

U.S. Department of Education
2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Walt Smolenski

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Academy for Allied Health Sciences

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1776 Raritan Road

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Scotch Plains State NJ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 07076-2928

County Union County

Telephone (908) 889-8288 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://www.ucvts.tec.nj.us/domain/1 E-mail wsmolenski@ucvts.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*Mr. Peter Capodice E-mail pcapodice@ucvts.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Union County Vocational-Technical School District Tel. _____
(908) 889-8288

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. Jane Lorber
(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

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. 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.)
2. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 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.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2011 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- ☐ Urban or large central city
 - ☐ Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - ☒ Suburban
 - ☐ Small city or town in a rural area
 - ☐ Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying 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	22	59	81
10	32	45	77
11	15	53	68
12 or higher	16	49	65
Total Students	85	206	291

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- | |
|--|
| <u>0</u> % American Indian or Alaska Native |
| <u>24</u> % Asian |
| <u>16</u> % Black or African American |
| <u>13</u> % Hispanic or Latino |
| <u>1</u> % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| <u>42</u> % White |
| <u>4</u> % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 1%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	3
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	282
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.011
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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

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

0

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11 %
 Total number students who qualify: 33

8. Students receiving special education services: 1 %
1 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>0</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>1</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	20
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	0
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 17:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	97%	97%	96%
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 2016.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	68
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	99%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	1%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No X

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.

We work to prepare students for college and a career in the diverse, and broad field of the Allied Health Sciences.

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

Our application process is intended to provide an equitable opportunity for all students in Union County to attend the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools. All applicants must be Union County residents and enrolled in 8th grade to apply. The admissions process for full-time students at the Academy for Allied Health Sciences requires applicants to attend one of five information sessions scheduled in the fall. Students must pre-register and attendance at an information session is a required step in the admission process.

PART III – SUMMARY

The Union County Academy for Allied Health Sciences (AAHS) is a vocational career academy for secondary high school students that immerses students in honors and college level academics, while preparing them for college and a career in the health sciences. The mission of our school is to promote the development of confident, well-rounded students through challenging academic experiences, with exposure to various health career skills and occupations. Cross-curricular educational experiences have been developed to promote critical thinking skills, foster opportunities for leadership, and show the connection among all disciplines. High professional standards in character and ethics are modeled and embraced throughout the program. The culminating experience of our vocational program provides students with instruction from college professors who prepare them to take the NJ-EMT certification exam at the end of their Grade 12 year.

We are located in one of the most racially, economically, and ethnically diverse areas of the United States and our admissions policy ensures that our student population is drawn equally from each of the municipalities in our county. Our student population closely mirrors the demographics of our county, and we consider our diversity to be one of the most important parts of our school community. We are located in one of the international centers for healthcare and biotechnology and are working to make connections with private and public entities that could help our students.

social support needed to learn.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The core curriculum for the Academy for Allied Health Sciences is centered on the allied health vocation, with a college focus. Our students take four years of English Language Arts, mathematics, allied health and science; and they take three years of social studies with an option of a fourth in the form of an elective. Importantly, all classes are offered at the AP or Honors level. Our students learn in a 83-minute block of study on a rotating A-B schedule. We take great pride in the vocational infusion to our students' core classes where they are prepared to enter the allied health field.

For our English courses, each teacher uses different content to achieve the same goals of the common core and inspire interest in literature. The teachers use various texts to teach grammar, critical and analytic thinking, and writing in various modes. Every academic year the students focus on a genre of literature which aligns with the accompanying history class as well as our allied health vocational focus. This approach gives the students an opportunity to have a foundation for understanding the text and personal growth. Though the literature might be unfamiliar, the concepts and ideas will be familiar to the students as they can develop their ideas from preexisting background knowledge.

In Math, students are given an opportunity to advance to the next course in sequence based on their individual skill level. All incoming freshmen are placed in the appropriate course based on test results with most 9th grade students taking Combined Algebra (I and II), most 10th grade students enrolled in Geometry/Trigonometry, most 11th grade students study Math Analysis (Pre-Calculus) or AP Calculus A/B, and most seniors typically finish with AP Calculus or AP Statistics/Probability. The focus during all four years is to develop the problem solving skills and reasoning abilities by incorporating application problems in each unit. The use of real life applications from different fields - physics, chemistry, and health related applications are the focus. Integration of mathematical topics with other subjects encourages students to relate information and increases the retention of the material learned.

