



## **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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

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

13 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
  - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 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	185	165	350
10	160	155	315
11	150	159	309
12 or higher	165	163	328
<b>Total Students</b>	660	642	1302

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 4 % Black or African American
  - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 88 % White
  - 3 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 8%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	90
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	108
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	1355
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.08
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2%  
27 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Dutch, Farsi, French, German, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, and Tagalog

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 8%  
Total number students who qualify: 107

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %  
183 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>68</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                 | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness           | <u>38</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed  | <u>35</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance    | <u>13</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>7</u> Hearing Impairment       | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>12</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	4
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	52
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	26
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	26
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	10

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 25:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	94%	99%	98%	95%	98%

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 2017.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	356
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	78%
Enrolled in a community college	8%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	13%

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 help every student learn to think with reflection, act with compassion, and perform with honor in high school and beyond.

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**

---

Birmingham Michigan is a vibrant and prosperous city of approximately 20,000 residents located just a few miles north of Detroit. Its school system is a reflection of its devotion to family life and attracts business executives and professionals to raise their children here. Its two high schools are exceptional in both academics and athletics, offering students a wide range of course offerings with myriad AP courses, state of the art STEM classroom experiences, award-winning art and theater programs as well as an exceptional faculty. Over two-thirds of our teachers have advanced degrees in their content areas. Two years ago, our Advanced Placement Physics teacher received an Einstein Fellowship, and spent one year in Washington DC working with legislators and other scientists on creating model curriculum for STEM and other science courses. Our mathematics department chair has been nominated for Northwestern's 2018 Distinguished Secondary Teacher Award, and Seaholm's business teacher was awarded the district Teacher of the Year for her work in game design and programming. Still another was featured for her work in *Beat Boredom: Engaging Tuned Out Teenagers*, published by Stenhouse Press this year.

Yet, these statistics do little to convey the unique personality of this fine school. One tradition that exemplifies our uniqueness would be Field Day. We are in year 94 of this tradition that has evolved over the years, but still maintains its core themes of unity, loyalty and community service. Each class selects leaders to guide them through a march, song, floor show and charity events as well as the field events themselves. In one month, the students develop a theme for each class, for example, Furious Freshmen, Sophomore Safari, Junior Jumpers, Senior Storm, design a T-Shirt to reflect the theme, choreograph a complicated march to music which each student must learn, create an artistic banner, develop a class skit that reflects unity and loyalty, sing the school song in unison and collect food for Gleaners Food Bank of Pontiac. All students must be involved and compete against one another to win the coveted Field Day trophy. On the morning of Field Day itself the school is buzzing with students ready to begin their march into the gym, each class separately, to their audience of parents and panel of teacher judges. 300 students in each class are dressed alike in the t-shirts they designed and matching shorts and socks. They come into the gym in groups of 50, with their music playing and their moves learned (some better than others). Scored on each of the categories, the students then move into the field events and crowning glory and the way to earn most points is the announcement of how much food was collected for the charity. Each year, we are the single largest doner to the food bank, with over 11,000 pounds of food items donated! This October event develops the unity, loyalty and friendships that last throughout their years at Seaholm and beyond.

Our Make Me a Maple is another example of the unity our students strive to achieve with their classmates. Each freshman who arrives at Seaholm is assigned a mentor who will guide him or her throughout the school year. Freshmen orientation starts with the junior and senior mentors cheering them through the inflatable arch that is used on the football field on Friday nights! During the school year, the mentors text encouragement to their mentees and they provide monthly events, like final exam study sessions, hot chocolate and donuts in motivational sessions, tail gating social events and more.

Flexible Scheduling, an interdisciplinary program started in 1964 and affectionately called "Flex," demonstrates both the academic rigor and the integration of civic responsibility within the classroom instruction at Seaholm. Students study a variety of geographic regions in the world, including their history, literature and current events, but also create opportunities to apply their learning to service learning opportunities. Each year, the students organize a Flex Conference on topic associated with their yearly theme. This year, the conference theme was Detroit: From Deterioration to Gentrification. They also participated in an exchange program with a majority Arabic high school in a nearby community, both visiting and hosting. Each senior presents what's known as his "Big Board" a multi-media presentation and 50 page research paper on a topic he or she began in the junior year. One piece to this presentation is the service learning component the student performed in the context of the research. These service learning opportunities range from creating a tutoring opportunity at the middle school, to developing a nutrition guide for the elderly, to working with the homeless to find shelters to sustain them.

