

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Dr. Thomas Richard Hall

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

Official School Name Brighton High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1150 Winton Road South

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

Rochester City                      NY State                      14618-2299 Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Monroe County

Telephone (585) 242-5000

Fax (585) 242-7364

Web site/URL http://www.bcsd.org

E-mail tom\_hall@bcsd.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Kevin McGowan

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail kevin\_mcgowan@bcsd.org

District Name Brighton Central School District Tel. (585) 242-5200

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. Mark Kokanovich

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. 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

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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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	0	0	0
<b>1</b>	0	0	0
<b>2</b>	0	0	0
<b>3</b>	0	0	0
<b>4</b>	0	0	0
<b>5</b>	0	0	0
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	125	152	277
<b>10</b>	152	152	304
<b>11</b>	141	133	274
<b>12 or higher</b>	145	130	275
<b>Total Students</b>	563	567	1130

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 11 % Asian
  - 7 % Black or African American
  - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 69 % White
  - 7 % 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: 5%

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	19
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	39
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	58
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	1146
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%  
11 Total number ELL

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

Arabic, Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Mandarin, Pashto, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Turkish, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 15%  
Total number students who qualify: 172

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %  
162 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>15</u> Autism                 | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>46</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>89</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>2</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: 6
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	5
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	59
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	57
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	19
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 19:1

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	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	96%	98%	96%	95%	89%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	287
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	70%
Enrolled in a community college	15%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	1%
Found employment	2%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
Other	11%

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.

BHS Believes that everyone has the right to attend school in an environment that is safe, welcoming, caring, professional, and free from harassment.

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**

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Brighton High School (BHS), in the Brighton Central School District, is in a residential suburb of the City of Rochester in upstate New York. The District includes 34,000 residents and has an enrollment of approximately 1,130 students attending grades 9-12. A large percentage of our residents are employed in professional careers and demonstrate active interest and involvement in the school community. The BHS community consists of diverse national, religious, and ethnic backgrounds with over 40 countries and 30 languages represented.

The first class to graduate from our current high school building was in 1941 with 112 students, the vast majority being white. The Class of 2017 consisted of 287 students, only 69% of whom are white. Since 1938, BHS has prided itself on its evolution towards a diverse student population that celebrates all people and all backgrounds, races, religions, ethnicities, languages, and sexuality. In addition, Brighton has continued to be recognized over the past decade as one of the Best Communities for Music Education by the National Association of Music Merchants.

Over the past five years, we have improved our June graduation rate from 89% in 2013 to 96% in 2017. More significantly, with a focused determination and commitment to improving our instructional approaches, academic interventions, and social emotional support for all of our students, we have seen a dramatic increase in the graduation rate for all of our subgroups. The graduation rates have increased for African American students from a dismal 55% to 95%, for students in poverty from 78% to 97%, for students with special needs from 65% to 82%, and for Hispanic students from 73% to 100%. During this same five years, students graduating with Advanced NYS Regents Diplomas have increased from 63% to 73%.

We have truly transformed our approaches, ideas, and beliefs for working with all of our students over the past 5 years. We have created a high school support team/Response to Intervention (RTI) team and process for monitoring ALL of our high school students. We implemented a new RTI approach in the 2013-14 school year. Since then, we created teams made up of counselors, administrators, and teachers that meet weekly to review students who have been referred. Parents, teachers, students, and RTI members can create referrals. Cases are reviewed and interventions are proposed based on presenting issues. In instances involving mental health or social/emotional needs, students may be referred to over 20 different in-house counseling groups. Our counseling approach is proactive and supportive with over 275 of our students engaged in weekly counseling and check-ins with mental health professionals and other students.

