courses per semester) while living in dorms, managing homework and residential expectation without much direct prompting from either the faculty or the residential and wellness support staffs. In so doing, they learn to cultivate time-management, self-regulation, and communal responsibilities alongside their academic growth. LSMSA references this phenomena as ‘guided independence’, which is to say that students are offered a great deal of quiet, individualized support, while also prompting them to manage and communicate their needs to us. The school has an academic and wellness network that works intentionally to recognize students’ struggles. If grades fall or faculty report that homework is not being turned in, students lose personal control over some of their free time and are placed on academic probation until they are able to resolve the identified deficiencies. At the same time, if a student self-reports wellness concerns, or if a teacher or a member of the residence life staff notes wellness concerns, the school facilitates regular and ongoing meetings with two full-time personal/wellness counselors. In each element of this support network, parents are consulted for additional insights and support, and the school’s “Concerns” team meets weekly with residential life and medical support personnel in order to consult about students in a holistic conversation.

In addition to individual supports for students who may be struggling academically or in the area of wellness, the school strives to build community among the students through extra-curricular opportunities and residential life programming experiences. Students are afforded the opportunity to engage with leadership and club opportunities, to participate in artistic and academic competition experiences around the state, and to compete in high school athletics. These opportunities, alongside the vitally important community which is built in the residence halls, allows for personal growth and wellness peer support amidst the stressors they may be experiencing due to home-sickness or in adjusting to the school’s academic pace and expectations.

In short, faculty and staff seek to provide both individual and communal support for their needs and their interests. LSMSA regularly notes that its students thrive, socially, academically, and personally. Many graduates name their time at LSMSA as the most influential years of their life, well-beyond the collegiate and graduate experiences.

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

As a residential high school representing students from over 75 percent of Louisiana’s parishes (counties), most of the LSMSA families are well outside the local community. With that in mind, LSMSA prioritizes regular and clear communication with them en masse and individually, from all over campus. Families are given access to their student’s course management software in order to monitor grades and attendance, and they are in close contact with their students’ residence life support teams in the dorms. Every faculty member holds 10 office hours each week in order to be available, not just to the students, but also to their families. Families are invited to contact faculty and the administration via phone or email, and faculty and staff strive to meet their needs, especially given the important trust they have placed in the institution in allowing their student to leave home and live here on campus. The LSMSA Foundation supports the Parents’ Council, which helps parents find ways to engage with the school even from across the state. LSMSA has a fortunate number of partners in the Natchitoches community. Northwestern State University (NSU) is LSMSA’s primary academic partner in many ways – allowing students access to their libraries and also offering our most robust collegiate academic articulation agreement. They also support our student services efforts by allowing students to attend NSU events and enjoy use of NSU wellness facilities. Additionally, LSMSA has developed a strong relationship with Natchitoches Regional Medical Center, entering into grants with them to support student wellness, and with Northwest Louisiana Technical and

Community College, allowing them to use our facilities for ceremonies as needed. Our leadership also works closely with several philanthropic organizations, welcoming them to our campus regularly.

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

LSMSA sets aside several professional development days annually for faculty and staff. Generally on campus professional development consists of topics dictated by state statutes, concerns raised by faculty leadership, best-practices explorations cultivated by departments, and special seminars offered by nearby university teams. Furthermore, annually LSMSA budgets for each faculty member to attend regional, national, or international conferences in their field. The application process for these funds includes an exploration of how pursuing this professional development relates either to current coursework or professional research interests and involves commitment on the part of the attendee to contribute back to campus conversations based on their experiences. Faculty may also use professional development funds toward the investment of research resources and materials, including items to be used in the development of new curriculum. The LSMSA Foundation, our philanthropic partner, also affords faculty and staff the opportunity to apply for professional development grants through the Richard Brown Fund once every two years. These grants are designed to support deep research projects and extensive, often off-site professional development prospects. The LSMSA Foundation also supports faculty professional culture by funding semester long sabbaticals for faculty chosen through a competitive application process. These sabbaticals are designed to allow faculty to pursue additional educational opportunities or to pursue creative and scholarly opportunities which would otherwise be impossible to undergo during a traditional contract year.

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

LSMSA was established by legislative statute to be independent of the state's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and to be governed by an independent Board of Directors that includes statewide educational leaders, gubernatorial appointees, and various ex-officio members. The Board of Directors hires and evaluates the Executive Director (Superintendent) to lead and manage the school. The Executive Director's senior administration includes two directors that are charged with oversight of the academic and the residential programs. The Director of Academic Services exercises the authority of both a high school principal and a collegiate provost. She is responsible for academic policies, scheduling, course development, teacher evaluation, professional development, the work of the college counselors, assessing students' academic performance, and when necessary, enforcing discipline. The Director of Enrollment and Student Services, as chief student affairs officer, plays an equally important role in the administration of the school. Because LSMSA is a residential school, the descriptive phrase is applied that it is a "Living / Learning Environment." While her primary responsibilities are in the recruitment of students, and the development of procedures and programs for the residence halls and student life, it is when these enrollment, residential, and academic components work as one that significant opportunities occur for student growth. Both directors work closely, along with the Director of Administration and Finance (responsible for the following areas: business offices, the human resources department, the information technology department, and the physical plant team) on creating and maintaining a unified vision for student experiences from courses to residence hall programming to the support areas of school. The "Living/Learning Environment" is a key part of LSMSA. Graduates report that, in addition to the college preparation they received in the classrooms, the importance of the lessons learned about self-management was key in their college successes.

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

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The school's founder, Dr. Robert Alost, conceptualized a school that would meet the intellectual needs of Louisiana's brightest students, but he also realized that the "living" component of the campus culture would be just as vital to the student's success. The school sees itself as a "living-learning community", but it truly is the combination of academic experiences with the social and residential life experiences that allow LSMSA's students to grow, to mature, and to thrive. The strongest students in Louisiana are invited to join a campus that values curiosity, critical thinking, academic rigor, and community. Within that, the question of naming one practice that contributes to the school's success, it would have to be the residential life program. The opportunity to take amazing classes from a first-rate faculty becomes amplified alongside the opportunity to live with other bright, hard-working, thoughtful peers. For many students, LSMSA represents the first place where they have found a peer group that embraces intellectual rigor alongside individual decency. Within the residence halls, staff members help to build community that carries over into the classroom. While the academic curriculum represents an amazing opportunity to pursue classes such as European Intellectual History, Differential Equations, Software Engineering, Organic Chemistry, and Religion in Literature, while also taking part in a Dance production, or the Mixed Ensemble, or while pursuing an independent study in Digital Photography and Web Design – all while still in high school – it is the life outside of the classroom that is the foundation of the school's success. Full-time student life advisors engage with students in a wide range of cultural, educational, leadership, recreational, social and wellness activities - encouraging students to make positive choices, build lasting friendships and search for a sense of balance between academic and personal growth. Students find themselves, and their cohort, at LSMSA, and they do this through the residence hall and student life experiences. The school's rigorous curriculum bears good fruits. Students experience the good results in their college placements, their scholarship offers, their college graduation rates, and their successful careers. But they also see the success of their residential life experience through the lives they lead – as good citizens, clear thinkers, and kind individuals. The school is proud of the students they are and the alums they become. Faculty and staff are proud of the work they do as part of this experience, but they are also proud of the people they become.