

**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 [ ] Magnet [X] Choice

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

Official School Name Leonardo Da Vinci High School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 320 Porter Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Buffalo State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 14201-1084

County Erie County

Telephone (716) 816-4380 Fax (716) 888-7181

Web site/URL http://www.buffaloschools.org E-mail glodinsky@buffaloschools.org

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. Kriner Cash E-mail krinercash@buffaloschools.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Buffalo City School District Tel. (716) 816-3500

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 Ms. Sharon Belton-Cottman  
(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):
- 38 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 6 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 27 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 71 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	28	83	111
10	24	74	98
11	37	63	100
12 or higher	28	59	87
<b>Total Students</b>	117	279	396

\*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 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 18 % Asian
  - 34 % Black or African American
  - 20 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 25 % White
  - 2 % 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: 4%

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	15
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	377
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Burmese, Somali, Bengali, Arabic, Nepali, Kinyarwanda, Spanish, Chin, Tigrigna, Nepali, Karen.

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 12 %  
49 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 88 %  
 Total number students who qualify: 350

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %

45 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>1</u> Autism                  | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>24</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>6</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4

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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1

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	91%	89%	90%	91%	88%
High school graduation rate	99%	91%	93%	96%	89%

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	88
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	66%
Enrolled in a community college	23%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	8%
Joined the military or other public service	3%
Other	0%

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

Yes  No

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

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

Leonardo da Vinci High School is a college preparatory school focused on individualized attention to every student in an environment of academic excellence and mutual support.

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

Students are selected via a district - wide application process and are ranked by an independent committee based on the criteria of student attendance and grade reports, there is no admissions test.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Leonardo Da Vinci High School is a four-year, co-educational public high school located on the campus of D'Youville College in Buffalo, New York.

A unique feature of the high school/college partnership allows da Vinci students to enroll in fully accredited and transferable college courses as early as their sophomore year. As a result, da Vinci students can graduate with up to 22 college credits. Located in the heart of Buffalo's West Side, a bastion of both new immigrant communities and long – settled neighborhood inhabitants, da Vinci provides focused, individualized attention to every student and is able to foster an environment based on academic excellence and mutual support in a family atmosphere.

Districtwide, da Vinci is celebrated for our connection to the LGBTQ Community and commitment to a culturally diverse student population. With under 400 students, there are dozens of languages and dialects spoken, as well as differing gender identities, expressions and sexual orientations. Da Vinci not only has high academic expectations, surpassing those set by New York State, but also high expectations regarding moral character; students are expected to complete several hours of community service each year, and to build relationships with local organizations providing services to the less fortunate.

Da Vinci's high academic expectations, which include four years of math and science, three years of foreign language and art courses such as Advanced Placement 2D, Studio in Media and Anatomical Design result in a Buffalo Public School - district high number of students earning advanced designation on their New York State Regents diploma. A da Vinci student is hard working, open to new opportunities, takes chances and is an advocate for social justice.

The da Vinci core values of 'Kindness, Courtesy, Dignity and Respect' are an accurate reflection of the school community.

A sample of the college classes available to da Vinci students include: American Sign Language Process of Scientific Discovery Computers & Computing Computers & Electronic Health Records Food & Culture Italian Level II Elementary Algebra, Algebra and Trigonometry Principles of Management Ethics in Theory & Action Developmental Psychology Abnormal Psychology Beginner Spanish II Public Speaking Theater Production Intro to Culinary Skills Microeconomics Research Writing American Government & Economics Physiological Psychology Social Problems Intermediate Spanish Latin American Civilization and Culture. In addition to the rigorous college and high school curriculum, students are also encouraged to enroll in AP US History, AP Language & Composition, AP Studio in 2D.