From 2000 to 2018, our students receiving free or reduced lunch have increased from about 6% to close to 18%. With this most recent change in BHS demographics, we have all had to shift our thinking in how we respond to students in poverty. In response to the changing needs of our community, a partnership between the District and the Jewish Federation of Rochester resulted in the opening of local food and clothing cupboards. BHS staff regularly transport students to these cupboards, ensuring that all of our kids have their basic needs met so that they can concentrate on their academic work. BHS students, staff, and community regularly sponsor clothing and food drives as part of our ongoing community service and KINDNESS projects. This year, we held our 1st Annual Brighton Believes Day. The day's activities included 1130 students, teams of parents, and the entire staff working together to support, promote, and engage with various local agencies on six service projects each benefiting a different not-for-profit agency in the Brighton community.

BHS has a well-established tradition of strong academics, appreciation and celebration of diversity, and of mutual respect for all. To ensure the continuation of such a culture, we have created a Professional Learning Team (PLT) made up of teachers, instructional specialists, and administrators. This core group, along with the Principal's Advisory Committee and Department Coordinator group, collaborates, discusses, debates, advises, and makes shared decisions on how we can make BHS the best high school in the Nation! "BHS Believes that everyone has the right to attend school in an environment that is safe, welcoming, caring, professional, and free from harassment." This is our simple, yet powerful mission statement. By using common and consistent "Brighton Believes" language, promoted by all constituent groups of the BHS

community, we have made gains in successfully addressing both behavioral and academic concerns. We believe that students who feel positively supported and safe in their learning environment perform better academically, socially, and behaviorally as they work towards meeting the challenges of becoming college and career ready.

The Brighton Believes qualities of Respect, Responsibility, Self-Control, Kindness, and Integrity, are the foundation for everything we do. We don't just say it, we live it through our words and our actions. Annually, administrators and counselors present to over 65 groups of 14-22 students in grades 9-12 to talk about mental health, bullying, cyber-bullying, issues with social media, sexting, and promoting our mission of making BHS a safe and caring place for all. Additionally, we have over 65 active community service clubs, competitive academic clubs, and specific diversity clubs that meet just about every student interest.

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

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

Brighton High School recently hosted 45 educators from 7 different surrounding schools who observed classes. Overwhelmingly, their feedback recognized the success of our curricular initiatives, with responses like, “You can actually feel the Brighton Motto of “Brighton Believes” and the 5 Character Traits throughout the building... You are living it!” and “Classes were student centered! Many teacher facilitators with students driving discussions,” and “BHS has a calming atmosphere in both the classrooms and in the hallways. There is a “vibe of “calmness” in the building, no tension.”

Our teachers are content specialists committed to cultivating innovative thinkers and creators. Experiential learning is the norm at BHS. From our investigative, constructivist-based math program, balanced approach to literacy instruction with embedded student choice, annual Cape Cod Whale Watch, and environmental field trips to local parks and streams, students experience the curriculum through authentic learning.

Our English curriculum includes a foundation of rigorous classical and contemporary texts while allowing for student choice to ensure that students engage with diverse voices and stories. Student choice is facilitated through a flexible curricular model that allows teachers to select texts based on each class’s needs and interests. Students are surveyed on potential thematic topics of interest and the following year’s senior English program is designed based on survey results. This organic process keeps our senior literature offerings innovative and responsive to student interest. For instance, this year, students demonstrated interest in the intense political climate and, in response, two new courses will be offered next year: Rhetoric of Race in American Culture, and Literature of War and Protest.

Students cultivate skills through a variety of instructional strategies such as Socratic seminar, shared inquiry, and the BARD College’s writing-to-learn exercises that our entire school has embraced. Our mission is to create an environment safe for exploration of ideas, where questioning is a regular response to texts, respectful dialogue is expected and explicitly taught, and students can engage the writing process as it intersects with other communication skills.

Like the English curriculum, our math curriculum emphasizes a respectful and collaborative learning environment that emphasizes the search for patterns. We believe that all students can experience success in mathematics; therefore, we have created two curricular options. Most students begin their math program with algebra and geometry. They may then continue on a STEM focused path, including such classes as Algebra 2, Pre-calculus and AP Calculus, or a non-STEM focused path, including such classes as Functions and Statistics, Transition to College Math, and Statistics and AP Statistics.

