

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 [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Ronald Agostinoni

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

Official School Name Maple Hill High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1216 Maple Hill Road

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

City Castleton State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 12033-1699

County Rensselaer County

Telephone (518) 732-7701 Fax (518) 732-0494

Web site/URL http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us E-mail jchevrier@schodack.k12.ny.us

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. Jason Chevrier E-mail jchevrier@schodack.k12.ny.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Schodack Central School District Tel. (518) 732-2297

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 Mr. Christopher Olsen
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	39	35	74
10	41	33	74
11	21	35	56
12 or higher	40	34	74
Total Students	141	137	278

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 92 % White
 - 1 % 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: 4%

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	6
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	12
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	280
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.043
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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):

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 25 %
Total number students who qualify: 70
8. Students receiving special education services: 18 %
49 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.

- 1 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 2 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 15 Other Health Impaired
- 22 Specific Learning Disability
- 5 Speech or Language Impairment
- 2 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 1 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 7
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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 12:1
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%	95%	95%	94%	94%
High school graduation rate	99%	92%	92%	90%	97%

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	69
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	52%
Enrolled in a community college	32%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	4%
Found employment	1%
Joined the military or other public service	7%
Other	4%

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.

To develop our students to become "...active, reflective, creative learners. In our schools, they will engage in rewarding work and practice behaviors that are intelligent in both and academic and a practical sense.

Students will develop the attitudes, skills, and understandings that will allow them to fulfill their potential and to function successfully in their individual and social roles."

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Maple Hill High School is a small school of 277 students that one would expect most people outside the district would have never heard of. On the contrary, it's very well known throughout the region. Our students and faculty represent themselves well and our reputation as a quality school is widely recognized. Maple Hill is a paradox of sorts in that our students enjoy the benefits of attending a school located in a rural area where there's a strong sense of community, all students are known and where students form lasting bonds with one another, yet at the same time our students are afforded opportunities and exposed to the technologies you would find in much bigger schools.

Maple Hill High School in the small town of Schodack is located within 10 miles of Albany, the Capital of New York. While rural, this location gives it a suburban feel. The school serves as the de facto center of the community. Community members come here to enjoy school-sponsored events such as sporting events, concerts and plays; however, the high school is also the place where scouts hold their meetings, where continuing education classes are held and where community-based groups gather for larger meetings and presentations. While the high school plays a large role in nurturing the youth of the community, the root of its success is in the community itself. This is a community where it's common to find multiple generations of the same family being raised and educated here. Although there's a natural desire for young adults to broaden their horizons and explore the larger world, many return here to their hometown to raise their own families. It's a place where neighbors look out for one another, rely on one another and celebrate with one another. This norm is instilled in the children at home and we see it reflected in the way students treat and respect each other in school. The school is not a utopia, but the expectation among staff and students is that the school is for everyone.

The history of the school system in Schodack dates back to the early 1820s. Quality education it seems has always been appreciated here. As the town was being organized, the need for a school was recognized. Several school buildings were constructed over the years. The current high school building was opened in the spring of 1956. This building has undergone several renovations over the years and is currently at the center of a capital project taking place in our district. As part of the project, the high school is receiving upgrades in facilities related to science, art and music. These upgrades will give students a learning environment that more closely replicates what they will experience in college. The renovations and new design of rooms and areas are geared toward creating spaces that promote collaborative opportunities. Breakout spaces and rooms that provide the flexibility for small or large groups will enhance the strategies that our teachers employ for promoting collaborative learning. Mirroring what is seen in our classrooms, our building is becoming student-centered.

Throughout its history, the town has consistently valued a strong educational system. The support of the community for its schools is a key factor in its ability to attract and retain exceptional educators. The majority of teachers spend their entire careers teaching at Maple Hill; our administrators also have a history of tenures much longer than a typical high school. Even when there is change – retirements, turnover in faculty, staff or administration – the culture is maintained and you consistently find a caring faculty and staff who want what is best for students.