Despite the challenges of economic changes in the City of Buffalo, Leonardo da Vinci High School has continued to provide high-quality education and produce highly-qualified global citizens. The school community is proud of its long-standing traditions and has been willing to embrace new ones in recent years. The school leadership has worked closely with teachers to create a dynamic, invigorating educational environment in which traditions are celebrated and new ideas welcomed. These traditions include: celebrating academic accomplishments during awards ceremonies, celebrating college acceptances on the morning announcements and on school bulletin boards, freshman orientation, an annual decision day for seniors to show their choice of college or career, culture day during which we celebrate and learn of the many cultures students represent – many being recent immigrants to the United States, teachers writing 'Shout Out' notes to students who demonstrate Kindness, Courtesy, Dignity and Respect, and/or academic excellence, a gratitude week for students to show gratitude to faculty and staff, and a heart - warming commencement ceremony - held at the beautifully restored 1920's era Shea's North Park Theater, located in an historic Buffalo neighborhood.

The academic programming at da Vinci provides challenges to students at all levels. There are academic and social-emotional supports through special education services, a student assistance team, integrated co-teaching, academic intervention services, mentoring, and teacher availability after school each day for extra help. Students have opportunities to advance at their pace to take general level courses, Regents courses,

advanced courses, college courses through two local colleges, and Advanced Placement courses. Students can develop socially, emotionally, physically and culturally through the many clubs and athletic options offered at da Vinci. Whether it be through the newly-formed Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) club, Game Club, National Honor Society, Culture Nights, da Vinci students have access to rich programming with dedicated staff advisers and agency supports.

## **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

Da Vinci High School utilizes a variety of student – centered approaches to enable and encourage every student to become active participants in the learning process.

Collaboration in student learning is focused on self-discovery and sharing. Students are given multiple points of data to process and must utilize the information to deepen learning and exposure to the topic. This information is then shared with the teacher and students, effectively creating a shared learning experience.

Technology provides each student with full use of district lap top to encourage familiarization with new platforms, internet research capabilities and exposure to near limitless sources of information.

Presentation creates opportunities for students to regularly share research findings with groups and entire classes as a way to further process and deepen their understanding of the material.

Curriculum provides a strong, rigorous course of study that emphasizes student - centered learning. This learning includes a variety of approaches and materials that delivers content that both challenges and engages students.

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

Throughout our building, we have experienced teachers who have taken advantage of a variety of professional development opportunities and are able to implement best teaching practices such as Step Up To Writing, Data Driven Instruction Processes as well as Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Strategies. All ELA teachers use the New York State Regents Rubric to guide their grading practices, which provide students with consistent expectations. Class assessments emulate state assessment formats in order to allow students to become familiarized with end of the year formal assessments. Teachers are provided with professional development to strengthen effective collaborative practices between ELA/ENL/Special Education teachers. Instruction has been focused on student to student collaboration, teacher – as – facilitator approaches and modifying the physical organization of the classroom to enable/encourage student co-learning and group sharing.

### **1c.** Mathematics

The mathematics department believes that math fluency, reasoning and communication is essential for both college success and lifetime need. The da Vinci focus is for students to see mathematics as a foundational set of skills that allows them to make sense of problem situations. Aligned with New York State Learning Standards, students are mandated to take four years of math at da Vinci High School and are enrolled in Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and Calculus. In order to use materials that are challenging and aligned with district goals, the math department follows district pacing and curriculum guides. Lessons are designed around challenging mathematical problems and unit assessments are aligned with the district curriculum and module guides. Item analysis is conducted from District Benchmark Assessments and given throughout the school year,. The analysis, provide data and are reviewed individually by teachers and discussed as a department during daily Common Planning Time (CPT). During 'CPT', teachers share strategies that they used in the classroom that they think contributed to their results on that topic or standard. Teachers then have the ability to adjust their instruction for best practice moving forward.

The technologically driven math department embraces the concept of teaching students with technology they will encounter in the world for which we are preparing them. Graphing calculators and interactive whiteboards are used daily and district provided laptops are utilized. Instruction is balanced by certain topics

taught without technology, to ensure that the underlying concepts are understood, and to their understanding of the material.