Our mathematics curriculum supports development of thinking and reasoning skills using mathematical ideas. Classes consist of student-centered investigations in the context of realistic problems and applications, and creating conjectures by drawing on knowledge from a wide variety of mathematical topics and looking for patterns. We emphasize the communication of ideas through reading, writing, and discussion. Our students work collaboratively to develop and defend their conjectures and methods, ultimately summarizing their findings in writing.

Our science curriculum ensures all students in all courses have opportunities to not only learn about science but to be scientists by encouraging students to ask questions, problem solve, design investigations, collect and analyze data, and ultimately use evidence to create valid scientific arguments and explanations. We actively engage students using methods that include an emphasis on STEM learning, STEAM projects (those that include art), high school/elementary school partnerships, case studies, and problem-based learning. Brighton’s core science curricular expectation is that all students experience 4 years of science, including Earth Science, Living Environment, Chemistry, and Physics. Many students are enrolled in our robust AP program that includes a 21st century technology-science interdisciplinary elective, Energy and Sustainability.

The Social Studies Department is committed to helping students develop the skills necessary to make informed decisions and challenges students to approach history and the modern world through various lenses. BHS Social Studies teachers encourage students to explore and engage themselves in being active citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society and ever-changing global community. Students are exposed to these opportunities through the department's commitment to building a schedule that brings seniors taking Law and Government together over a dozen times per semester in a large setting to hear from and engage with various government-related professionals. Further course offerings include a 2-year global history sequence, US history, economics, several AP history courses, Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) Economics, and AP Psychology. The department also offers several elective courses including world religions, sociology, and psychology.

In addition to offering numerous college-level courses and AP-level offerings, BHS supports all students with college and career readiness through specific grade level seminars. Grade level seminars provide training and exposure to college and career opportunities throughout each year of high school. Over the past several years, counselors, teachers, and administrators have worked collaboratively to design specific college and career curricula for each grade level. Students' counselors deliver the curriculum in weekly seminars that last between eight and twenty weeks. We start in ninth grade where students take online career inventory surveys and are introduced to our work-based learning program and internship opportunities. We also expose students to Naviance and the ability to research colleges and careers based on interest. Students create accounts and start creating personalized resumes and activity sheets, which are revisited throughout each year of high school. Additionally, we host over 60 different college and university visits each year for our juniors and seniors to attend. In addition, we also offer group and individual guidance throughout the college search and application process through counseling appointments and our counselor led College Application Monday program offered after school in the fall to seniors. Students preparing for careers are instructed on the job application process, interviewing tips and skills, and are also exposed to a variety of career and trade opportunities offered through our local BOCES services. Each year, we support between 35 and 45 students who choose to attend various career and trade opportunities at the Eastern Monroe Career Center (EMCC). We also offer students interest tours; we bus students to EMCC to explore the various trade and career opportunities students can partake in. Through our work-based learning program, we host Future Friday events where we invite over 30 different speakers representing various professional and trade careers to introduce students to career paths. All students are given the opportunity to attend these information sessions as they are offered during our daily FLEX time.

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

Brighton believes that art and music play a primary role in the total development of the individual. Our students do this through hands-on learning, developing sensory awareness, visual literacy, reflection, and critical thinking. We create a nurturing environment, allowing students to take creative risks, make connections, envision solutions, and express themselves. In our art program, students have an opportunity to engage in Studio Art, Drawing, Painting, Advanced Drawing and Painting, Photo 1 & 2, Understanding Design, Ceramics 1 and 2, Sculpture, Jewelry Making, Portfolio Preparation, AP Art History, AP Studio Art, and Independent Study. Student work is displayed throughout the building featuring a new artist every other week. We have multiple district wide art shows to celebrate student work. In addition, individuals participate in local art shows at the college level at RIT and Nazareth College. We have a number of clubs including Art Club, Pottery Club, Photo Club, Anime' Club, and an award winning art and literary publication called, Galaxy. In music, students have the opportunity to perform in wind ensemble, symphonic band and concert band, 2 jazz bands, 3 orchestras, chorale, mixed concert choir, and treble choir, as well as several extra-curricular ensembles. Students also have the opportunity to take music theory and advanced placement music theory. At BHS, we find a way to make sure every child enrolled in the arts is able to connect in some way with the greater community.

