

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Mark Bayer

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

Official School Name Somers Senior High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 120 Primrose Street P.O. Box 640

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

Lincolndale NY 10540-0640
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Westchester

Telephone (914) 248-8585

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Web site/URL
https://www.somersschools.org/Do
main/8

E-mail mbayer@somersschools.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. Raymond Blanch

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

District Name Somers CSD Tel. (914) 277-2400

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mrs. Donna Rosenblum

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

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

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2018 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2012 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
10. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
11. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 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
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	137	133	270
10	147	137	284
11	126	128	254
12 or higher	146	132	278
Total Students	556	530	1086

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 5 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 88 % White
 - 0 % 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.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	9
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	25
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	1086
(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: 1%
7 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Japanese, Spanish, Russian, Albanian, Italian, Korean

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 8%
Total number students who qualify: 92

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
170 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>13</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>48</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>80</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>25</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</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:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	4
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	71
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	20
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	16
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	9

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 15:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	99%	98%	98%	99%	100%

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

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

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	284
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	82%
Enrolled in a community college	13%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
Other	0%

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.

Somers High School teachers, staff and administrators are committed to providing an environment that promotes learning experiences that will enhance the development of our students into caring, responsible and productive citizens of the 21st century.

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

Somers High School is a suburban high school of approximately 1100 students located just about 50 miles north of New York City, New York. The school is literally at the heart of the community and students and their families, as well as town residents, enjoy the many entertainment, culture and sporting events held at the high school. The school is located in the hamlet of Somers, New York which has a population of approximately 20,000 residents. The area's population grew dramatically in the 1970's and 1980's when a new Interstate highway was completed and more families moved to the area. Large corporations attracted an international corporate element to the community as well.

The high school is recognized for its great sense of community and spirit. With a focus on the "whole child" the school provides opportunities for students to shine in a variety of areas - including academically through such programs as Science Research as well as individualized and self-selected student internships in a Senior Experience project. It also provides supports to ensure that every child find success. A student success center, a transitional support program, and a writing center are three recent additions that provide timely supports for students when they meet with academic and/or personal challenges.

Art and Music programs are strong and valued elements of the high school program. Students visit New York museums, attend operas and Broadway shows, and have the opportunity to work with visiting musicians from a local center for the Arts, Caramoor. Our students have opportunities to travel abroad through the collaborative efforts of art, social studies and world language teachers. Students who participate in these travel experiences return with a greater appreciation of the language and culture of other countries.

A commitment to the service to others - both near and far - is a strong fiber in the fabric of Somers High School. Students in various clubs and organization raise money for needy individuals in local and international locations, they volunteer their time and efforts to build homes, clear land or clean up and rebuild after natural disasters. The high school culture promotes volunteerism and students find numerous ways to "pay it forward". Each year, students participate in an annual event "Day of Service" which was started to honor the victims of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

A strong academic focus enables students to challenge themselves with various electives and college-level course offerings. The high school has offered a wide variety of Advanced Placement courses for many years and has recently added the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme to its course offerings, allowing students to take rigorous college preparatory classes while in high school. We offer a pre-engineering program through Project Lead the Way, a variety of levels of World Language courses, several courses in musical performance and composition, and a rigorous set of courses in fine arts, fashion, and graphic and media arts. With a strong focus on college and career readiness, we guide our students to pursue their passions while encouraging them to take a breadth of courses in a variety of areas to produce well-rounded students.

With a focus on continuous improvement, teachers in professional learning communities seek ways to engage students through the use of classroom discussions, instructional technology and varied experiences (field trips, hands-on and project-based learning). There is a great sense of ownership and pride at the school and students often return to the high school after they graduate to reconnect with teachers, counselors and administrators.

Somers High School has a robust and well-recognized athletic program, with several teams and individual athletes holding regional and state championship titles. In addition to our athletics, we promote a rich and varied extra-curricular program where students learn about themselves and the world around them through such clubs as Culture Club, Gay Straight Alliance, STAT Club (Students Taking Action Today), RISE (Representatives Inspiring Social Equality), Mock Trial, and Model UN. Students learn leadership skills while promoting a positive school climate through an active Student Council and grade level student leadership boards. A large percentage of our student population participates in at least one of the many activities we offer and if there isn't an activity that suits their needs, we encourage them to take the initiative and start one on their own.

