

**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 Mr. Gregory Santoro

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

Official School Name Skaneateles Senior High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 49 E Elizabeth Street

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

Skaneateles NY 13152-1398  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Onondaga

Telephone (315) 291-2231

Fax (315) 291-2229

Web site/URL

http://www.skanschools.org/highsch

ool \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail gsantoro@skanschools.org

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Mr. Ken Slentz

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail kslentz@skanschools.org

District Name Skaneateles CSD Tel. (315) 291-2221

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Ms. Susan Murphy

(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>	74	62	136
<b>10</b>	58	54	112
<b>11</b>	63	63	126
<b>12 or higher</b>	69	65	134
<b>Total Students</b>	264	244	508

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 96 % White
  - 1 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 school year: 2%

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	10
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	12
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	486
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

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

Swiss-German, Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 14 %  
Total number students who qualify: 72

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %  
30 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>2</u> Autism                  | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>16</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	45
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 11:1

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	95%	96%	96%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	97%	96%	96%	93%	94%

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	127
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	76%
Enrolled in a community college	21%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	2%
Other	1%

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. 1991

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

We give 100% in all we do - in the classroom, on the field, on the stage, in the community. We teach, learn, coach, guide, support, lead, and care the Laker Way, 110%. The Laker Way is not just some of the time, it is all the time.

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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The Skaneateles Central School District is centered on Skaneateles Lake, often referred to as "the jewel of the Finger Lakes." The district's most important natural asset, however, is a highly engaged community of people who support education, the arts, and athletics; and a thriving set of partners, including booster clubs, the Music Guild, the Parent Teacher Committees (PTCs) and the Skaneateles Education Foundation. The community is known for being close-knit and for taking care of anyone and everyone who needs help in any form.

Skaneateles High School's 520 students are from varied backgrounds, and have a range of interests and abilities. Some have come from other parts of the state and country but most have been born and raised in the immediate area. Thirteen percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch. As they are exposed to new ideas and experiences throughout their school years, their hopes, dreams and plans expand and grow. Skaneateles High School sees its role as a catalyst to help all students grow to their fullest potential.

In the early 1980's the District developed the District Mission, Vision, Commencement Expectations and Strategic Planning Process, and started us on the path to becoming a high performing school. The High School was named a National Blue Ribbon School (formerly referred to as the Blue Ribbon for Excellence) from the United States (US) Department of Education in 1991. Committed to the concept of continuous improvement, the High School has since added more challenging courses, focused on professional development and alignment of the curricula with world-class standards, added programs to prepare students for fulfilling lives and careers, reached out to families for greater involvement, engaged the community in providing real-life experiences for students and created a climate of wellness and personal growth.

The High School now offers approximately one hundred courses: remedial to Advanced Placement (AP) and college classes, the Arts to Business and Engineering. It provides activities and services to support every student's abilities and interests.

This is a unique school where students are urged to find their "North Star" by exploring and taking risks, and where teachers understand the importance of "failing forward".

It is a school that is built on the premise that we must never stop learning. Educators learn from each other and from their students and former students in innovative ways. The importance of learning is so ingrained at every level that the Board of Education adopted this as its primary motto; "Learning is not just some of the time; it's all of the time – for all of us."

It is a school in which the path toward learning is dependent on connecting with the outside world. This is done in so many ways: a very active Rotary Youth Exchange Program, an exchange program with an inner city high school, job shadowing, experts presenting in classes, virtual and actual field trips, trips abroad, and more.

It is a school that believes in the District mission: to provide positive and successful learning experiences for all students. The schools will also strive to provide the students with knowledge and problem-solving skills necessary to contribute and adapt to an ever-changing world. Within a caring and student-centered environment, the schools will offer a balanced educational program with high expectations to challenge and motivate each student. The school staff, students, parents, Board of Education and community share the responsibility for this mission.

It is a school that embeds the teaching of our Commencement Expectations in every class so that students become Effective Communicators, Effective Goal Achievers, Critical and Creative Thinkers, Collaborative Contributors and Quality Producers.

It is a school in which the whole child is cared for based on the Six Dimensions of Wellness: Intellectual, Physical, Social, Emotional, Occupational and Spiritual wellness.