#### **1d. Science**

The science department aligns its curriculum with the New York State Learning Standards. It offers extensive opportunities for students to engage in a wide variety of courses at all levels with access to state-of-the-art laboratory facilities and scientific equipment. Leonardo da Vinci High School mandates that all students enroll in four years of Science. The department offers Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Environmental Science, Earth Science and Anatomy and Physiology. To facilitate college and career readiness, classes also focus on our partnership with D'Youville College, as it implements its programming to the Health Services areas of Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and other medical areas of study and degree. Each branch of science includes an option accessible to students at all levels. Teachers rely upon an inquiry-based, laboratory-based, experiential approach to learning. Instructional approaches to learning include discovery lessons in science laboratories, lecture, collaborative learning, and evidence-based projects. Teachers use formative assessments to guide and modify their instruction to ensure success on the summative unit tests and ultimately, New York State Regents Examinations. Teachers provide support through after-school tutoring, and mastery learning to ensure student success.

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

Leonardo da Vinci uses New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies to guide instruction, ensuring that teaching practices focus on specific learning targets. The Social Studies curriculum is four years: Global 9, Global 10, US History 11, Participation in Government and Economics. Regents exams are given after Global 10 and US History. Additionally, we offer electives that appeal to students of all abilities including AP US History and AP Government. Other electives include African American Studies and Sociology. Learning expectations are clearly communicated between teachers and students. Our curricular practices incorporate inquiry-based learning with an emphasis on document analysis, critical thinking, and debate. Additional approaches include project-based learning. Government classes include the expectation that students attend and participate in Buffalo Board of Education monthly board meetings and District Parent Council meetings, both of which they present issues of concern and ask questions of elected officials of issues of direct student concern. District provided laptops, Google Classroom, and other internet resources, are incorporated into daily lessons. Lessons include explicit instruction and student-centered, inquiry-based activities. Students analyze source materials and write historical claims at the appropriate developmental level to sharpen critical thinking skills. Students needing additional support receive this through AIS services, smaller classes, direct consultant teachers, and modified curricular materials.

Student progress is assessed in several ways. Formative assessments (graphic organizers, strategic questioning, and technology) garner detailed information used to improve instruction/student learning throughout the lesson, allowing students to critically think and analyze. Summative assessments (essays, primary source analysis, and projects) are used to evaluate learning within state standards and in accordance with district benchmarks. Based on the data accumulated through these assessments, teachers modify future instruction for higher achievement. Students are also mandated to perform multiple hours of community service in each of the four years of high school, this far exceeds the requirements of the state and reflect the da Vinci focus on community outreach and participation. Area food pantries, parks and community centers have been the recipient of our students efforts.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

Leonardo da Vinci High School, in partnership with D'Youville College, a highly respected, local, 115 year old, private liberal arts institution has as its expectation that students take fully accredited college courses from grade 10 to grade 12. Students have the opportunity to earn up to 22 college credits while in high school. Students are guided and advised by both high school and college counselors and department chairs, these courses as well as text books and materials are provided free of charge by the partnership. High school students have full use of all college facilities including gym, pool, library, study areas and laboratories, they are fully integrated into the college's activities and receive a college enrollment ID. The

high school is physically located on the college property and is connected to the college academic buildings, allowing students to simply walk from the high school to the college in a matter of minutes. In addition, the college is actively working to deepen our partnership by establishing a ‘college bridge’ program which will allow students to earn an associate’s degree while in high school. Other degree and certificate programs are also ready to be implemented in the coming year to allow students a variety of choices to continue their focus on college degree attainment.

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Leonardo da Vinci High School provides opportunities for students to develop their individual interests, goals and skills. The core values of the school: Kindness, Courtesy, Dignity, Respect supports student character development to enhance school climate and a strong sense of identity and accepting culture. Each department throughout da Vinci High School bases their curriculum on New York State Standards and uses best practice in the development of their courses and lessons. The range of courses throughout the high school are designed to be accessible to all students throughout their high school careers and allow students to engage in curriculum that matches their interests. Each department offers a diverse range of courses that build on basic knowledge and skills, the rigor of these courses grows with the knowledge and grade level of the students and include college credit and Advanced Placement opportunities.