Our social studies curriculum offers World History, United States History I and II to our freshmen, sophomores, and juniors respectively. Students are also able to take history electives like AP United States History, AP United States Government and Politics, AP European History and Genocide Studies and the Holocaust. Beyond the sequential events of each discipline, our students learn critical thinking skills that translate well beyond content. Students also are able to tie together the political, social, economic, and geographical forces that have impacted our history as well as infusing our vocational focus into lessons that further illuminate the connection between allied health and history.

Our science curriculum is as follows: Scientific Inquiry and Analysis and Biology in 9th grade, Chemistry in 10th grade, Physics and AP Biology in 11th grade, and AP Physics and AP Biology in 12th grade. Each science course, except for Scientific Inquiry and Analysis, involves an in-depth lab component and provides opportunities to apply what is being learned in the traditional classroom to the lab setting.

Ninth grade Biology is an introductory course for first year high school students and is devised to give each student a comprehensive understanding of the living structures and functions via the major themes and concepts of biology. Advanced Placement Biology is equivalent to a challenging first-year college biology course and prepares students to take the national A.P. Biology exam, and students who receive qualifying scores may be eligible to receive college credit. Scientific Inquiry and Analysis is another 9th grade science course whose topics studied are chosen from a variety of chemical, physical, environmental, astronomical, and mathematical science contexts, with a focus on getting students to think analytically about the students' impact on the world around them. The Chemistry and AP Chemistry courses at Academy for Allied Health Sciences are designed toward a science teaching paradigm that emphasizes inquiry and application of scientific concepts for our 10th and 11th grade students, respectively. The main goal of these courses is to have students complete their journey with the ability to think like a chemist and demonstrate high level readiness for college level challenges in chemistry and its allied disciplines. Physics I and AP Physics are algebra-based, honors-level courses, which strive to impart on the students an awareness and explanation of how the natural world works around them here on Earth and through the universe taken by 11th grade and

12th grade students, respectively.

Our vocational courses provide the special link between high school, college, and career readiness. Our vocational sequence is as follows: Dynamics of Health Care in 9th grade, Community Health, Emergency Clinical Care and Medical Terminology in 10th grade, Anatomy and Physiology I and Scientific Principles of Nutrition in 11th grade, and Anatomy and Physiology II, Medical Ethics, Introduction to Clinical Research and Medical Mathematics in 12th grade. Additionally, our students take a college-level Emergency Medical Technician course that climaxes with students receiving state certification to perform the duties of an EMT out in the field or at college, if they choose.

Thus, each course serves as the proverbial backbone to our institution and are taught at the honors level that produces highly prepared students ready for the next step of college and a future career in the health sciences field. These courses provide students opportunities to not only be engaged in their passion for the healthcare profession but to do it in a real-life applicable way. Our students are also eligible to earn up to 24 college credits in conjunction with Rutgers University's School of Health Professionals. Also, each course takes a community-oriented approach with students earning community service hours in volunteering at their local healthcare facilities as well as the mandated service hours earned through the EMT program.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Our school's other curriculum areas support our students' acquisition of essential skills and knowledge. The objective of the Union County Vocational Technical Schools (UCVTS) Health and Physical Education Program is to embed the vocational focus of our district into the health and physical education curriculum to challenge students as well as reinforce the knowledge from other classes. Each year of study in our program is divided into four different marking periods, offering students a variety of learning opportunities with a focus in various careers.

Beginning freshmen year, students take two marking periods in the fitness center, where they learn the basics of fitness training and program design and eventually progress to EKG interpretation as juniors. By senior year, our students design and implement fitness workouts for fellow classmates as "personal trainers."

Our students also take one marking period per year of Project Adventure which is tailored by our instructors to build teamwork and foster positive relationships while simultaneously challenging students to perform a variety of tasks that culminates in climbing a multitude of ropes. Our students also take one marking period of team sports which works on students' physical and teamwork skills in traditional and adaptive sports. Lastly, students also take one marking period of Health each year with focus on EKG interpretation and Fundamentals of Health and Wellness, a college-level course as well as drug and alcohol awareness and the Harassment Intimidation and Bullying mandated by the state of New Jersey legislation.