The Business Education Department provides students with 21st century skills necessary to succeed in work, life, and citizenship. A focus on creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking are essential. We want our students to be globally aware and to possess financial and entrepreneurial skills to prepare them for increasingly complex life and work environments. Our program includes courses allowing students to operate a virtual business and to learn the marketing and financial literacy skills needed to be successful

at home and work.

The Technology Education Department strives to provide students with real world experiences that reflect current technological trends. Our program focuses on problem solving using various tools and machines including 3D printers, drones, robots, solar panels, wind turbines, and go-pros. Because a variety of courses are co-taught with teachers from other subject areas, including science, business, and art, students develop a 21st century, interdisciplinary approach to learning. It is our goal as a department to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate an ever-evolving future.

The Foreign Language Department values multiple opportunities for interactions with native speakers. We invite intern teachers from other countries to work with students in the classrooms. These interns share their culture and language with students through presentations, small group work, and individual conversational practice. Additionally, every year, French and German students are offered the opportunity to participate in a school-to-school exchange. BHS students travel to host schools in Bremen, Germany, and Rennes, France. Enthusiasm for language study begins in middle school. When students reach high school, over 90% of students continue on to level 2 in their chosen language, many electing to take honors courses. Many choose to complete the sequence in Languages Other than English (LOTE), working toward a diploma with advanced designation. Though it is not required, approximately 67% of students continue study in their chosen language in their junior and senior years, including AP Language and Culture Courses. Students may also study a second LOTE such as Latin.

The Health and Physical Education Department has the goal of establishing healthy habits for all students. We have done so by developing 21st Century classrooms utilizing tablet devices for each student and by incorporating mental health and wellness into curricula. Our physical education program includes a new online course that allows students with alternative educational plans to complete requirements from a remote location. Additionally, we offer an adaptive PE class to meet the needs of our students with intellectual and physical disabilities.

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

We use quarterly reports to target students in all grades needing interventions. As a result, we have documented that failure rates have decreased each quarter from 2010 to 2018. In fact, the total number of students failing one or more classes in the second quarter fell from 252 students in the 2010/11 school year to 162 in the 2017/18 school year. Targeted interventions early in the school year ultimately translate into a student's success, that year and into the future.

To ensure that students reach their potential, academic monitoring begins as students transition into the high school. Ninth grade students may have reduced free periods and limited open campus privileges based on their academic performance. These students may be scheduled into a study hall, skills lab, student help rooms, and/or academic intervention class depending on student need. At the end of each quarter, report cards of all 9th grade students are reviewed, and structured supports are added or lifted as needed.

For all students, enrichment, remediation, and targeted academic interventions are embedded within the school day. Because not all of a student's class periods meet on a given cycle day (BHS works on a 6 day meeting pattern), faculty members are scheduled for Student Help times multiple periods throughout the cycle. These help times occur during students' and teachers' unscheduled class periods. Students may choose to seek out or be required to meet with a teacher for extra support or for enrichment. For students who may not qualify for state mandated support yet wish to have more regular and structured support within the school day, skills lab offers writing and reading support. Students who have been identified as struggling academically, socially, and/or emotionally and who require additional intervention services may be scheduled to the Brighton Support Center (BSC). Services available to students through BSC include support with executive functioning, such as learning organizational strategies and help with academic monitoring; test preparation; credit or course recovery; grade monitoring for newly arrived transfer students; and other transition supports.

The Alternative Instructional Model (AIM) program is designed for students whose needs expand beyond

the scope of the traditional high school setting. The AIM program is a highly structured and closely monitored learning environment, geared towards those students lacking the necessary pro-social skills needed to function in a traditional high school setting. The program offers support for students who are experiencing extreme difficulty with a less structured school environment or demonstrate behaviors including lack of motivation or connection to their current academic program. AIM provides a smaller, more personal learning environment for struggling learners. Students are afforded intensive support through group and individual counseling. Some AIM students need help managing their emotions and behaviors in the context of a learning environment. In response to these student needs, intensive counseling is a built-in component of the AIM program. The program is a regular education program that meets the same academic standards set forth by the New York State Board of Regents.