The arts at Da Vinci High School are well known and respected for their ability to develop students’ skills and have earned a number of awards recognizing our students and programs. Students are provided with opportunities to grow their skills and have represented da Vinci at local events and media showcases. Visual Arts students are supported with a menu of classes in studio art, painting, drawing, ceramics and animation. Opportunities for all students include an Art Club designed for any interested student and the National Art Honor Society for students who excel in their skills and love for the visual arts.

Physical Education classes are designed to develop skills and knowledge that will help students become productive members of our community. Instruction in fitness, healthy choices and Sports Business Management help guide students' growth. Curriculum and instruction are designed to provide students opportunities to develop their personal skill level. Health class and successful completion of First Aid training are embedded in the Health Curriculum. The course is organized to address physical, emotional and social dimensions of health, sexual education and healthy living.

Leonardo da Vinci’s World Languages program provides students the opportunity to choose between French and Spanish. The world languages department provides students access to develop their language skills and cultural knowledge. World Language course opportunities range from Spanish I or French I to continuing language study for college credit. The goal of the department is to teach essential language skills beyond memorization of vocabulary and embolden students to use their knowledge in a life changing way. The curriculum is designed to enhance student skills in four key areas; reading, writing, listening and speaking. All students are required to take the Checkpoint B exam at the conclusion of the third year of study. This also allows students to earn an Advanced New York State Regents Diploma. Students have the opportunity to continue their passion for world languages and receive college credit.

Library Media resources at da Vinci utilize the D’Youville College Library, a state of the art facility with college level media resources, opportunities for collaboration spaces, research materials and reading centers, it functions as a valuable reading center for students.

**3. Academic Supports:**

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

As a public high school, Leonardo da Vinci welcomes and serves students who achieve above and below grade level. Our staff uses formative assessment data to determine the appropriate assessment for our students' individual learning needs. To address the needs of our special education population, all core

academic departments offer co-taught classes, supported by either a special educator or trained paraprofessional. As determined by the students Individual Educational Program, students may also be placed in our 12:1:1 classes for skill- and academic-based instruction by trained special education teachers, with a classroom aide or individual aide, or both. Personalized encouragement from school counselors, teachers, and administrators serves to prompt targeted students to attend after-school tutoring opportunities staffed by content teachers and student mentors.

To ensure all students perform at high levels, our staff is committed to student attendance. To address student attendance, counselors and administrators meet with students with chronic tardiness and absences. The school attendance officer identifies students who have attendance issues and find ways to ensure students feel welcomed, wanted, and valued; home visits and in – school meetings are also part of the ‘tool kit’ employed to meet the needs of the students and their families. We focus on the impact that relationships have on student learning. Encompassing the school core values of ‘Kindness, Courtesy, Dignity and Respect’ professional development and faculty meetings are often focused on ways to make students feel valued, respected, and understood within the school and in their lives. This year, training sessions provided information for teachers to support students who have experienced trauma, and provide teachers with the knowledge to make sure those students can perform to the best of their ability. Ament data is collected and studied at every level to help shape the delivery of instruction and interventions. Classroom teachers use a variety of progress monitoring techniques from the traditional benchmarks and state exams to the innovative technology applications available through instructional platforms such as Schoology and Google Classroom and many applications on their district issued laptop computers. Department members work together to provide further analysis of data collected by completing item analysis reviews used to restructure teaching methods and promote student success. Guidance counselors push into classes throughout the year to administer needs assessments to help identify and address areas of concern for students. Using the data collected, additional academic, social, and emotional interventions are refined and improved each year.

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

To address the needs of advanced academic students, we offer AP courses across all subject areas and advise students as to the most challenging college courses offered through our college partnership. Students are able to begin taking these challenging courses as early as 10th grade. AP and college courses provide students with a deep level of content into subjects through lecture, discussion, and experimentation.