Determining what is best for students involves understanding that one student's best is not the same as another student's best. We want each student to develop to his or her personal potential. This entails employing varied strategies to meet all student needs. While the whole student is important, encouraging academic success is a priority. We want students to be engaged and challenged in the classroom and different supports are required to effectively accomplish this. We follow an inclusion model to meet the needs of our students identified by the Committee on Special Education. Depending on the need, special education teachers may co-teach in a classroom or a teacher assistant may be assigned to the class. With these program supports along with added Curriculum Support classes and appropriate accommodations, students identified with disabilities are able to participate successfully in the same curriculum as general education students. Looking more broadly at our entire student population, our core course offerings allow students to take the level of course that will best challenge them. Core courses are offered at the Regents level and prepare students to meet commencement level standards. For those students capable of more rigor,

with an offering of nine Advanced Placement courses and opportunities for college credit through our partnerships with public and private colleges and universities, students have the option of college and AP level courses in all the core areas.

Recognizing that we are called to foster the academic development of students, we also realize that we cannot ignore their emotional, physical, social and cultural development. In addition to teachers being available for the non-academic needs of students, the high school employs a social worker, school psychologist and two school counselors to work with students. The high school has also developed a pupil personnel services team made up of the principal, social worker, school psychologist, counselors and school nurse that meets weekly to identify and address student emotional, physical, social and academic needs. Interventions including individual and group counseling, academic intervention, working with classroom teachers on improvement strategies, referral for screenings and testing and referrals to outside services are some of the strategies used by this team to meet student needs.

As our teachers have been encouraged to design courses that meet the varying needs of students' academic readiness, they have also been encouraged to design and deliver courses that address students' physical and cultural development. All students participate in physical education each year, and in addition, have the option to take such electives as Foundations of Fitness, Stress Management and Sports Nutrition and Personal Health. Social Studies, ELA and Foreign Language courses have a role in addressing cultural and social issues. We enhance these teachings by offering electives such as Introduction to Psychology, Future Global Conflicts, The Civil Rights Movement, Contemporary Issues of the Middle East and Hitler, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.

Faculty-driven initiatives have also helped to further our students' social and cultural development. For the past 8 years, faculty and students have participated in a Hoops Against Hunger charity basketball game. Many students and community members come together for this to raise money and food donations for our local food pantry. Personal and social responsibility is also stressed in school-wide assemblies such as our opening day class meetings, pre-prom assembly and events throughout the year sponsored by our Student Council, Key Club and S.A.D.D organizations.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Maple Hill High School’s curriculum and instructional methods are examined, evaluated and refined on a continuous basis to ensure that the curriculum provides our students with the knowledge and skills needed to prepare them for the post-secondary learning opportunities they will choose, and to strengthen their capacity to become informed and engaged citizens in society. Our core curriculum offers students the opportunity to earn the New York State Regents diploma, the Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and a district approved College Preparatory diploma – each successively requiring additional core course work. All core disciplines also offer Advanced Placement as well as college credit-bearing course options.

Our curriculum follows the New York State Common Core Standards. Curriculum is mapped in all subjects in order to identify and address any gaps and redundancies allowing teachers to purposefully design their courses to meet standards and goals and to implement the most effective teaching strategies. Our curriculum is aligned to standards both vertically and horizontally. Subject-area teachers across grade levels work and plan together to ensure they are preparing students for the next grade level and progressively challenging course work in the subject area. Grade-level teachers also collaborate to verify they are focusing on similar foundational skills across disciplines.

Classes at the high school are taught on an alternating day, 80-minute block schedule. This, in part, influences the curricular approach. The 80-minute block allows for flexibility as well as a more in-depth study of topics. Instruction is student-centered, collaborative, inquiry-based and interdisciplinary. These approaches allow our students to learn and obtain knowledge and skills in real-world ways. The curricular approaches also help address the learning standards that involve problem-solving, communication skills, evaluating and integrating sources of information, using evidence to support ideas and recognizing relationships among ideas.