The above examples simply illustrate the wonderful traditions that contribute to the reputation for excellence both academically and in myriad other ways to vast to encapsulate in 800 words.



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

---

### **1. Core Curriculum:**

Over the years, Seaholm’s core curriculum has developed to provide depth over breadth that characterized earlier curricular ideations. We use a district framework that asks faculty to research current best practice and design in their disciplines. District instructional coordinators facilitate the faculty in grades K through 12 to ensure vertical alignment and transitional supports among key grade-level points. At strategic moments along the way, students and community involvement is invited and implemented. On a building level, department chairpersons meet weekly to discuss their curriculum and strategic building goals that are supported through that curriculum. Specifically, improved literacy in all subjects and improved student and staff relationships (in order for them to feel connected and valued) are discussed routinely. That conversation includes ways to close achievement gaps where they exist and ways to incorporate building strategies to support our goals. For example, an emphasis on student engagement and civil discourse is a goal all teachers have been incorporating so that we have two-fold process of engaging students in discourse that is respectful and at the same time honest, and in doing so, teachers broaden their relationships with students beyond the content.

The English Language Arts Curriculum is theme-based, balancing contemporary and classic literature that is diverse, inclusive, and appealing. From Macbeth to I Am Malala, the English department offers exposure to diverse points of view to build empathy and expand thinking which in turn increases literacy performance. Students see themselves represented in the literature, which helps them to feel valued as well as broadens the views of all students. Additionally, standards are met and foundational skills acquired through a three-pronged approach of writing, reading and speaking. Works read are challenging in many ways – content, reading level, depth of thought. The ELA classroom also emphasizes student voice and engagement, shifting the locus of control to the student by providing opportunity through whole group discussion and student-led seminar. Such communications skills are essential to both college and career goals.

Roughly two thirds of students take Integrated Math (IM) 1, IM 2, IM 3, and Pre-Calculus at Seaholm. About a third of our students take IM 1 in eighth grade and then take IM 2, IM 3, Pre-Calculus, and AP Calculus at Seaholm. The IM courses are aligned to Michigan’s state standards, which are the Common Core State Standards. The IM courses cover all the content standards and emphasize the Standards for Mathematical Practice throughout. Foundational math skills are emphasized, especially in early grades. The curriculum does allow for movement among both honors and non honors sequences, so that students can accelerate their paths with support from additional foundational classes. For example, we found that some students transitioning from 8th grade IM might need an additional trimester before joining the honors sequence; therefore, we could offer that first support class first term and allow for them to move into the honors in term 2, without missing the opportunity to be included in honors their freshman year.

The Michigan K-12 Science Standards (based upon the Next Generation Science Standards - NGSS) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) are the supporting pillars of the Seaholm science curriculum. The NGSS have a foundation of cross cutting concepts, engineering practices, core science ideas and flexible assessments. The science courses/electives offered at Seaholm embody the foundations of NGSS, the MI Science Standards, and also parallel STEM career pathways. Student choice has been emphasized by offering biology, chemistry and physics classes from grade 9 so that students who may be interested in pursuing specific careers are given the opportunity of starting early rather than waiting until later grades. For example, a student who wishes to pursue medicine may take Biology A and B in grade 9 and Advanced Placement Biology in grade 10. A future engineer may opt to take Physics A and B, and then go into AP Physics.