In addition to an extensive intervention system for assisting struggling learners, we believe that the foundation for success in all content areas is the ability to think critically while reading and to succinctly express ideas in writing. As part of our daily math program, all students are required to not only think about the math they are doing, but also write out their strategies and mathematical thinking. This instructional approach has proven to assist all learners as students must not only solve problems using formulas, but must also be able to describe the mathematical principles behind the problems. Students at BHS have a greater sense of how mathematical concepts are related to one another and are skilled in applying these concepts to authentic situations. Our Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores in math have consistently been ranked number one in the upstate New York region.

In our ELA program, all students cultivate their writing, speaking, and listening skills through a variety of instructional strategies, such as Socratic seminar, shared inquiry, and writing-to-learn exercises. Students are required to engage in intellectual and creative risk-taking and demonstrate patience and resilience when encountering challenging reading and writing tasks. Multiple opportunities for low-stakes writing, discussion, and reflection create an environment safe for exploration of ideas, where questioning is a regular activity in response to texts, respectful dialogue is expected and explicitly taught, and students can engage the writing process as it intersects with other communication skills. For instance, writing-to-learn exercises as promoted through Bard College, have been fully adopted as a tier one approach to assist all of our learners. Students learn to cultivate their voice and explore their thinking through meaningful, sustained writing, which facilitate a student's individual ability to think critically in response to a text or topic. This writing then becomes the foundation for rich discussion and, through a series of prompts and collaborative interactions, is eventually transformed into a finished piece. Through these engagements in all grade levels, students are able to internalize the writing process from initial idea to final published product over their four years of high school. All of our teachers have been introduced to or trained in the Bard writing-to-think methodology, regularly practice the strategy during our professional development opportunities, and are encouraged to use the strategy in all content areas.

Finally, many students in grades 11 and 12 (over 125 students this year) choose our Work-Based Learning Program where students can pursue internships, work-study and independent study programs.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

We routinely seek student input when brainstorming ideas for improvement by surveying students at the high school every two years. In response to specific student concerns, we have designed programs that focus on positive interactions. Our focus on identifying students who may be at-risk in unexpected ways led to the implementation of the Link Crew mentor program. This program “links” freshmen and transfer students with upperclassmen focusing on having "fun with a purpose" while simultaneously developing student relationships. The program works to ensure that new students start school with a positive impression and encourage one another to continue improving our inclusive school culture. Students work together in a fun, low-risk environment that empowers students.

Mental health awareness has been part of our daily practice for the last several years. In particular, breathing and mindfulness practices continue to be incorporated into the classroom. This work emphasizes a deliberate, metacognitive approach to the learning environment, which can be frenetic and stressful. Additionally, therapy dogs are being integrated into the high school setting in an effort to build community while reducing anxiety among students and faculty. These dogs are being introduced during high-stress times, such as when we have over 400 students taking AP exams.

Something truly unique to a public high school like BHS is our daily FLEX period. The BHS community recently implemented a 30-Minute FLEX period between the 4th and 5th period of each day. This additional time enables students and their teachers greater opportunity to connect outside of the scheduled class time. Our master schedule has been deliberately structured to allow for every teacher to be available to work with students during this time. Students have the option to see teachers for review, make up work, obtain extra help, ask clarifying questions, or to eat lunch, exercise, play group sports, collaborate with other students on projects, seek out counselors for academic or emotional support, or to just relax and take a break from the rigorous high school program. Students needing additional academic assistance may be required to meet a teacher during FLEX similar to attending a class. Our library, computer labs, cafeteria, and all classrooms are available for students for independent and/or collaborative group study. Our goal of midday FLEX time is to create new opportunities for students and their own teachers to work together and improve overall student achievement and allow students to manage anxiety. In a 2017 survey, 72% of students reported that this time helps them manage their personal stress levels, and 66% report that the loss of such time would, in turn, increase stress.