It is a school where students have gone on to do such amazing things as work for the vice president of the United States, the Olympics and the Peace Corps, lead Engineers Without Borders, and become bi-lingual doctors and teachers. They've gone to law school, studied culture in Kazakhstan, held internships in Russia, and have become epidemiologists in the area of global health.

It is a school where, at the end of their lakeside graduation ceremony, students run as a group – wearing blue and gold gowns and no shoes – down the aisles created by smiling teachers and parents to jump into Skaneateles Lake, taking a leap of faith into their future.

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

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

The foundation of the Skaneateles High School curriculum is the New York State (NYS) learning standards provided by the NYS Education Department, which inform a core curriculum in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, and Social Studies. On this foundation, we have built a fully comprehensive curriculum that also incorporates world-class content standards into the many courses we offer. Two Curriculum Coordinators (one for English/Language Arts and Social Studies and one for Science/Technology/Engineering/Math [STEM]) are tasked with understanding requirements, investigating options, aligning curricula across grades and within departments, training staff and monitoring implementation through a district-wide Professional Learning Committee, attended by teachers, administrators and students. This keeps us well aligned with the battery of state-mandated Regents exams, Advanced Placement (AP) exams and college level exams while our wide range of offerings fulfill our mission to provide positive and successful learning experiences for all students. Embedded into our curriculum are also the life skills of listening respectfully to others, collaborating effectively in decision-making, and treating others fairly and with respect in all aspects of life.

Our district Mission states that “We strive to provide students with the knowledge and problem-solving skills necessary to contribute and adapt to an ever-changing world.” In all our courses students are guided to become Effective Communicators, Effective Goal Achievers, Critical and Creative Thinkers, Collaborative Contributors and Quality Producers (our Commencement Expectations). Career exploration is immersed into every course, so that students can see direct applications for their knowledge. We focus on real-life activities that prepare our students for college and/or career decisions. The Job Shadowing and Counseling offices connect students with the outside world through group visits, career speakers, and shadowing opportunities. Alumni speak to our students about their high school, college and career experiences to provide them with insights into the options open to them. Through coursework, guest speakers and field experiences, we make sure that our students understand their future roles and responsibilities in a global community.

The English Language Arts courses available to students are Regents English 9, Honors English 9, Regents English 10, Honors English 10, Regents English 11, English 12, Creative Writing, Public Speaking, College Composition and Literature, AP Composition and Literature, and AP Composition and Language. The curriculum emphasizes reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and presenting. Skills in reading comprehension and literary appreciation are developed. Students receive extensive instruction in prewriting, drafting, and revision necessary for college and many careers. Listening and speaking skills are developed through oral presentations and group discussions. Courses also emphasize vocabulary development, library skills, and effective study habits. Interdisciplinary activities make the curricula relevant to real-life activities. For example, our English 9 and Global 9 teachers have been collaborating on an interdisciplinary approach to teaching standards using project-based learning. They have planned and implemented specific class projects that give our students a better understanding of historical and world issues through the integration of literature and written work that supports the social studies standards. In addition, the planning goes beyond specific classroom projects and introduces significant outside expert presenters and student presentations of real-world problem-solving to their peers and other outside groups.

In Mathematics, courses available to students are Math 9, Math 10, Math 11, Math 12, Regents Algebra, Algebra 2, Algebra II, Honors Algebra II, Regents Geometry, Honors Geometry, Pre-calculus, Honors Pre-calculus, Calculus, AP Calculus and AP Statistics. Real-life activities involving active collaboration are emphasized in all courses. An example in Geometry, students work in small groups to solve a problem where two friends debate the quickest route from their spot on the beach to a taco cart. Students have to decide what information they need to answer the question about which path will get them to the cart the quickest, then solve. This sort of application/transfer-learning task sets us apart from other schools.

In Science, courses available to students are Regents Earth Science, Regents Biology, Honors Biology, AP Biology, Regents Chemistry, Honors Chemistry, Regents Physics, AP Physics I, AP Physics II, AP

Environmental Science, and Ecology. Each course teaches the required content knowledge and the skills necessary to conduct and evaluate scientific studies, with a heavy emphasis on engagement in practical, real-life studies. For example, in Chemistry, a traditional lab on chemical titration was replaced with a real-world scenario where students need to figure out how to treat the wastewater from a manufacturing plant such that, after treatment, it can be disposed of through the municipal water system. In addition to the titration content, this redesigned inquiry lab also requires students to grapple with related real-world questions like how best to balance the tension between offering the most environmentally friendly solution and the most economical one. In Physics, our students study the physics of some phenomena in sailing which is a relevant, real-world connection given our district's location on Skaneateles Lake. Topics in ecology and environmental science include earth systems and resources, the living world, population, land and water use, energy resources, pollution, and global change.