In social studies, the curriculum is driven by the idea of students becoming capable, global citizens. Students use history as a platform to evaluate the choices of the past, and learn how these choices will affect the future. Students transition to learn the principals of economics and how the global economic system interconnects the United States with the world. Finally, students finish Seaholm with the study of the American governmental system and its place on the global stage. This course order was constructed to

maximize the skills of each age group, as well to emphasize things that are more meaningful to students' lives. Early grades focus on history, building off the standards covered in middle school. As students mature, more complex ideas are added, linking things like after school employment and the increased availability of the civic process to the content standards. While covering all the mandatory information, social studies has ordered to increase the meaning to the student.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

The World Language Department supports students in the acquisition of essential skills and knowledge by providing opportunities for linguistic and cultural proficiency and competence. Our work is based on the National Standards from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, commonly known as the 5 C's: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities. Specifically, at Seaholm we offer Spanish, French, Chinese, Japanese, and American Sign Language.

In addition, our courses have specific expectations regarding student proficiency, based on ACTFL's Proficiency Guidelines. For example, students are expected to be rated at the Novice Mid level at the end of their first year of language study, while the expectation for students who complete the Advanced Placement program are expected to be rated at the Advanced Low level.

World languages are offered in an experience-based model, as opposed to a grade-based model. This means that students in any particular language class will not necessarily be in the same grade. For example, an incoming 9th grader can enroll in Level 3 of a language if they come with two years' experience from the middle school. In our district, students can take world language courses for high-school credit beginning in 6th grade, and can potentially take language courses without interruption through the end of their senior year.

Seaholm High School offers Foods and Nutrition, Multicultural Foods, Today's Health, Contemporary Life Issues, Interior Design, Parent and Child Development and Human Sexuality. The two foods courses provide students with skills necessary to apply proper nutrition to meal planning and preparation. Course activities focus on good nutrition, kitchen safety, sanitation and healthy life style choices as well as innovative and imaginative food design. Today's Health is a required course designed to provide students with the practical life skills necessary to maintain total health in today and in the future. Major course emphasis is placed on wellness, understanding oneself and others, substance use and abuse, and human sexuality. All courses focus on teamwork and collaboration thorough the use of project-based learning.

Seaholm High School offers a variety of courses utilizing technology. We offer Web Design, Programming, and Game Design within our Information Technology Department. Students have the opportunity to use state of the art wide screen, curved computer displays, as well as oculus rift headsets so they can see their virtual reality games that they create themselves. Students have the opportunity to learn HTML hand coding, JavaScript, Visual Basics, and Unity. We also offer a plethora of courses within our Engineering Technology Department. Students can sign up for Engineering Systems, Engineering Design & 3D CAD Modeling, Introduction to Energy, and Robotics. In Robotics, students learn the fundamentals and application of automated machines including robot fundamentals, stepper motor, sensors, fabrication techniques, and safety. Introduction to Energy is a course intended to take the mystery out of the technology that we have grown to depend on in our everyday lives. Students work in a living lab setting where renewable energy systems provide lighting, heating & cooling, and electricity for experiments. All technology courses require collaboration, teamwork, and problem solving skills.

Students love our art department and often fill their schedules with the diverse offerings such as Photography, Advanced Photography, Ceramics, Drawing, Art Foundations, Jewelry Making, Graphic Arts, Mixed Media and Advanced Placement and Portfolio. Our students frequently conduct art fairs and often collaborate to paint murals on our building walls to enliven the building for their peers. Recently, senior art students painted murals of coi fish in ponds in a mindfulness area designed to provide a place for students and staff to practice meditation and serenity.

Our music program supports classes in 9th Grade Band, Symphony Band, Jazz Band, Advanced Jazz Band,  
NBRS 2018 18MI106PU Page 10 of 15

Piano, Choir, Show Choir and more. At festivals and competitions, they receive top honors. Physical Education courses offered at Seaholm include Personal Fitness, Team Sports, Volleyball Tech, Football Tech, Scuba Diving, among others. Students are required to take 1 full credit of physical education courses, but if they participate in a sports team or march in band they are exempted from .5 of these credits.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