While the different disciplines share many common goals, they also have their own strategies and methods of developing successful, civic-minded students. Teachers in the English language arts area focus on the foundational skills of comprehension and expression in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening. To support these skills in all English classes, freshman are required to take an Information and Digital Literacy class in which they develop research skills using a variety of information and communication technologies in order to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information. The English department also collaborates with school counselors to present our career and college planning software to all 9th graders who will establish accounts and learn about using the program for college and career investigation. Oral presentations and interdisciplinary projects are required at every level. Service learning is also incorporated in some English classes to reinforce civic learning. A prime example of student engagement that advances student learning is our teachers’ use of podcast series as “texts.” In 9th and 11th grade English classes the fictional Limetown podcast and real-life investigative Serial podcast are used as instructional units. Students are highly engaged listening to the podcasts while also reading transcripts. Students have to evaluate the information and employ critical thinking in discussions. Furthermore, in addition to exposure to the technology used for podcasts, teachers utilize technology in Skyping the creators of the Limetown series to discuss the writing and production with students.

Our Mathematics curriculum ensures that students gain the foundational skills of problem solving, comprehension of concepts, procedural understanding, application, mathematical connections and representations. Having a variety of pathways that correspond to students’ abilities has resulted in advancing the academic achievement of all students. Particularly, our stretch Algebra course allows less proficient students extended time to build a stronger foundation in Algebra. Additionally, our Math Lab also reinforces foundational skills for these students. Incorporating technology and teaching math topics in a real-world context increases the engagement of students. As an example, one of our math teachers installed a beehive in her classroom to study mathematical concepts in connection with honey bees. This same teacher challenges students to become “Trig-Masters” and “Super Trig-Masters” by successfully completing a series of quizzes on trigonometry used in science and technology fields.

Our Science curriculum focuses on the foundational skills of asking questions, observing, planning and conducting experiments, and analyzing, collecting, interpreting and organizing data. Students are also required to draw on math and writing skills. Similar to the English language arts curriculum, all freshmen are required to take Laboratory Science I which teaches them fundamental laboratory skills that will be utilized in all science courses. Our science curriculum allows students to gain a foundation for future study in a variety of areas. We have coursework through AP Physics and AP Biology for students who will study STEM fields at the baccalaureate level and beyond. We also have science courses such as Conceptual Physics, Semiconductor Industry and Nanotechnology and Biotechnology which prepare students for technological based programs at the associate degree level. Truly interested in helping students connect science classes to the real world, the science department has established a Science Seminar Series to bring in guest speakers to educate students about how science is used in their fields.

Our Social Studies curriculum prepares students to critically evaluate sources of information, synthesize data, use evidence to support an idea, understand informational texts and primary sources and write effectively. Student engagement occurs through interdisciplinary projects, a robust offering of elective courses and presentations from guest speakers who share stories and bring history alive. Civic learning is both embedded in the curriculum and supplemented by activities of teachers. Our Global History courses give our students an understanding of many cultures; the United States History courses teach students about our cultural heritage as well as their rights and responsibilities as U.S. citizens; Economics helps students to be informed, economically-literate citizens, and Participation in Government courses prepare students to be actively engaged at all levels of government. Our Social Studies department has also been on the forefront of many initiatives that promote civic learning and engaged citizenship. They have organized a St. Baldrick's event to raise money for childhood cancer research, organize an annual charity basketball game to raise funds for the local food pantry and have organized events to endorse and bring awareness for the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Courses in our additional curriculum areas enhance the learning and skills of our students, provide a broader experience and build knowledge for foundations in wide-ranging fields. These curriculum areas, in which all grade levels participate, include coursework in visual arts, music, physical and health education, foreign language, business and technology. Additionally, our partnership with our BOCES allows students access to additional programs during the junior and senior years.

New York State mandates that all students successfully complete one credit in Fine Arts in order to graduate. Our students meet this requirement by taking a full credit from our art or music offerings. Our visual arts curriculum presents the fundamental concepts used for creating art as well as appreciating art through our Studio in Art course. Open to all students, this course is the foundation course for all other visual art courses we offer and alone, provides essential art appreciation skills and knowledge for students who do not plan to pursue further art courses. Additional study in visual arts is available through our Advanced Studio Art, Drawing and Painting, Advanced Drawing and Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics and Photography courses. Study of the visual arts gives our students the opportunity for creative and artistic expression. The work also lends itself to helping students acquire design, composition and spatial skills. Historical influences are investigated, and critiques and assessments are completed using self and peer evaluations as well as portfolio assessments.