BHS recognizes the incredible knowledge, experience, and insights that our faculty possess and actively seeks out teacher expertise when it comes to literally all aspects of the school. Almost all curricular decisions, instructional approaches, intervention supports, scheduling decisions (such as the creation of common planning time, etc.), grading practices, academic policies, and character education initiatives are developed collaboratively with faculty. We embrace our mission (BHS Believes that everyone has the right to attend school in an environment that is safe, welcoming, caring, professional, and free from harassment) and work together as an entire staff to make it a reality. When it came time to review how BHS would use an extra 30 minutes in its day, a team of administrators, teachers, and counselors came together to create a model for implementation. It was clear from the start that the majority of teachers did not want to simply add a few minutes to each class, but wanted to do something innovative and creative with this gift of time. After months of committee meetings, presentations to the greater faculty, surveys, and focus groups, the team came up with our FLEX period, a 30 minute time period in the middle of the day where all students and faculty are available for academic, social/emotional, and other supports. Feedback from faculty and students on FLEX has only been more positive with each passing year. For the past five years, teachers have also come together with building administrators on a monthly basis and over the summer to map out the professional development needs for the coming year. Based on District initiatives and emerging building needs, faculty craft what our professional days look like, and in many cases, lead the actual professional development work. In addition, teacher instructional leaders have been supported by departments and the district who inform, guide, and coach staff on changing curricula, assessments, and programs. This has been extremely empowering and satisfying for our faculty. As part of

this team's recommendation, we also give back four faculty meetings a year to our departments to continue their professional work. Lastly, BHS recognizes the main reason that faculty members are hired: to teach our kids. To support this belief, teachers do not have study hall, café, hall, or bus duties. The only contractual time outside of regular class periods that teachers are assigned is to be with students during student help times and FLEX time. Teachers ultimately feel a great sense of support and feel valued for the professionals and educators they are.

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

We have found that the best way to engage our community is to employ multiple methods of outreach and communication. One method is our monthly Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) meetings where important school issues and updates are provided. We send out a weekly electronic e-News communication with important information, upcoming events, and descriptions of weekly events and information. Furthermore, in order to reach as many homes and families as possible, we leverage 21st Century tools, such as Twitter, Remind, Facebook, our district web site, text alerts, and automated calls to emphasize important information and provide timely communication.

Another method by which we engage our families is through 24/7 access to course and assessment grades as well as daily attendance records. Teachers regularly report grades on our parent student/portal and many are using Schoology, a learning management system whereby parents and students can communicate with teachers, access grades, videos, homework assignments, and so much more. Parents know that their child's teachers are accessible by phone, e-mail, and are always available for face-to-face meetings. Additionally, counselors, teachers, parents, students, or administrators can request a "case conference" where every staff member working with a child is present to discuss specific concerns or issues with the goal of improving student achievement and emotional mental well-being.

On a yearly basis, counselors and administrators meet with parents to provide an overview and answer questions about college-and-career pathways. Additionally, administrators and counselors host grade-specific parent nights. These nights include information about graduation requirements, work-based learning opportunities, the college application process, and additional post-secondary opportunities. Former students and parents are invited to provide a perspective that school officials alone could not. Students share what they learned from their experiences in Brighton and emphasize for their peers that they take advantage of every opportunity we have to offer. We also host a College and Career night for both parents and students that offers over 16 different sessions that have evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of parents and students in the community.

Through our Brighton Support Team, new students are assigned a mentor staff member. These staff members meet with the student individually at least 6-8 times per year and communicate 4-5 times per year with their parents. Mentors work with students and families to engage them in the school community, answer questions, and connect them to the variety of ways we communicate student progress and achievement.