In our World Language courses, we teach levels 1 through 4 in the Spanish language. Our curriculum is aligned with the most current approach where students are immersed in the language and culture via authentic materials. Through this approach, our students simultaneously become global citizens as they work towards proficiency in communication. Specific to our Allied Health component, our students engage in a multi-disciplinary learning environment. As an example, our curriculum documents infuse vocational health sciences learning in courses such as personal nutrition, fitness, and health. Additionally, this medical knowledge is reinforced in the Spanish language through authentic performance based projects in which students simulate real life medical scenarios. In essence, they become the receptionist, the doctor, and the patient. Ultimately, the goal is for our students to effectively communicate in the Spanish language as they pursue their postsecondary studies in the medical field and thereafter.

Two interdisciplinary courses offered that meet the state of New Jersey requirements for graduation are Financial Literacy and Dance Appreciation. These requirements are completed by our tenth grade students with both courses offered in a hybrid fashion that utilizes online capabilities especially with our one-to-one initiative with the Google Chromebook. Financial Literacy provides students the skills they need to reach financial independence, maximize their net worth, and maintain a strong credit score. Credit card usage, appropriate debt, banking services, investments, budgeting, insurance, and prevention of identity theft are

explored and discussed. Students are engaged in learning about finances in an online environment under the direction and supervision of a teacher. The online approach incorporates a variety of techniques and interactive experiences to accommodate different learning styles. Dance Appreciation provides students with an appreciation of world dance forms, social dance, and musical theater. Students are given an opportunity to share any part dance has taken in their lives. Students also have four in-person classes which give them the tools to create choreography in any style of their choosing.

Among the other electives offered to our junior and senior students are Introduction to Humanities, Film and Genre Studies, Communications Media, and Global Ethics. The Humanities course centers on the learning of fine arts, literature, philosophy, history, culture, and the social sciences with focus on critical thinking skills. Film and Genre Studies provides the student with a comprehensive guide to studying the language of film as a visual art form. Communications Media allows students to become acquainted with contemporary media and its effects on their society and themselves as individuals. Students also have the opportunity to take electives in other buildings that might align with their vocational or college goals. These electives include: Bio-Chemistry, AP Economics, and Human Body Design.

Through the variety of curricular offerings, we provide our students a rigorous and wide-reaching array of courses that are rigorous but also have real-life applications. Through the hard work and dedication of our teaching staff, we have structured curricular offerings that help make every single Academy for Allied Health Sciences student a well-rounded citizen with a remarkable skill set that makes them attractive to undergraduate universities and workplace ready.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

All teachers at Academy for Allied Health Sciences employ a variety of instructional techniques that get the very best out of our students. Due to the competitive and high-achieving nature of our students, our teachers utilize best practices in the form of problem-based learning, differentiated and explicit instruction, and technology-driven approaches. The types of techniques are primarily driven by the content they deliver. Specifically, our science, math and vocational teachers utilize problem-based learning where students are tasked with thinking critically to solve an issue that is both pertinent to the discipline and a larger problem in the context of global affairs. Teachers also use differentiated instruction especially in courses where students could be further ahead or behind each other depending on their prior learning experiences. Therefore, teachers can implement anchor activities for students who demonstrate mastery and want to further their learning experiences in that specific topic. Our district has also taken on a one-to-one initiative with every student receiving a Google Chromebook. This has greatly enhanced our abilities to offer real-life applications of course work.

treasure trove of data that clearly delineates where students excel and where they are deficient. Our school leadership provides teachers with direction of how to interpret the data and time to read and analyze these data streams and apply it to how they can approach their lesson planning. It can guide a teacher's instructional approach for the year or provide insight on how a teacher can individualize instruction for students who struggle in a particular academic area.