### **3c. Special education**

The special education department services students with IEP's, 504's and other committee identified supports. The district Committee on Special Education meets regularly at da Vinci with teachers, students, parents and other individuals to assess the learning and social status of all identified students, to understand their progress, monitor learning and give a forum for all to share concerns. Students are regularly able to progress to a less restrictive environment due to the attention, sense of community and quiet, patient school atmosphere; they are more willing to take chances, learn from mistakes and practice social skills without fear of judgement or ridicule. Students are placed in the least restrictive educational environment as per state and federal laws and regulations. Da Vinci High School includes two self - contained 12:1:1 classrooms that allow students with more intensive needs the ability to learn in a small class size, with the benefit of a teacher aide, special education teacher and other support staff. Those students with less - restrictive identifications receive integrated co-teaching environments in general education classrooms where they are fully integrated in the classroom with a second instructor to provide additional learning strategies and approaches. Other students receive resource room support with a certified teacher engaging students in a small group to enrich and instruct students outside of their general education classrooms. But whatever the identified disability, all students participate in fully integrated art, physical education, swim, cafeteria and school - wide events along with their general education counterparts. All students, are treated equally and without judgement and all students voices are heard and encouraged.

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

The city of Buffalo, and da Vinci High School has been fortunate and reinvigorated as the immigrant community has grown in the past 10 years. Communities around the high school have seen a rebirth of commerce and activity as these courageous families make their mark in the city. To service this important segment of our school community, we have instituted a variety of classes and interventions, under the direction of the Board of Education's Multilingual Education Department. Small group instruction provides our new language learners with skills and strategies that are unique for that segment of students.

Grade 9: Course offered: English Language Learner High School Emerging Class either in small group setting (resource) or pull – out individualized instruction, all offered by certified ELL teachers.

Grade 10, 11: Course offered: ELL transitioning for students having been assessed as gaining benchmark knowledge of English enabling them the ability to learn at a more independent level though still under the support and supervision of a certified ELL instructor.

In addition, instruction is also offered for those ELL students identified as in need of special educational services.

The immigrant community of da Vinci HS also is involved in such activities as our annual Cultural Day, National Hijab Day, Cultural fashion show and other events that highlight the many gifts many cultures have brought to our nation, our city and our school.

**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:**

Leonardo da Vinci High School encourages all of our students to become involved and to explore the many opportunities offered to them both in the high school, the college and their community. Their experiences should generate growth and discovery and they should have many opportunities to stretch themselves and to find new strengths. Research has shown that students who participate in interscholastic sports and extracurricular activities have greater success in school and are more likely to graduate and feel a identification to the school. Da Vinci offers a vast array of athletics, impressive for the size of the school. Such sports as Cross Country, Track, Swimming, Boys and Girls baseball, Volleyball and soccer teams are competitive and provide our students with a sense of school community and serve to challenge them both mentally and physically. With a 90% or greater graduation rate for the past six years (99% in 2019), we expect of all our students to graduate on time, earn an Advanced Designation on their diploma, receive a selection of college acceptance letters and ultimately become productive members of society. We encourage our students to become actively involved and we challenge them every day to remain engaged.

Teachers are the backbone of this endeavor. They are always bringing new ideas for clubs and extra-curricular organizations to the high school office for feedback and consultation. They partner openly with students and are encouraged to create new and innovative ways to learn. Together, our students and our teachers provide a comprehensive learning experience that is unique, positive and engaging. Students are given many forums for recognition including a 'college acceptance' and 'Merit/Honor Role' ranking bulletin boards prominently located across from the main office, assemblies, and 'shout - outs' during the morning and afternoon announcements.

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

The administrators and teachers at Leonardo da Vinci High School make it a priority to have timely communication with parents both in times of concern and when there are positive messages to relay. Communication is made in several ways: phone, email, letters, positive post cards, automated attendance calls, web pages, and texts and our own Facebook pages. Parent and student online portals are used so that families can have real-time data regarding grades, attendance, and behavior issues. Parent-teacher conferences are held during two early-evenings per year to provide accessible times for parents to meet with teachers. Our student led Student Council sponsors a culture event every year where families and students are invited to share their cultures, food, and music.