Parent representatives are also a part of the shared decision-making teams at the building level. They sit on our Principal's Advisory Committee providing input to the principal on school policy, procedures, protocols, and any other concerns they may have. Parents on the PTSA building committee work closely with the principal on student activities, building-wide initiatives, improvements to parent communication, and input on topics for monthly PTSA meetings. In each of our teacher, administrator, and staff member interview committees we seek the inclusion of parent and student representatives.

## **3. Professional Development:**

In order to foster effective and long-lasting professional development for faculty that would positively influence student achievement and create institutional changes in practice, in 2012-2013, we created the BHS Professional Learning Team (PLT). The purpose of the PLT is to "assist in the creation of professional development throughout the year." PLT has been instrumental in working collaboratively to create PD opportunities for staff and acting as an "educational think tank" focused on ways to improve the

school. Teachers that have been invited to serve in instructional leadership roles and classroom teachers have the opportunity to contribute to this team's work. Through our PLT planned PD sessions, teachers can reflect on practice, learn from each other, and share experiences about teaching, learning, and supporting students. Our interdisciplinary groups foster ideas and rich discussion from across the curricular spectrum.

PLT recommendations have had numerous positive outcomes for students and faculty. This is due to several PLT recommendations. Piloting small professional learning community groups has led to a series of innovative approaches to mental health and instruction. Our mental health and wellness includes a trauma-based approach to interventions, including diversity and planning groups to address what our students are saying and feeling while at school. Part of our approach includes opportunities for all faculty to participate in role-plays and discussions addressing student mental, social, and emotional health and to practice strategies for working with students using a trauma-informed, therapeutic approach.

Academically, common approaches to writing instruction and assessments are part of classroom practice, specifically, creating common approaches to writing in the disciplines using the writing-to-think methodology and recursive curricular reflection focused on creating greater inter-teacher instruction and assessment reliability. Much of our work identifying students who need unique instruction and assessment led to creating materials for tutoring and credit recovery. Our diverse learning population has benefit from the creation and support for credit recovery programs on Saturdays and the creation and support of on-line learning courses. Our summer school program has, in turn, been revamped, including a 15:1:1 ratio between students and instructors.

Finally, to ensure success for every student, PLT has been actively engaged in two major topics this year; an intensive book study and discussion on grading/homework practices to meet the needs of all of our kids and planning an ongoing PD sessions on the topic of diversity. Through the work of this team, recommendations will be made for specific initiatives, goal setting, and professional development moving forward. This is an exciting and collaborative process for administrators and teachers to work together to meet the needs of our ever evolving student body.

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

We formally survey students every other year to gauge the atmosphere and climate of our community. Results are shared with staff, students, and the community in various groups, including our Professional Learning Team (PLT), our Principal's Advisory Committee (PAC) that consists of student and parent representatives, and our Coordinators' group made up of our department chairs and administration. Solutions are collaboratively developed by all stakeholders to ensure continuous improvement in our culture, climate, and academic focus.

Administrators and teacher leaders meet regularly in PLT, PAC, and Coordinators' meetings to identify the emerging needs of our students, faculty, and BHS community. The ultimate goal of all of these groups is to make Brighton High School a great place to work and go to school, developing solutions to problems that are student centered, student focused, and student supported.

This year, a group of students in our Leadership Seminar class decided to focus on particular themes they identified in the survey. After making a proposal to our building leadership team, students analyzed the data specific to student stress, mental health and wellness. They examined issues most frequently noted as stressors for students, including homework, multiple major assignments or assessments given or due on the same day, and the pressure to excel academically while still participating in clubs, sports, and family events. Students administered additional surveys, ran focus groups with faculty members, analyzed the data collected, and summarized their findings. Students presented to our Department Coordinator Leadership team and entire faculty.

We have developed two additional committees wherein students, faculty, and administrators come together to talk about how we can make BHS ever better. Our Brighton Believes Day committee consisted of various club leaders, members, advisors, athletes, coaches, administrators, and counselors. The group was formed as part of our district wide service day initiative. Students were empowered to develop projects and

outline events for the day. We had numerous planning meetings over the span of 4 months. In the end, over 1100 students came together in a day of service. Each grade level had a special collection project and a grade level task to perform during the day. Students helped to oversee all events and were incredibly satisfied with the results.