Our music department offers performance, theory and music history opportunities. Students can develop and improve their performance skills by participating in our Band and/or Chorus courses. While engaging in the experience of personal expression through music, students are exposed to different musical styles and techniques. Additional electives in the music department include Music Theory, Music in Our Lives and American Pop Music. These courses promote communication skills in music through composition, allow for analysis of music and provide practice of critical listening skills. These courses also help students to develop an understanding of this art form from a cultural and sociological perspective and in historical context.

All students are required to participate in a physical education class each year. The goal of the physical education program is to have students learn technical skills, strategies, collaborative skills and social behaviors that will promote an active lifestyle. Students experience a broad range of activities that include team sports as well as individual sports and non-competitive fitness activities. NYS health related fitness testing is included in the curriculum as an opportunity for personal assessment. Students use the information for setting goals and designing personal fitness plans. Students interested in learning more about health and fitness can take additional physical education electives. These courses, such as Sports Nutrition and Personal Health, Stress Management and Fitness for Life, help students develop a better understanding of health and wellness concepts. These courses also promote responsible behaviors, include goal-setting and incorporate assessment and evaluations. New York State also requires student to complete a Health course. Through this course students gain accurate health information related to nutrition, substance use and abuse, chronic and infectious diseases, mental health, fostering positive self-esteem, decision making skills, human sexuality, family living skills, and death and dying.

In the foreign language area, our students have the option to study Spanish and Mandarin Chinese. All students must successfully complete one year of language in high school but have the opportunity to study each through the fourth level. In addition to the language, students learn the culture of the countries each language is spoken. Grammatical structures are taught and reading, writing, listening and speaking skills are targeted, and expanded in subsequent levels. Through our involvement with Distance Learning, we are also able to offer our students the opportunity to learn American Sign Language. The emphasis of this introductory course is on teaching skills for essential communication and functional dialogue.

In addition to our Fine Arts courses, we also offer Practical Arts courses in Technology and Business. Our Technology courses offer an exploratory program that emphasizes an understanding of the processes that people utilize to satisfy a need. Through courses such as Design and Drawing, Principles of Engineering and Energy Systems, students gain the ability to use, manage, assess, and understand the major technological systems of our society. The skills on which these courses focus include critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, design, construction, testing and evaluation. These skills are practiced through hands-on, real world applications. Our Business courses offer students instruction in skills they are likely to use in their everyday home and work lives. Financial Math for example, helps students to understand the complex financial world they will encounter after high school and gives them the skills to navigate banking, investing, insurance and taxes. Our Career Exploration Internship Program provides students with a link between school and careers. Through supervised internships, students not only become aware of what it's like to work in a particular career, they gain an understanding of the importance of a positive work ethic, cooperation, teamwork, timeliness and human relation skills.

Finally, through our BOCES, students are able to participate in Career and Technical Education and New Visions programs. The CTE programs offered in grades 11 and 12 deliver high quality instruction directly related to the knowledge and skills needed in a particular career area such as Information Technology, HVAC or Culinary Arts. Additionally, these programs integrate math and language skills that are both needed in the career and assessed on certification exams leading to licenses in the various areas. The New Visions programs are senior year, honor-level programs designed to allow students to explore career fields through internships, mentoring, projects and college coursework. Academic, presentation, interpersonal, teamwork, self-direction and problem-solving skills are all emphasized.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

The instructional approaches, interventions and use of assessments at Maple Hill High School are geared toward successful academic and personal outcomes for students. Our teachers are given the flexibility to use instructional methods that work best for their area and experimenting with new approaches is encouraged. Similarly, interventions are tailored to the needs of individual students. Analyzing assessment data is seen as a tool to be used by administration and teachers to move the program forward.