We have active and engaged parents who work behind the scenes to help support a variety of student programs in the school. In addition to our PTSA, which is the backbone of our home-school connection, we also have a variety of booster clubs, an educational foundation, and parent committees at each grade level to support class events that promote class and school unity.

Somers High School is a caring community of learners invested in helping each student find success.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Core Curriculum at Somers High School is influenced by the district’s vision, which identifies three key areas: 21st Century Knowledge and Skills, Social-Emotional-Physical Wellness and Global Citizenship. While the social, emotional and physical wellness of students is paramount and enables full engagement in the school’s learning community, 21st century knowledge and skills and preparing students for global citizenship are the areas most fully connected to core curriculum. Skills in literacy and social studies prepare students to be informed and active citizens and participants in American democracy and global affairs. Mathematics and science combine to open new solutions as we harness the knowledge and skills in these areas along with engineering practices and the use of technology to afford students a full STEM experience.

At Somers High School (SHS), we recognize the critical importance of strong literacy skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking - as we build curriculum and programs that are aligned to New York State’s Next Generation English Language Arts Standards. Every SHS student takes the norm-referenced Renaissance STAR Reading assessment upon entering ninth grade to ensure that those not reading at or above grade level receive support. The high school’s Success Center monitors this testing and follows up with students for progress monitoring should that be required. ELA teachers have mapped curriculum that is inclusive of a balance of literacy experiences and exposure to a wide range of genres and authors. The ninth grade “Personal Interest Project” (PIP) promotes student inquiry. The students are then guided to research, interview experts, document and finally present their work. Most every unit in ELA is thematic in nature and explores aspects of the human condition that are especially relevant to young adults such as “Collective Fear and Societal Pressure,” “Marginalization and Conformity: Finding a Voice,” “Human Dignity and the Struggle to Survive,” “The Power of Human Emotion,” and “An Odyssey of Self-Discovery.” These themes open avenues for interdisciplinary work and give students the skills to excel in all disciplines. Support for students as readers and writers is provided in the school’s Success Center and newly established Writing Center.

Social Studies curriculum is quite comparable to the work in literacy classrooms. Reading, writing, listening and speaking are critical skills in these classes as students engage with the New York State standards for Social Studies – History of the United States and New York, World History, Geography Economics, and Civics, Citizenship, and Government. Inquiry forms the basis for work in social studies classrooms and themes such as Time, Continuity, and Change, Creation, Expansion, and Interaction of Economic Systems and Global Connections and Exchange help students go beyond the study of particular events and think more deeply with regard to recurrent historical themes. Classroom practices that engage students in rich discussions include Socratic Seminars, small group collaborative work and student projects and presentations.

Extensions of learning in the social studies occur in various aspects of student life – most especially our strong student council and community service oriented HS clubs and student organizations. The New York State Council on Leadership and Student Activities (NYS CLSA) has recognized both teacher and student leaders of the Somers High School student council. Our current student council president also serves as president of the student executive board of the NYS CLSA.

Students acquire foundational skills in science and mathematics during their initial years at SHS and build on knowledge and skills acquired in Somers Middle School. Approximately 65% of ninth graders enter the high school having taken Algebra or both Algebra and Geometry in middle school. The remaining students continue their study of Algebra in grade nine. Students choose a science pathway once they enter the high school – some, having taken Earth Science in middle school begin study of life science, others study earth science, physics or chemistry.

Project Lead the Way, pre-engineering courses have been great places to witness the connection of science and engineering practices. PLTW courses include Introduction to Engineering Design, Principles of

Engineering, Civil Engineering and Architecture and Digital Electronics. Additional technology and engineering offerings include Electronics and Robotics, Foundations of Technology and Stagecraft (real-world preparation of the stage sets for the HS musical production).