PLT took on the task of offering professional development on various diversity topics to our staff this year. As a result of faculty feedback given to us in a fall survey, a diverse student panel of 22 students was created to offer their personal reflections on diversity at BHS. Students met with administrators, teachers, and counselors for over 3 months to plan a conference day in April. Students are driving the specific topics that will be discussed and will present to the faculty at the start of our conference day. It is shaping up to be a powerful day.

The current principal began at BHS six years ago. During the first two months of his tenure, he met with over 60 faculty members and asked them the following three questions: What makes BHS a great place to work and go to school? What areas need to be addressed right away and what needs to be looked at over time? What advice do you have for the principal? From that first year, the principal established the foundation for a new collaborative approach by creating a new mission statement that addressed the basics of working in a safe and supportive professional environment, establishing a more transparent decision making process, creating more opportunity for staff, student, and parent input, emphasizing a strategic focus on instructional and mental health approaches for all students, and creating a protocol for identifying and working with our struggling learners and transfer students. The principal meets with teacher leaders each summer to map out the initiatives for the year ahead and gathers their input on how initiatives should be structured. These initiatives become the standing agenda items for the administrative cabinet meetings, coordinator leader meetings, and committees. Feedback is collected from constituents during the year and adjustments are made where necessary. Additionally, during the principal's initial Q & A sessions at the start of his tenure, students asked for more accessibility to the principal. As a result, in addition to his open door policy, the principal holds regular and publicized twice weekly, hour-long office hours in places students typically gather, such as the cafeteria, library, and main hallway. Students and teachers regularly sit with the principal to offer ideas or simply chat. As a result, students understand that they are part of the administration of the school climate and culture.

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

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We have truly transformed our approaches, ideas, and beliefs to working with all of our students over the past 5 years. While not all students can or will pursue 2 or 4 year degrees, they certainly have a much greater chance of being employed or pursuing college and being productive members of our community and society by earning their HS diploma. The mission of the Brighton Support Team (BST) is to support the whole learner. BST helps to identify BHS students who are struggling academically, socially, and/or emotionally. BST works creatively with different stakeholders in a team model to implement interventions. BST participants range from administrators, counselors, teachers, and other staff members.

There are three small group BST teams divided up alphabetically and coordinated through an assistant principal. Each team consists of the administrator, counselor(s), a Skills Lab (tutor center) staff member, and 3-4 teachers. Teams meet once per week to review students referred to the team. Parents, teachers, students, and RTI members can make referrals. Cases are reviewed and interventions are proposed based on presenting issues. Not only do we take the time to address academic issues and concerns for struggling students, we routinely address the mental, social, and emotional concerns of our middle and high performing students who do not appear on a failure list. By regularly bringing teachers, administrators, and counselors together with parents on behalf of our kids, we are truly improving the way we address the needs of all of our students at BHS.

The large group BST team consists of our 5 administrators, 9 mental health professionals, and various special education or regular education teachers. This group meets twice per month to discuss the more severe cases involving program changes or tier 2 or 3 interventions requiring the expertise of the entire support team. It is here where we make the largest impact for some of our most challenging student situations.

The Brighton Support Center (BSC) teacher sits on all BST teams and attends all BST meetings. This allows each group to work creatively as a sub group while also maintaining a sense of uniformity. Additionally, the BSC teacher provides a consistent protocol for meeting schedules, recommendations, continuum of services, and tracking of progress. Kids needing tier 2 interventions are also routinely referred to the BSC in the hopes of intervening early, prior to examining more restrictive tier 3 interventions or programs.

In our first year of BST, we discussed 85 out of a total possible 1134 students throughout the year. Only 8 teachers made initial referrals that year. This past school year, we assisted over 180 students with 71 teachers making referrals to this collaborative team of professionals. Due to the work of this team, we have not only seen our overall failure rates decrease dramatically and our overall graduation rate increase, we have seen graduation rates for all of our sub group populations increase over the past 5 years.