Our teachers employ a variety of instructional approaches in the classroom. While explicit instruction is utilized and seen as beneficial in outlining clear goals and providing important information, an observer to our school would generally witness student-centered, inquiry-based instruction. In math classes students are

working in small groups on problem sets; collaboration, peer teaching and flexible thinking are all being developed. Laboratory work is a main component of all our science classes. This is an ideal environment for students to work cooperatively. The hands-on learning involved enhances our students' conceptual understanding of theories and principles being taught. With this opportunity for participation, students are more engaged in their own learning. Our English, Social Studies and Foreign Language teachers often use group projects as a method of instruction. Students have to work cooperatively to identify the goal, gather and synthesize information and divide roles. Students then teach one another during presentations of their projects. The interdisciplinary nature of many of these group projects further enhances overall understanding. Project-based learning is central in our technology classes. The teacher poses a question or challenge for our students and requires what she calls a, "hands-on, minds-on" approach to solve it. Students cultivate creative thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills during these authentic experiences.

Differentiated instruction can also be seen in our classrooms. This occurs, for example, in a required core course for which a variety of levels (Regents, AP, etc.) does not exist. In a difficult course such as Chemistry, the teacher must provide the support needed for all students to achieve the standards while also providing more rigor to those students who can go beyond the standards. Differentiated instruction is also evident in our co-taught classes. The co-teacher, a special education teacher, assists in the modification of classwork and assignments to ensure learning and growth for identified students.

Our move to Connected Learning with 1:1 digital devices for all students is a technology-based support for instructional methods. It expands and enhances interaction in the classroom and can expand opportunities beyond the classroom to the online world. Students have increased access to learning resources and can learn and collaborate anywhere, anytime. Digital devices engage students in a format they enjoy, and learning in a real-world, current context helps prepare students for college and the workforce.

Together with high-quality instructional practices, effective interventions are essential for the learning and achievement of struggling students. Our Instructional Support Team collaborates and consults about students to develop academic and social-emotional interventions. Interventions may include one-on-one instruction by the teacher, peer tutoring, remediation through use of the standards-based digital curriculum of our Learning Management System, development of Behavior Intervention Plans, individual counseling and regular communication with parents to discuss students' needs and to connect parents to appropriate school and community resources. We also partner with other schools in the Distance Learning environment to provide summer review for students needing to pass Regents exams required for graduation.

The appropriate use of assessments as well as a thorough understanding of assessment data helps us to meet student needs, evaluate our programs and improve instruction for high levels of achievement. When concerns arise about individual students, psychoeducational evaluations, functional behavior assessments and social emotional assessments are tools used to assess students' cognitive, academic, developmental, adaptive and social/emotional functioning. Results of these assessments are evaluated to determine the level of support, whether it is identification under the Committee on Special Education, a 504 plan or other support plan, appropriate for individual students. Results also help to determine accommodations and modifications needed by these students.

Teachers are continually using formative assessments to guide their instruction. Many of our teachers are Google Classroom users and use it for class discussions. Teachers can monitor student learning through these discussions and provide feedback. Teachers use apps that send a quick survey of questions to students who can respond using a digital device providing immediate feedback to teachers regarding student learning. Several of our teachers also use Zipgrade – an app that allows a phone or tablet to scan quiz and test answer sheets for immediate feedback to students and item analysis for teachers. The Fishbowl technique has also been utilized by our teachers in large-group discussions. This method allows all to participate allowing the teacher to evaluate understanding of the whole class.

The summative assessments used at the local level include unit exams, midterm and final exams. At the state level, our students take Regents exams and at the national level, they take Advanced Placement, SAT and ACT exams. Our district uses a data driven instruction approach for improving student learning and

performance. Analysis of assessments occurs at the administrative as well as teacher level. Our district contracts with the Capital Area School Development Association to analyze our state assessment data. Data reports are then reviewed within academic departments. Teachers review how their students' results compare across teachers, similar schools, region and state. They look at data to determine their students' progress toward meeting each of the standards. A comparable analysis is performed on AP exam data. Additionally, professional development is provided to train teachers in item analysis and distractor analysis in order to guide their instruction and assist them in developing quality test questions that best measure student learning. Peer professional development also occurs. One of our teachers has engaged in research around designing assessments and shares her knowledge about constructing multiple choice questions, analyzing distractors and using exams to inform instruction with other teachers in our district. With the goal of maintaining high levels of achievement, our school will continue to systematically assess and evaluate instruction and take appropriate measures in response to the data.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

A very telling indicator of Maple Hill High School's positive climate and culture is the pride in the school felt by students and their parents, staff and administrators. Students and teachers enjoy being here because there's a sense of belonging. They care about the school and each other. Keeping in sight the main goal of developing the academic, social and emotional growth of students, faculty and administration take care to promote a positive environment and protect the culture that has been instrumental in advancing our school to where it is today.