The Social Studies courses available to students are Regents Global History I, Regents Global History II, Regents US History and Government, Economics, Participation in Government, AP World History, AP US History, AP European History, State University of New York (SUNY) Economics and SUNY Public Affairs. In order to expose our students to real world historical, government and civic learning situations, we have students visit historical sites and write about their experiences, we follow the electoral process and we have hosted a Naturalization Ceremony following which the presiding judge spoke to several classes. In Participation in Government classes, we ask our students to attend public meetings and add community service requirements to their experiences. We encourage our students to register to vote and we take eligible students to the polling place on school budget votes. Our high school has a very active and involved Model UN program and we continually invite local government officials into our classrooms to expose students to careers in government.

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

Our High School is known throughout the state as a top-tier school for the Visual and Performing Arts. Participation promotes problem-solving skills, collaboration, perseverance, focus, and dedication. The Visual Arts curriculum includes Studio in Art, Studio in Drawing and Painting 1, 2, and 3, Studio in Photography 1, 2, and 3, Studio in Ceramics, Graphic Design 1 and 2, and independent Study in Art. In grades 9-12, 142 students participate in Art Classes. The Performing Arts curriculum includes performance-based ensembles: Concert Band, Orchestra, and Mixed Chorus. Also, Music Technology 1 and 2, and Music Theory are taught. Students also elect to participate in many smaller ensembles. In grades 9-12, 132 students participate in Music Classes.

Physical Education is required for all students for 4 years, every other day. It is designed to graduate students who can make appropriate and enjoyable choices in order to lead healthy, productive lives. Activities include team sports and lifetime activities like dance, bowling, skating, golf, pickleball and self-defense. The Health Education class is required for all students and meets every day for 20 weeks. Its purpose is to guide students to become responsible for their personal wellness and health. Students learn healthy attitudes and goals through real-life experiences. Subjects covered in the curriculum are emotional/mental/social Health; physical fitness; nutrition; tobacco, alcohol and other drugs; diseases; reproductive health and parenting. We want our students to enter their post-secondary pathways equipped with the knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes, and behaviors in the NYS learning standards for health and physical education, SHAPE America's national standards, and the Six Dimensions of Wellness.

The World Languages program has earned the New York State Seal of Bi-literacy. Students are exposed to other cultures and to opportunities for global careers. Many students elect to become youth exchange students or to study abroad in college. Classes offered are Spanish levels A, 1, 2, 3, college levels 4 and 5, and AP; French levels 1, 2, and 3, college levels 4/5 and 5; and Latin levels 1, 2, 3, 4, and AP. All classes are every day for 40 weeks and taught through immersion in the language and culture. Students are offered field experiences, trips abroad associated with the coursework and electives such as International Foods and Culture I and II. French currently has 60 enrolled students, Spanish has 241 enrolled students, and Latin has 50 enrolled students in grades 9-12.

The High School Library Media Center (LMC) is the heart and soul of Skaneateles High School. The

faculty learns about new information technologies and resources for instruction including databases, NoodleTools, and TurnItIn. Instructional programs and up-to-date technologies help students achieve information literacy, including the use of databases as search tools. Small student groups gather to socialize, do research, have discussions and work on projects. The LMC also fosters an appreciation of reading and literature through book clubs, displays, and a POETRY OUT LOUD National Recitation competition. The LMC averaged 317 visits/day during 2016-17.

The Business Department offers courses focusing on careers in business and finance. Courses include Career and Financial Management (20 weeks), Entrepreneurship (20 weeks), Accounting I (40 weeks), Business Law I (40 weeks), Sports Management (20 weeks) and Marketing (20 weeks). Business 101 (20 weeks) and Business 102 (40 weeks) earn college credit from Onondaga Community College (OCC). An international management/marketing club for high school and college business and marketing students, provides students with rich and realistic learning experiences. In grades 9-12, 132 students are in Business courses.