Because Seaholm is a high performing high school, we need to be vigilant not only in maintaining that performance, but also in examining trends in student learning in order to deepen and improve the experience for all students in our building. To that end, the staff and its leaders meet routinely to determine how we can best serve those needs. Of course, the primary tier one intervention is a rigorous and relevant curriculum and continued professional development on the best in instructional professional development. These aforementioned elements are addressed elsewhere in this document. One notable tier 2 intervention that we implement is the Academic Lab, a support class designed for non special services students who need academic support. In January, the English and math department chairs, 9th grade counselor and the 9th grade assistant principal meet with their same colleagues in 8th grade to review student NWEA and PSAT reading and math scores, as well as GPAs, to determine who needs this added support in grade 9. Student by student, they review and discuss those scoring in the 50% and below on these tests. Identified students' families are contacted and offered a three week foundational summer school program in math and reading skills, taught by the same teachers who will be teaching their English and math classes in the fall. In addition, they are scheduled into a support class, Academic Lab, with an average size of 10 for each of the three trimesters, again team-taught by their same English/math teachers. This plan allows for students to develop a rapport with their teachers prior to entering high school, and it keeps the students with their peers in the math and English classes. We do not remove them from the regular classes, but instead provide them with additional practice in the skills. For example, knowing there will be a math quiz on Friday, the teachers in the Academic Lab reinforces skills specific to the students' needs prior to that quiz. Other grades also have the opportunity for Academic Labs, with its small size but that class is given more homework and skill support. Some students, however, even when high achieving can feel overwhelmed, which impacts their own learning/success. This year, we instituted a Mindfulness Academic Lab, which is designed to take high achieving-students suffering from anxiety and institute mindfulness practices and developing strategies to use in their classes prior to tests and assignments that serve to calm them and allow for academic success. In the last few years, we have worked to diminish the gap that exists for our minority students both in their academic achievement and in their presence in our honors and Advanced Placement courses. Department chairs examined the data in PSAT/SAT scores for our minority students compared to Caucasian students who enroll in these classes and found that a discrepancy existed. Department chairs worked with the principal to create advisory forums for these students to counsel them into the honors and AP opportunities and then studied how the cohorts have performed. We found that those minority students were just as successful at their white counterparts and overall AP data revealed that our scores continued to improve. We also used a one of the first nationally normed surveys to assess school climate and culture, Panorama, to gather information on our students' attitudes regarding the school culture. When reviewing the results of the survey, and removing any neutral response but only taking into account the favorable responses, we recognize we have a long way to go to improve all of our students' sense of belonging to the school, but the scores of our minority students to that same topic caused even more dismay. 54% of our students answer positively (agree or strongly agree) that they felt they belonged, while only 29% of our minority students indicated they agreed or strongly agreed. There is a deep connection between a sense of belonging and the ability to achieve both academically and socially in the environment. This year, after implementing some of the strategies mentioned in this report, we hope to see these scores improve and affect student learning as well. We just gave the survey again last week and will have the results soon.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

---

### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

Much of the narrative of this application focuses on the work being done on the climate and culture of Seaholm, an exceptional school known for its academic success. Leadership in the building recognized after surveying its students that there was work to do on improving our students' sense of belonging and connectedness to the staff and to one another. But staff, too, was craving that same sense of belonging. Stability in the leadership, or lack of it, had created a pervasive uneasiness and lack of trust in administration. Elsewhere in this report, we have discussed leadership itself, but from all perspectives, the culture in the building needed more trust among all stakeholders. To this end, school improvement endeavors shifted from the academic to the culture and climate in order to work toward that engaged, inclusive and trustful culture but also to maintain academic excellence as the two goals are inextricably linked. To build a strong culture of belonging and feeling valued for students, we initiated professional development in raising awareness of teenage pressure, anxiety and depression through faculty meetings run by our counseling department, a showing of the film *Angst* to staff, community and students—along with a panel of experts in teenage psychology. We provided Safe Talk training to both staff and students three times across the year, involving over 120 staff and students. We instituted U<sup>M</sup>atter week and First Friday for Students. We created a Joy Committee, devoted to enhancing the culture of Seaholm to include wonder and joy in learning. Some activities included, the band teacher's lecture on "The Top Ten Songs to Relieve Tension," at lunch, pizza provided by admin, where over 100 students, staff and parents voluntarily arrived. The art teacher offered a session at lunch on "Love in Art" for February, where we enjoyed her analysis of famous art and heart-shaped pizza as well. Next month the calculus teacher plans to surprise us all with his contribution to the joy of learning. The secretaries set up a celebration of National Chip and Dip Day, complete with a variety of treats in the teacher's lounge. Last spring, when our air conditioning broke during final exams, we purchased freeze pops and teachers distributed them between exams, and teachers received ice cream treats on their breaks. The counselors handed out hot chocolate to students as they entered the building one cold morning this winter. Culture is improving, and we look forward to seeing the results in motivated students and staff.