Administration and faculty understand the importance of students' contributions and value their input. In return, students are more engaged in the school community and motivated to give their best and make the school a better place for all. Viewing the school as a whole organization, students can be seen included in many levels. In the classroom, teachers encourage expression of opinions and open discussion allowing students to become confident in communicating their ideas. Elected Class and Student Council officers represent peers in decision making for the entire student body. This gives students a voice in determining student activities. Students are also included (among faculty, administration, board of education members and other adults) in high school and district-wide planning groups. Their contributions to these groups allow students to see their responsibility for as well as their impact on their school. While all these examples illustrate the leadership roles our students take, we recognize that involvement from all students is essential. Whether it's playing on an athletic team, being involved in a service-oriented club, performing in a play or musical production, competing in an academic competition or exhibiting artwork, there's a niche for all our students to showcase their talent or play a role in the school community. Care is taken to recognize student involvement and accomplishments to further engage and motivate students. Achievements are highlighted on social media including the school website as well as school Facebook and Twitter accounts. Quarterly honor rolls are posted and students from each grade level are selected for Student of the Month recognition.

Supporting academic, social and emotional growth means recognizing that each student is unique. We look at students as individuals and instead of employing cookie-cutter fixes, we develop creative solutions to academic and social needs. This generally involves devoting more time and staff resources to solving the problem, but the mindset is that it's worth it. We are vigilant about being aware of the trends in social issues and academic needs and adjust programming as necessary. Knowing that transitions are stressful for students, we proactively address them through such events as Freshman Orientation, Junior College Awareness Night and a presentation from a panel of recent graduates talking to our junior and senior classes about the transition to college. We look to make transitions positive experiences for students to embrace rather than situations to fear.

Teachers in our school feel valued and supported not only by administration but by their own colleagues. Teachers are encouraged to attend conferences for professional development. Funds for conferences are included in the budget and an additional pool of money for more extensive professional development can be applied for. Teachers are also surveyed about the professional development they can offer to colleagues based on their own expertise. This demonstrates that administration views its teachers as valuable resources. The participation of colleagues accepting training from their peers demonstrates the respect accorded one another. Furthermore, for a small school we have a disproportionate number of student teachers. We attribute this to the respect that area college education programs have for the expertise of our teachers and the quality training they can provide to future teachers. Finally, alongside student achievements, exemplary classroom activities and accomplishments of teachers are also highlighted on school social media.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Families, community members and community organizations are viewed as valuable resources for the successful advancement of our students and school as a whole. We look to utilize the expertise they can

provide and the contributions they can make. On our part, we understand our obligation to provide feedback to them. Parents have an expectation of being informed about student achievements and challenges, and community organizations appreciate hearing about the impact their contributions have made. There's also an implied partnership among our school and community organizations. Our job is to prepare students for the future they will face and we can't do this in a vacuum. We need to listen to the community, the institutes of higher education and organizations that represent the workforce to understand what our students need to learn and experience in order to be successful beyond high school.

The home-school connection is so vital to student success and therefore, cooperation between the two is essential. Communication between school and parents and teachers and parents is paramount. At the start of the year, parents are invited to an Open House to hear about expectations from each of their children's teachers. Our students receive written reports from teachers eight times per year. In addition, parents can log onto a parent portal in order to see current assignments and grades. Teachers are strongly encouraged by administration to contact parents at the first sign of any concerns. Additionally, parent or teachers can request an after school parent-teacher conference at any time and we schedule two evening parent-teacher conference nights during the year for those parents whose schedules may not allow an afternoon conference.