The Technology/Engineering Department offers students in grades 9-12 the opportunity to explore a broad range of technologies in preparation for a college major, employment, or for personal enrichment. The Project Lead The Way (PLTW) program provides course credit from the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). Each of the classes uses state-of-the-art technology in a laboratory setting involving real life challenges. Classes focus on problem-solving and teamwork. The Pre-Engineering (PLTW) 5 unit sequence includes Design and Drawing for Production–Pre-Engineering, Computer Integrated Manufacturing, Digital Electronics, Principles of Engineering, and Engineering Design and Development. Other technology courses include Hydroponics, and Engineering Design and Development and Design and Drawing for Production for non-engineer majors. The Technology/Engineering courses serve 111 students.

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

High School teachers use a variety of well-researched, robust instructional methodologies. Central to our teaching philosophy is a commitment to meet the diverse talents, interests and individual needs of our students. Direct instruction, seminars, labs, experiential learning, lectures, small group collaboration, Socratic discussions, peer teaching, problem-based learning, individual and group research, and the “flipped” classroom are commonplace. Finding and using best practices is a priority. For example, the Social Studies department uses inquiry-based techniques based on the Essential Questions model, developed by McTighe and Wiggins, in which students research and challenge historical content based on a series of well-designed inquiries. Students use high-quality reading materials and primary source documents in all classes. Teachers use inquiry and problem-solving to involve students in real issues within the local and global community to build transferable skills that will benefit students in their future college or career choices.

Technology as a teaching tool is ubiquitous in every curriculum area and regularly used for instruction, research and production. Platforms such as blogging are used to communicate ideas and thoughts effectively and in an organized fashion. NoodleTools, an online program, is used for organizing writing assignments. Specialized technology is available in classes like engineering, art, music and science. There is a dedicated video production room funded by the Skaneateles Education Foundation, and a professional recording studio is in the final stages of construction.

When a student experiences difficulty in mastering a course objective, teachers turn to alternate strategies to meet that student’s needs. Students come after school for small group or one-to-one intervention. Teachers are often available during their planning or lunch periods, and will answer texts or phone calls in the evenings or weekends. Many maintain lessons and resources on their web page for student reference.

The Learning Center, and Math and ELA support classes, exist to assist any student who needs additional support in achieving success. For students with disabilities, there is an inclusive range of special education supports. In these settings, students are given assistance with test taking skills and learning strategies. Content area assignments and expectations are broken down and clarified for all the content areas.

Our teachers engage in a continuous cycle of evaluation, reflection, and revision of our curriculum based on

student performance data. Each summer, teachers review data from state tests and classroom assessments to identify curriculum areas in need of strengthening, and then make those changes. The NYS Regents Exams (the final exams in Regents classes) are a measure of how our students compare to other students in the state. By analyzing comparative data on student mastery (85% or better), we strive to achieve the highest level of rigor in our courses.

Teachers use projects, quizzes, tests, written work, research papers, creative products, performances, participation, and many other methods to gather data on student progress. Some students may also have behavior logs, daily/weekly behavior checks, homework checks and/or work completion logs. Teachers use these data to inform instruction and address individual needs.

The support settings use the same types of assessments as classroom teachers. During more formal evaluations, assessments used include individual Reading, Math and Written Language tests, anecdotal Information from teachers, classroom observations, vocational assessments, Speech/language evaluations, Occupational Therapy evaluations, Physical Therapy evaluations and Psychological evaluations.

Surveys and opinion polls are also used to gather information on a variety of questions affecting instruction and climate. For example, through a survey to all students 9-12 the Library Media Specialist learned that students were using google or Wikipedia to search for information. Her mission became teaching research skills using databases.

Our small class sizes, range of course offerings, and the rigor of courses set the stage for high achievement. We offer 15 AP courses and 14 courses that carry college credit. All students are encouraged to challenge these courses, and the new ranking and weighting practices do not penalize students for stretching into more difficult courses. Teachers constantly refine classroom instruction to meet higher standards and to challenge our students. For example, before the NYS Next Generation Science Standards were implemented, our Science teachers are using them, adding an increasing number of phenomena-based labs and lessons.