1. School Climate/Culture:

One of the aspects of the Academy for Allied Health Sciences that we are most proud of is the culture of respect, growth, and learning that we have worked to cultivate since the opening of the school. A main reason why we have such a healthy school climate is how we engage and motivate our students. We have teachers that engage in best pedagogical practices, and we work to ensure that students are challenged at the appropriate level and feel a connection to their learning. We believe that if each student understands the value in what they are learning, that the school culture will be positive and respectful. Also, our successful culture derives from the seamless collaboration with our families and communities via our annual college fair, an active Parent Student Association, the required clinical experience in EMT, and the various charitable undertakings our students and staff participate in like Relay for Life. Through our vocational focus, our students are afforded authentic learning opportunities where we have been able to infuse allied health into all of our curricular offerings.

The positive environment of the Academy for Allied Health Sciences is one that begins with students entering school to the administration greeting them each and every morning. These greetings give both administration and students opportunities to discuss items of importance. Our counseling department adds tremendously to our healthy school climate by meeting with each and every student twice annually and each class as a whole-group twice annually. We also have an active student government that involves the student body and faculty in many spirit days that foster a real sense of community.

An online tool that has greatly added to our students' view of their progress is Naviance, a comprehensive college and career readiness to align students' interests to post-secondary opportunities both in and out of the classroom. Our health curriculum, mentioned earlier, addresses many of the social and emotional concerns our students have in a structured and evidence-based curriculum. Counselors meet with students twice individually and twice in the form of class meetings.

Teachers are the backbone of our fine school community and the administration does everything possible to include them in the decision-making processes of the school. There is an open door policy regarding teachers being able to meet with the administration about any pertinent issue. There are also special days that we honor our teachers like at our December and June Faculty meetings and our teacher of the year breakfast and reception. On a district level, our teachers are regularly invited to receive accolades for contributions to our school and/or their specific content area at our monthly Board of Education meetings.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Partnering with families and the community begins with prospective students. The Academy for Allied Health promotes and provides numerous information sessions explaining our unique vocational offerings. Current students serve as ambassadors and provide guided tours to all interested students. This is a great way to showcase our unique capabilities with the broader audience. This family and community engagement continues once the student is enrolled. We email a weekly newsletter to our families informing them of upcoming events and sharing student recognitions. We are fortunate to have a very active and supportive Parent Student Association (PSA) which sponsors events like Relay for Life and Project Graduation. These family-driven, grassroots events provide safe and exciting experiences for our students.

Stimulating student development while engaging families and the community continues with clubs and internships. Our main vocational club, HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America), consistently engages our students in a variety of activities like fundraisers, health awareness promotions, leadership conferences and local, state and national competitions. These activities greatly add to our students' successes as they are tasked with behaving and conversing like health professionals in a variety of roles throughout the year. Another club playing a pivotal role for many students is NHS (National Honor Society). Our chapter of NHS provides outreach on a regular basis through various charitable undertakings, culminating with a chapter-wide fundraiser that fulfills the citizenship tenet of the honor

society code. Citizenship is also on display with our senior internship program

Our internship coordinator has done a spectacular job of establishing and maintaining contacts in the local health care field where roughly half of our seniors participate in a half day internship learning the ways of being an allied health professional. Also, our seniors complete a minimum of ten hours of clinical hospital work through their EMT course.

Yet another way our school fosters collaboration with the community is through our dual accreditation agreement with Rutgers University. Our students are capable of earning up to 24 Rutgers credits through our vocational course sequence by earning a predetermined passing score on a Rutgers exam. These advanced courses prepare students for the rigors of college curricula.

With so many wonderful things happening at the Academy for Allied Health Sciences, it is important to have mechanisms to make the school community aware. Therefore, our school community utilizes our monthly Board of Education meeting, a weekly newsletter, and our website to get the word out about all the outstanding student feats. Our board of education meetings are open to the public and we use this as an opportunity to recognize our students of the month as well as provide opportunities for students to present ideas to the board. Our weekly teacher-prepared newsletter is disseminated to all students, staff, and parents. It provides another platform to celebrate the accomplishments of our students and staff to our primary stakeholders. To make the larger community aware, we make use of our school website to celebrate achievements and to post announcements from the administration and guidance departments. It is clear the Academy for Allied Health Sciences make the engagement of our families and community a focal point.