We also want our parents and the community to hear about all the achievements of our students. Our school website, school Facebook and Twitter accounts are updated multiple times a day and are rich with information and student activities and achievements. Parents can also register to receive weekly eNews and text notifications of important events. We are responsible for providing information to the community but also desire feedback from them. Community input is always sought on major issues. Our building planning team includes parents and representatives from various community organizations. We absolutely rely on community organizations to support our mission and supplement the education and engagement of our students. We have cultivated a robust relationship with both the Rensselaer County Chamber of Commerce and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute to provide internships to our students. We have established and maintained associations with colleges that grant significant merit awards to recognize our outstanding junior students. The Rensselaer County Division of Youth works with us to provide summer jobs to students we have identified as high risk.

Finally, we look to connect with those organizations whose goal is to make positive change in the community and world. Our local Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs and YMCA have demonstrated wonderful support to our school and students. Rotary sponsors students each year to participate in the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards program and also hold a recognition dinner for our top service-minded students. Kiwanis sends a student to the Hugh O'Brien Youth Leadership conference each year, supports our Key Club and provides funding for school supplies for students in need. The YMCA also recognizes students and educators in our school who exhibit exemplary community service.

3. Professional Development:

Maple Hill High School recognizes the importance of providing high quality professional development to improve teaching and learning. In addition, the district also recognizes the importance of tapping into the passion, talent, and expertise of our teachers. The district works collaboratively with teachers on the Professional Development Planning Committee to help write the District's Professional Development Plan which identifies goals and coordinates activities to assist with successful completion of the plan. In addition, the district provides an opportunity for teachers to apply to become Professional Development Leaders. As a Professional Development Leader, teachers are paid a stipend to plan and deliver workshops that allow them to continue to grow professionally as well as help their colleagues learn new skills and provide professional leadership aligned to district initiatives.

In addition to the professional development delivered on site through conference days and our Professional Development Leader initiative, the district continues to seek non-traditional avenues for professional development. We are the first school district in the state of New York to be given Start Up NY tax free status due to our unique incubator program that we house in our schools. By providing space for carefully vetted start up companies free of charge in our schools, we accept payment in the form of professional

development for teachers and hands-on opportunities for our students. Through this collaborative partnership we connect entrepreneurs directly with our school community and provide an opportunity for us to learn through our direct interaction.

In collaboration with other school districts, local professional organizations and through our local BOCES, we continue to provide high quality learning experiences for our teachers. We participate in regional conference days that build connections and allow collaboration between educators of different districts. Similarly, our distance learning teachers helped establish a Distance Learning Professional Development Committee with other districts involved in Distance Learning in order to create opportunities to share best practices and brainstorm solutions to challenges experienced teaching in this format. The district also understands that learning should not just be limited to conference days and workshops. Leveraging technology, the district has invested in various forms of online learning for our teachers. This allows teachers to have access to professional learning that works on their schedule. The district continuously evaluates all professional learning in an effort to ensure that faculty have multiple opportunities to grow professionally.

The school district tries to maximize its resources through the budgeting process in recognition of the importance of professional learning. Moneys are set aside each year through the faculty association and for the administration to ensure engagement in professional development activities. Leveraging funding from both state and federal sources allows us to focus on this critical component of our profession.

4. School Leadership:

Maple Hill's leadership philosophy is deeply intertwined with the legacy left by our Superintendent who passed away last summer. Describing who he was and what he did for our school as our leader will provide the best illustration of how our leaders continue to lead our faculty and students. Our superintendent had the curiosity and enthusiasm of a child, and the wisdom and foresight of a visionary. He was passionate, inspiring and innovative and exhibited humility, open-mindedness, perseverance, trust in others and a deep respect for family and community. Always, he conveyed the feeling that we were in this together. He could have pursued any number of lucrative administrative positions in the private sector but chose education because of his true desire to inspire, encourage and motivate future generations.

Following his example, the district's leadership team works closely together to ensure that the district's focus remains on students and high quality academic programming. Leadership is critical in supporting our students and teachers, advocating for resources, and maintaining a positive environment that thrives on trust, creativity and innovation. It is through respectful and thoughtful interactions with faculty, staff, parents, and students that the entire school community feels supported from all levels of leadership.