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## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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

Engagement in learning is extremely important for us and for our students. Emphasis is placed on the role each individual student plays in the school-wide community and that each student has something unique to contribute. It's apparent that our students feel very secure and comfortable within our school setting. Students strive to work to the best of their ability in order to prepare themselves for their future. In a demanding yet comfortable environment our high school is a wonderful location for students to develop intellectually and emotionally over the course of four years.

Focusing our strategic planning and our decision-making on the Six Pillars of Wellness, instead of just on academic success has created a school in which the whole person is valued and cared for. Our belief that caring for the physical, social, emotional, occupational and spiritual well-being of each individual is as important as academic success has led to a coordinated focus on counseling, health, physical activity, nutrition, career awareness, and academic, extracurricular and social opportunities for students. Every committee and every decision-making team begins deliberations by reviewing the District Mission, Commencement Expectations and the Six Pillars of Wellness.

Experienced teachers know what works in a classroom environment but it takes a positive environment for them to feel comfortable enough to try a new strategy that may not work as well. This kind of environment leads to a positive school culture that benefits veteran as well as newer teachers. There is a culture of growth and improvement in our staff that translates into a positive and impactful learning environment for our students.

We put a top priority on the relationships we all develop with our families and our students. It is those relationships that afford us the opportunity to help our students reach their goals in the six wellness areas. In turn, this has contributed to better academic performance, greater individual student satisfaction and success, and greater staff and student morale.

We are in the third year of our new policy for Rank and Weight. Previously, we not only had a very inflated weighted grade-point-average scale, but we still were ranking students based on that weighted scale. With concerns about the unhealthy environment that these systems were beginning to foster, we decided to explore other options. Much research was done prior to any changes taking place. Inquiries were made to approximately 100 colleges regarding their opinions. The feedback confirmed our suspicions and we therefore eradicated rank and modified a very old weighted grade system. Since making the changes, the tension of fierce competition has abated and more students are taking more courses for interest or personal betterment.

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

Our families and community are some of the greatest resources the Skaneateles High School has in fulfilling its mission, and we go to great lengths to inform and engage them. The district website and Facebook page are used extensively by the High School and by individual departments and teachers to convey information and ask for input. Through a community grant, the High School has a number of closed circuit large screen TVs in prominent places, displaying school news, celebrating successes and providing information about events and deadlines to students, staff and visitors. There are numerous events for families and community members, including orientations to various programs, help with college applications and financial aid, information about district and building priorities like building projects and strategic planning, and information on topics like social media and drug awareness. Families have individual meetings with the counselors, administrators and teachers on a regular basis to review the student's standing and wellness and for college and career planning.

We continually invite family and community members into our classrooms to expose students to concepts and real-life situations relevant to the course objectives, and to careers that are available as they enter the

workforce and college. We are fortunate to have parents and community members with an amazing range of experiences and expertise who are willing to share with our students. The Job Shadowing and Counseling offices connect students with the outside world through group visits, career speakers, the Alumni program and individual tailor-made shadowing opportunities. Students have shadowed tattoo artists, child care workers, funeral home directors, auto mechanics, computer scientists, farmers, farm advocates, politicians, educators and more. Our data base includes hundreds of local people who are willing to serve as mentors.

The Skaneateles Education Foundation (SEF) was established to solicit and manage charitable contributions and bequests for the benefit of education in Skaneateles. Its principal purpose and goal is to supplement, though not supplant, state and local public funding to enrich the educational experience of every student. Other active partners include our Parent-Teacher Committee, the numerous sports boosters, the music boosters and Skaneateles Music Guild, the Rotary Club which sponsors the Youth Exchange program, the Skaneateles Endowment Fund and Skaneateles Teacher Association which fund student scholarships, and many local businesses and colleges.

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

Professional development is a priority in the District and the High School. As our District motto states, “Learning is not some of the time, it’s all of the time...for all of us.” All teaching and learning is governed by the goals in our Strategic Plan. One of our most important initiatives in our Strategic Plan is to “know thy standards”. Our teachers study the standards and adjust curriculum accordingly. We have two curriculum coordinators, one in Humanities and one in Science/Technology/Engineering/Math (STEM), whose responsibilities include working with teachers on standards, assessments, high-quality impactful instruction and best practices for working with different student populations. They lead a district-wide Professional Learning Team. We also use a Board of Cooperative Services (BOCES) curriculum specialist who works with selected groups of teachers on specific curriculum projects. We regularly consult experts in our content areas.