Leonardo da Vinci has several partnerships that have been successful in working with family and community members for student success and school improvement. Roswell Park Cancer Center is a leading cancer research hospital located in Buffalo, NY. Each year, the entire school community focuses on a fall 'Walk for Roswell' throughout the neighborhood. This walk has raised thousands of dollars for cancer research and has become an important school event, rallying the entire community around the cause of raising funds for cancer research. This drive is in memory of a da Vinci senior that succumbed to cancer four years ago and is remembered each year. Parents are informed of events through a summer mailing and on our district website prior to the events, in addition a monthly da Vinci Dragon Newsletter highlights important school events, activities and meetings.

Academically, Leonardo da Vinci High School partners with Say Yes to Education, a local foundation that provides an array of services to our school including mental health counseling, college information, after school programming and tuition assistance. For mental-health and counseling services da Vinci High School works with Best Self Behavioral Mental Health Agency to provide needed in – school services for students for general counseling needs to crisis counseling. As needs arise our psychologist, school counselors, and/or social worker will communicate directly with parents to inform them of available services. We have found that the best way to engage all families and the community has been in offering a variety of choices, so families can choose what works best for them and be involved with da Vinci high school at the level they feel most comfortable.

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

Creating a positive, collaborative and engaging professional culture has been central to the success of Leonardo da Vinci High School. Teachers always given direct access to the administrative team through an open-door policy and are supported with recognition, thanks and leadership opportunities within the school community. We are partners in education and enjoy an atmosphere of trust, friendly interactions and professional growth. Da Vinci is a place we all want to contribute to and come each day. Teacher attendance has improved markedly in the past two years, and is emblematic of the positive environment in which each teacher wants to be a part.

Professional development is ongoing for faculty and staff at Leonardo da Vinci High School with the goal to improve the quality of teaching and learning and sense of school community. We strive to ensure that our stakeholders have the materials and resources necessary to enable our students to meet or exceed state and local standards. We are firm believers that teacher's must continue to participate in educational activities which align to district and building goals as well as their own in order to remain vital and invigorated. This year our faculty has attended offerings ranging from embedding new technology to enhance teaching and student learning into their classroom to understanding the changes and implications of the New York State Next Generation Learning Standards and how those new expectations and measurements impact us at the school level. We craft professional development to fit our staff's needs. Some opportunities are planned and delivered for a few short hours during the school day with the intent of teachers going back to their classrooms immediately and trying out what was learned while other opportunities are offered during the summer and help our teachers plan for the next school year. We rely on the individual departments of the Buffalo Public Schools to provide both whole faculty training during district professional development days, to department level and teacher level training during our daily Common Planning Time periods.

The da Vinci professional development goal is for all professional staff and school personnel to align all professional development activities with the New York State approved subject area standards and student needs. Professional development is aligned to support achievement of the Next Generation Learning Standards, the district's mission statement, and district goals. These goals are created by analyzing district testing data, incorporating the New York State approved subject area learning standards, identifying student needs and applying the district's mission statement and established goals. The school administration, Site-Based Teams, and individual departments collaborate to identify areas of need and to create specific curricular goals. A vital part of this goal writing process is to identify potential professional development needs within each department or grade level. Teachers are recognized, thanked, encouraged and valued on a daily basis. We collectively celebrate success and learn from challenges, we trust and value each other and support each other in good and tough times. The da Vinci family supports and nourishes our minds and souls to create a place of true learning and community. It is a special and precious learning community.