Just as classrooms are student-centered, our leadership is faculty/staff centered. Understanding that decision-making should be shared with those closest to the classroom, the faculty is empowered to make their own decisions in instructional choices. Leadership also recognizes their role in making teachers feel safe and therefore, makes clear that trial and error is acceptable when it leads to learning. This has created a culture of risk-taking and consequently a faculty with a higher capacity for creativity and innovation. Evaluations in our school are not punitive but rather used as opportunities for growth and learning new things.

In the high school, our leadership consists of our interim superintendent, principal, director of curriculum and assistant superintendent of pupil personnel services. Additionally, we have faculty mentors to advise and support our new teachers as well as faculty professional development leaders who provide high quality training to their colleagues. Our principal serves as the department head for all academic departments and leads our faculty and department meetings. The principal is a strong advocate for data-driven instruction and works with departments to analyze and understand assessment data to move programs forward. The principal also encourages teachers to take advantage of leadership opportunities in their field. Our small school is home to two New York State Master Teachers and several regionally recognized teachers who present their work on curriculum and assessment statewide.

In the end, student achievement is the goal. Leadership understands that they facilitate, rather than mandate this outcome. They clearly communicate their objectives, remain committed to ongoing professional development, convey an openness to new ideas and approaches and maintain a flexibility that demands high levels of achievement but institutes loose guidelines. One simply has to look at our established programs, distribution of resources and relationships to recognize the role played by effective leadership. Our leadership has facilitated partnerships with colleges, relationships with companies that provide internships to our students, connections with community organizations that recognize and reward high achieving and civic-minded students, expanded opportunities for our students through distance learning and advanced a more focused, higher quality curriculum through data-driven instruction. Our leadership is forward-thinking and always looking to improve.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

In addition to being cognizant of the need for varying levels of courses that correspond to the different levels of academic readiness of our students, while also being responsive to the need for additional supports for some students, Maple Hill has made strategic decisions and partnerships that have created extensive learning opportunities for our students.

Our collaborations with other schools and organizations have allowed us to generate large-school opportunities while keeping our small-school culture. Students have a great deal to choose from to find the right fit for their own personal academic success while in high school and in preparation for a successful future. Maple Hill has developed agreements with our local community college as well as three private colleges to offer college credit to our students through dual-enrollment programs. Students take classes in the high school delivered by college-approved teachers and earn college credit. College credit courses are available in all core areas. The ability to graduate high school with college credit already earned gives our students more options while in college.

Maple Hill also utilizes other connections to give our students as many academic opportunities as possible. Through our BOCES, we can offer students Career and Technical Education programs where they can earn certifications in a variety of well-paying fields such as aviation maintenance, HVAC, Cosmetology and Security to name a few. These more hands-on programs fit the learning style of some of our students, while the more college preparatory New Visions programs – also offered through BOCES - help provide a strong foundation for our students looking to pursue medical and STEM fields, research, or careers in government or communications.

In 2007 the decision was made to invest in a Distance Learning lab and join a consortium of schools to share courses across schools over the Distance Learning network. While we are able to share the expertise of our own teachers with other schools, we also benefit by being able to offer additional courses beyond what our teachers can deliver. Through Distance Learning, we have expanded our Advanced Placement as well as College in the High School course offerings. Additionally, we are able to offer the highly sought after course, American Sign Language to our students. Distance Learning will also allow us to expand our Computer Science offerings allowing us to expose our students to a career area with a very high demand for knowledgeable employees.

Due to our teachers' willingness to be innovative and creative, we are able to offer an extensive and varied list of electives allowing students to explore interest areas beyond the core courses. Furthermore, we pride ourselves in being flexible and will look to satisfy students' unmet needs through independent study or school-provided online courses. The platform we use for online coursework is very adaptable. We can use it for credit rescue, allowing students to repeat units to improve grades. It can also be used for credit recovery, allowing students to repeat a course. A third use is for enrichment, allowing students to independently study a course we do not offer.

Before students can be expected to learn, basic needs must be met. We have identified students whose families struggle to provide basic necessities and in conjunction with the Regional Food Bank, one of our teachers and social worker established the "Backpack program" to supplement the Free and Reduced breakfast and lunch program. On Fridays, identified students are able to take home a backpack of nutritious food and snacks to ensure that over the weekend, nutrition needs are met.