The District provides opportunities for staff development through Superintendent Conference Days (four per year), release time for selected groups of teachers, department meetings, many summer staff development days, and staff attendance at workshops and conferences. The High School takes full advantage of these opportunities. In addition, the Skaneateles Education Foundation has provided 59 grants to High School teachers to develop learning activities that align with their curriculum and enrich the real-life examples they can provide for their students. Three high school teachers have been awarded the special Jean Graham grant for transformative learning experiences through summer travel in the pursuit of enrichment, global experiences and lifelong learning.

Our teachers and coordinators are all active learners and in turn bring their expertise to their peers. In Science, two out of our six teachers are NYS Master Teachers. One member of our Math department was recently the Vice President of the Association of Mathematics Teachers of New York State (AMTNYS) and also sits on the NYS Math Advisory Panel. Teachers have presented at state and national conferences and have worked directly on the writing/editing process for NYS standards and assessments. A former Humanities coordinator was president of the NYS English Council. Our Social Studies teachers have spent a great deal of time with experts in the field who have assisted them in creating meaningful and real world experiences as we expose our students to life lessons around civic learning, history and government. These experiences develop and advance our expertise, to the benefit of our students.

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

The Principal describes his philosophy this way: “When I was hired in the summer of 2013, I went on an interview tour to talk with current students, former students, staff and faculty, along with parents and community organizations. I wanted to hear all that I could about the school from all the various stakeholder groups. I wanted to know their feelings about the culture and find out what they were most proud of and find out how we could enhance our educational programs and school culture. The biggest common denominator throughout these conversations was that everyone believes in giving their best in

everything they do. This drive and passion for excellence was the thing I most admired and identified with both in my leadership style, as well as my own life, and from there The Laker Way was born. Here is what The Laker Way is:

We give 110% in all we do....

In the classroom, on the field, on the stage, in the community.

We teach, learn, coach, guide, support, lead and care the Laker Way, 110%.

The Laker Way in not just some of the time, it is all the time.

What is your extra ten percent?

The Laker Way enhances my leadership style as Principal, because I believe and want to instill in our students that giving their best, no matter the class or activity, will benefit them in immeasurable ways. I want them to be proud of being a Laker, and know that it matters. I want them to know that graduating from Skaneateles High School is an honor and an achievement. Wearing that jersey, performing on that stage, participating in that club, and giving their best with respect and honor, is The Laker Way and that is our culture and belief. Our Laker Way message is out there, it is our brand and our community recognizes and believes in it. Our students know what it means, and how it relates to their lives, not just in school, but in everything they do. The Laker Way connects us to our community, brings us together as a “family”, and encourages positive relationships.”

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

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A teacher provides the following description of the kind of school we are: “I feel the driving force behind the success of our [school] is the high expectations we have for everyone involved in our school community. We all expect excellence from each other. From our students, our teachers, our administrators and our support staff, we hold each other accountable and this environment creates a culture that allows us to communicate and collaborate freely to make sure we fulfill the high standards that we all expect. We all know we have the support of each other and the administration.”

We are all learners all the time. We are a community of learners. We are a family, and we leave no family member behind. We believe in high expectations, in working hard and well, and in supporting each other. We believe in giving each other every opportunity to pursue our goals, to take risks and to learn from our mistakes. We give 110%.

The key to our success as a school is not any particular teaching strategy, assessment tool or special program. It is the total commitment by the staff, students and community to the beliefs in the previous paragraph. Our District Mission, our Commencement Expectations, our District Motto, the Laker Way, the Six Pillars of Wellness - all are linked to our common belief system.

Every one of us - the principal and the coordinators, the aides and the teachers, the custodians and the counselors, the parents and the bus drivers, the community members and the lunchroom staff - has a role to play in the nurturing and teaching of our students. We are small enough, and we care enough, so that no student should be overlooked. To make each student feel welcome, worthy and whole is everyone’s job - all the time

Our common goal is to get better and better at doing those things that can make our students the best human beings they can be. There is no such thing as good enough. Even as the staff met to talk about what should be said in this application, they were thinking of new things to try, and better ways to meet student needs.