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

The leadership philosophy of Leonardo da Vinci High School is based on the core values of the school principal: "Kindness, Courtesy, Dignity, Respect". While always a high performing learning community, da Vinci had experienced a continual change in administrative leadership over the previous five years. These changes had caused inconsistent and unfocused mission and goals for the school and created a vacuum of leadership. In addition, the tone and demeanor of the building had become authoritarian and not conducive to nurturing the whole child. When assigned, the new administrative team immediately assembled a group of stakeholders made up of new and veteran staff, students, parents and community members that sought to identify both strengths and needs. The principal saw as the immediate priority to 'heal the spirit' of the school and sought to bring a sense of calm and caring by instituting his four core values and communicating those values throughout every day, from morning announcements, home calls, even stenciling the values on the walls of the building and adding those values to the school letterhead. This was done to announce the arrival of a new student-focused tone that acknowledged the need to create a positive, sensitive and safe school that puts as its center the mental health of the hard working students under its care. Many of these students are immigrants, some of whom have seen and suffered greatly in their young lives, others are native born students of poverty that are subjected to lack of adequate housing, food and consistency, still others are carrying the weight of self-identity and gender issues that may cause them to feel isolated, inadequate and

unworthy of love and attention. The principal had felt many of these issues in high school and understood how these factors can create an overwhelming sense of loneliness and distraction from the limitless academic potential of every student. So this focus was central to a rebirth of the high school.

The Assistant principal focused on data, teacher-student relationships, scheduling, schoolwide activities, clubs, team building and behavioral issues. This allowed the principal to focus on instructional leadership in the form of classroom visits, observations and targeted feedback. Drawing on the strengths of both individuals, the administrative team set to work to assemble a dynamic guidance department, school social worker and school psychologist. Together the team prioritized the needs of the school, based on the goals the faculty had submitted in team building meetings. The school has now begun to see the positive results of our actions; the number of students earning Advanced Recognition on their diplomas as doubled in three years, the school had the highest graduation rate in 2019 (99%) of any high school in the entire county, attendance (both faculty and student) has improved and the types of college acceptances students are now receiving include Ivy League schools that are seeking out da Vinci graduates. In addition, da Vinci is seen as the 'rainbow' school in the district, a safe, affirming place for students exploring LGBTQ issues, the Gay Straight Alliance has doubled in size and students are becoming actively engaged with these issues. The principal marches with students (carrying the rainbow flag) in the city Pride March, as a sign of solidarity and support.

Parent participation now includes an active, growing Parent Teacher Organization that sponsors student events, hosts a faculty luncheon and is a regular presence in the building. The administrative team recognizes that parents are the spine in the book of learning and spotlights parents during events and school activities. Parents are now volunteering during school events and attending monthly meetings to provide crucial feedback for the administrative team.

Leonardo da Vinci High School is a place of caring, learning, nurturing growth, the leadership team, in partnership with parents, community members, faculty and students continue their quest to create a community and world based on the core values of 'Kindness, Courtesy, Dignity and Respect'. We celebrate the Blue Ribbon Recognition as humble validation of our collective efforts.

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

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School leaders at Leonardo da Vinci foster a safe, comfortable environment in the building, which allows our faculty the professional autonomy to capitalize on their individual strengths and abilities, while at the same time, providing guidelines that promote consistency for all. Goals and objectives involving student achievement and social emotional well-being, are clearly communicated. School leaders respect and have established a strong rapport with school faculty & staff. All efforts are made to listen to the faculty, staff, parents and students. The most important priority to the School Leaders is creating a caring and encouraging environment that allows students to reach their greatest potential. To do this, they are cooperative and transparent and give all staff that opportunity to have a voice. School leaders take pride in having an open door policy with all stake holders. This policy is extended to the student population as well. Students looking to establish new extra-curricular activities or those with vision of a school event or fundraising idea, are given the ability to take on these leadership roles. New clubs such as the Gaming Club, The Senior Activity Club and the Journal Junkies club are examples of this. The Building Safety Team is composed of faculty and staff and it reviews practices to insure safety of all in the building. The building level PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Supports) Committee focus on promoting student success, recognizing student achievement and promoting positive behaviors via a plethora of initiatives such as Dragons on Fire, Triple A (Academic Achievement, Attendance & Attitude) assembly celebrations, DaVinci day (a day to celebrate school spirit and unity) to name a few. School leaders have an unrelenting commitment to the da Vinci core values of "Kindness, Courtesy, Dignity and Respect" which are an accurate reflection of the school community.