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

Seaholm prides itself in the successful partnership with family and community members. Each year, incoming 9th grade parents are given the opportunity to become a parent representative for their student's class and serves as guides/volunteers from freshman to senior years. Comprised of parents from various elementary schools, both public and private, that feed into the high school, they also represent the diverse families in our community whenever possible. A teacher advisor also follows the grade through all four years at Seaholm. This parent group and teacher advisor team helps families navigate the various traditions, events, activities and networks available to them. The Seaholm PTA is a very active parent community and often hosts guest speakers from the school and community. This year they screened the movie *Angst*, about teenage anxiety and depression, with a panel of counselors from both in and out of the school to answer questions. Also, we had Dr. Michele Borba speak to the parent community regarding social media. This talk inspired a book club to read her book, *Unselfies*. Recently, the the PTA sponsored a showing of the movie *Screenagers* to complement these topics. Monthly, our Principal hosts a question and answer session prior to the start of the PTA meeting, providing parents the opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues pertinent to their student. We also have a Character Education Parent Advisory Committee, which meets monthly to advise and learn about issues related to our character education initiative. 8 years ago, parents formed the SOS (Seaholm Offers Support), which offers a variety of monetary and community service events, ranging from covering the cost of heat bills for a family in need, to gift cards to specific students for clothing, to backpacks filled with school supplies, to ACT prep classes. Monthly, they examine ways to help community, students, families and staff. Additionally, parents can join various school and district communities: the African-American Family Network, the Latino Family Network, Community Forum, among others. This spring break the AFFN sponsored a trip for students to visit HBCUs. Last year, when the math department moved to a new integrated model, the school offered information nights, but this year when it was implemented parents voiced strong concerns, prompting two

forums at which parents gave feedback. Their concerns prompted a variety of measures provided by the school to address their objections and to support students through the transition. Another example of community and family engagement is the partnership that Seaholm has with the City of Birmingham. Each January, junior students are encouraged to apply to sit on City of Birmingham Boards. Students apply and rank their interest in various City Boards. The students are then sworn in at a Birmingham City Council meeting and serve a one-year term.

### **3. Professional Development:**

The district itself offers specific classes that are both online and in schools which cover a variety of topics from technology like Google classroom to content-based such as ways to teach discussion strategies in an English classroom. Professional development at Seaholm is ongoing and focused on supporting student achievement through our building school improvement goals. Occasionally, both district and buildings work together to build capacity in its teachers. One such professional learning is Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). Several years ago administrators and nominated teachers were trained in the theory and practice of this professional learning. At Seaholm, three teachers develop with the building administrators and with district consultants content for implementation at the building. We have committed to devote 10 hours of this training for teachers and staff each year for the next four years. This learning includes strategies faculty can use in their classroom to engage all students to develop a culture and environment of trust and acceptance and improve student learning. Additionally, assistant principals have been trained in Restorative Practice methods to modify behavior without resorting always to suspensions, but instead to “repair harm” to victims and to re-establish or restore relationships. Even with simple training, we have noticed significant changes. In one example, two students had fought in the cafeteria and while both were suspended because of our student code of conduct, they also participated in a restorative meeting. The students shook hands at the end of the meeting and while they certainly did not promise to become friends, they took their individual pride with them with an increased understanding of the other’s point of view. We have had no problems with these two young men despite being in the same class the following term. Finally, we have incorporated civil discourse professional learning for our staff in an effort to develop relationships between students and staff and to address the increasingly ugly social media and political rhetoric we are witnessing in our country. Teachers practice strategies like “Peel the Onion” in which each participant listens to different sides to a topic and then reflects using question techniques. We set up model discussions relevant to our school, such as moving to one colored graduation gowns, and removing cell phones from the classroom. Staff learned how to be a part of this kind of discussion before asking students to participate in them within their own classroom setting.