3. Professional Development:

At the Academy for Allied Health Sciences we believe that learning is a lifelong endeavor. We strive to provide our teachers with the support and resources to identify areas of growth that will have the most impact in helping students learn. Administrators are positioned to assist teachers in setting meaningful and achievable goals to support student achievement. Each year, with the assistance of building administrators, teachers set personal goals directly tied to student growth and meet at various times throughout the year to measure progress. There is an end-of-the-year process for each teacher to go over their learning goals, reflect on their learning, and begin to think about goals for the upcoming year. Teacher professional learning is also informed by data gathered from administrator evaluation, student feedback, and student achievement data.

The district supports teacher learning and professional growth by providing the resources and a supportive learning structure. For instance, the district has invested in a professional development coordinator who plans professional learning opportunities throughout the year. The PD coordinator has made positive steps in ensuring that teacher learning is targeted, relevant, ongoing, and based on areas that can positively impact student achievement. The PD coordinator works to find internal and external experts to lead learning groups, and gathers data from the faculty on what professional development is needed. Once the data from teachers is gathered, the PD coordinator works to create differentiated learning opportunities for all teachers by providing teachers with a wide range of workshops to attend. For example, at our most recent professional development day, teachers had the opportunity to learn about different educational technology, research on student motivation, classroom culture, Socratic questioning, and many other topics.

Our Board of Education is also extremely supportive in approving teacher learning opportunities at external workshops and for teachers pursuing graduate-level coursework. Teachers are encouraged to take masters-level courses and are eligible for reimbursement, and teachers are also supported financially and professionally to attend external workshops. Several of our faculty meetings in past years have been run by teachers who attend workshops and “turn-key” to the rest of the faculty. We are proud that our teachers are invested in their own professional growth while also working to help other teachers grow and learn.

In addition, to these opportunities our teachers meet monthly after school in building groups and as part of their discipline. At the building level these meetings have been used to build teacher capacity to learn and

use new educational technology, discuss and prepare for curriculum updates, and to identify areas of needed growth as a staff. Teacher time at discipline meetings is spent exploring specific instructional or curricular topics and then developing strategies for teachers to work in small learning groups to improve their pedagogical content knowledge, instructional techniques, or revise their curricular documents.

4. School Leadership:

One of the foundational beliefs of the Academy for Allied Health Sciences is that leadership is distributed among all stakeholders at the school. The school and district administration work to create space for students, parents, teachers, and community members to take ownership in appropriate areas. For example, when considering new courses we have reached out to students to gauge interest, worked with past graduates and industry contacts to determine the focus of the new courses, and provided teachers with resources to write new curriculum documents. We believe that this approach to leadership allows us to tap into a diverse well of expertise and collective skills.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The Academy for Allied Health Sciences employs many different strategies for academic success for all students. Our administration, school counseling department, and faculty provide academic and socio-emotional supports for our students.

Our teachers, along with guidance from the administration, utilize data mined from the ACT Aspire, PSAT, and PARCC to identify strengths and areas for improvement to individualize instruction for our students. AP exams are offered in many subjects which qualify students to earn college credit in those particular courses.

Our school counseling department is committed to implementing academic supports and strategies when appropriate. This involves coordinating assistance for struggling students with our chapter of the National Honors Society, review of end of marking period grades and intervention plans created for students earning a 70 or below, assistance in planning for short and long term assignments, and instruction in study skills. They also are heavily involved in college and career planning. This involves assisting in the implementation of the SAT/ACT Prep courses offered and helping students navigate Naviance's careers and college majors links. Year-round evening events like our College Fair and Panel presentations and Financial Aid information seminars keep students and parents informed. Our counseling department also conducts individualized college meetings with each junior and gets guest speakers to provide guidance on college essay writing.

Perhaps the most important aspect of our school counseling department is the socio-emotional support they provide. Because poor school performance is often linked to personal issues outside the school realm, our counselors help all stakeholders determine the best course of action to assist troubled students. We have also been proactive in utilizing community resources for crisis and health interventions like Prevention Link, Union County Human Services, and FACT (Families and Community Together). We have also been very proactive in facilitating mediation for peer disagreements, including those part of Harassment Intimidation and Bullying investigations. All in all, it is safe to say that our whole-child approach has benefited all Academy for Allied Health Sciences students.