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

Without question, leadership at Seaholm is a shared endeavor, even while responsibility may rest predominantly with the principal. The principal at Seaholm has been in the role for one year but had been a teacher and department chair in the building for 28 years before becoming assistant principal and then interim principal. With overwhelming support of the staff, she was appointed as principal a year later, without having ever applied for the position. This information is only important in that it reveals the emphasis in the building on the fundamental role of the student-centered classroom. Focused on teaching and learning at each level, leaders in the building consider all endeavors, events and plans through the lens of its impact on student learning, whether that be academic, social or emotional. The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) consists of all administrators in the building: principal, three assistant principals, eight department chairs (who teach between .5 and .75 of the school day but are administrators) and the athletic director. The unique role of the DH, who has a foot in both teaching and administration, serves to enhance the instructional emphasis of the high school. Administrative decisions are made with input from those in the classroom, not years removed. Their content expertise is invaluable as they advise the principal on matters of best practice in their disciplines. For example, the Special Services department chairperson provides invaluable insight for the other department chairs by advocating for the needs of this population, often underserved and misunderstood. But not only administrators lead at Seaholm. Teachers chair most of the committee work and lead virtually all of the professional learning conducted in the building. Some examples are Culturally Responsive Teaching, School Improvement, Civil Discourse, Student Assistance Program, Flexible Scheduling and so much more. And finally, students contribute so

much leadership as they develop and grow in ways to own their learning. Students lead their own Flex Conference, this year on Detroit and Gentrification. They lead advisory committees for both the principal and the character education committee, as well as have spots on district curriculum committees that approve changes and materials. Yes, the principal holds the staff accountable for their work and its impact on student learning, but in turn, she is held responsible for the results—and there is no sense in hoarding leadership opportunities when building capacity provides so much more impact on student learning.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

The Seaholm staff are justifiably proud of their high expectations for students and for their expertise in their content areas that contributes to our reputation for excellence. But we came to the conclusion that our focus needed to be on improving the culture at our school. Students who feel connected and valued in their school thrive; conversely, those who feel disconnected struggle academically and socially. ONE strategy among others that was particularly successful in building connection, was UMatter week. It began with clubs, teams, and organizations decorating parts of the building in ways that communicated the theme of UMatter. The swim team decorated the pool hall with paper fish captured in nets with the slogan, "You aren't just one fish in the sea--U Matter." The Leadership class hung lights down our main hall with the slogan, "You light up our lives." The photography and yearbook classes worked together to hang literally hundreds of pictures of the students in the hallways. NONE were vandalized, despite the fears of administration. The building was transformed, and while maintenance warned of fire hazards, they helped with making it safe rather than requiring the students remove it all. We had Safe Talk training for students and staff, which is run by a local organization, The Friendship Circle, to help participants recognize signs of depression and self harm in others. We held a fine arts contest on the theme of UMatter and students entered musical compositions, poetry, essays and artwork. The highlight of the week turned out to be the Ted Talk type presentations by teachers who shared their stories with the students and staff in the auditorium. Tears, laughter and connections occurred as teachers demonstrated how we all suffer and how we need one another to get through those difficult times. The next day, students did the same in the Little Theater to a compassionate and supportive audience. This week sparked a movement to create a more visibly student-centered, inclusive and inspiring building environment. The PTA has donated monies to permanently display photographs, artwork and quotes in the hallways. The showcase of this will be the Martin Luther King quote, "Intelligence plus character--that is the goal of true education," in 5' X 7' metal sign in our lobby. Additionally, in order to continue this initiative of that we all matter, we have other plans being implemented in both large and small ways.