Students receive great preparation for developing independence in their learning through the science research program, a three-year course open to all students. Science Research begins in grade 10 with the study of the research process and the building of research skills to explore topics in the areas of science, social sciences or engineering. During the three years, students delve into an independent piece of research that they design and conduct under the supervision of their mentor. Students in the program are encouraged to participate in numerous competitions and symposia both in the local and national level in order to present their research. The program has produced competitors on the national level (e.g. Siemens, Intel Science Talent Search) and the International level (e.g. Intel International Science and Engineering Fair).

A Wise Independent Senior Experience (W.I.S.E.) may encompass many or all core subject areas. Students in W.I.S.E. program design and carry out their own senior projects in their field of interest. Projects can fall into four different categories: an internship, a creative project, a self-improvement project or a service-oriented project. The experience culminates with an oral presentation before a panel of students, teachers and community members.

College and career readiness is supported through many opportunities for enrichment including a wide variety of both AP and IB courses in all core areas. Recognized as an IB World School, Somers High School offers students the opportunity to earn the full IB Diploma or simply enroll in IB classes of their choosing. Service learning through the International Baccalaureate Program, Peer Leadership, Student Council, National Honor Society and/or the various service oriented clubs or organizations encourage civic and global-mindedness and engage students in solving real-world problems.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Somers High School provides robust offerings in non-core curriculum areas with the belief that our vision for graduating students is that they possess the knowledge and skills necessary to function in a 21st Century Global Society.

Both the visual and performing arts are important components of our curriculum. Students have the opportunity to engage in a wide variety of classes in the visual arts that highlight process and creativity and often culminate with a public showing of their work. The district's annual art show is a highlight for high school students and the community at large. A yearly fashion show is the result of student work in Fashion Marketplace and an after-school club called Fashion and Textile Arts. These events are authentic opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. Performance opportunities in music include three main groups – string orchestra, concert band and chorus – as well as chamber orchestra, chamber choir, jazz band and several other student-formed smaller performance groups such as woodwind or string quartet depending upon student interest. These performance ensembles typically perform two formal concerts per year but also perform at other community and public events. Students also have the opportunity to engage in theater productions in front of the audience as actors and musicians and behind the scenes as directors, choreographers and stage crewmembers. The spring musical is always an extraordinary display of talent and the Sunday luncheon matinee is an opportunity to invite our senior citizens to meet and interact with student actors prior to the show. Students begin study of the arts in ninth grade and continue with these programs through twelfth grade. Both the visual and performance arts provide opportunities for enrichment with both AP and IB course offerings.

A strong and well-rounded, four-year physical education program includes the Personal Challenge Program in Grade 10. In this program, students are focused on the measurement and improvement of personal fitness and on the development of personal skills that help them to be more effective members of a group. A health-related approach to fitness is emphasized as students learn to use state-of-the-art equipment and set both short and long-term fitness goals. Students are required to attend physical education classes throughout their four years of high school. Classes meet every other day. In tenth grade, they also attend a one-semester Wellness class. IB Sports, Exercise and Health Science as well as IB Dance provide additional

opportunities to explore physical education and wellness for students in 11th and 12th grades.

Foreign language offerings include French, Spanish and Italian and allow students to continue their study of language begun in middle school or extend learning to a new language as upper classmen in high school. Moving toward a proficiency-based approach, our goal is to equip students with the ability to understand and speak in the targeted language. Students can continue their studies in college-level, AP or IB courses in the target language.

Strong Technology and Engineering offerings at Somers High School allow students to earn college credit through pre-engineering Project Lead the Way courses, or pursue interests in robotics or stagecraft. Computers allow students to perform many useful activities involving research, design and drafting. Student experiences are enhanced through the use of AutoDesk Inventor, a 3-D modeling software program and other industry-standard software, including: Revit (Architecture). Technology and Engineering Education can be viewed as the study of the human-made world. In Somers High School labs, students will come to understand how societies have applied math and science to create wanted goods and services.

Recognized as an International Baccalaureate School in 2017, Somers High School offers all students to earn an IB Diploma or choose to take a single or several IB courses in grades 11 and 12. The IB Diploma Program offers opportunities for students to explore different perspectives and engage in respectful discourse. One course that has been overwhelmingly positive and popular for students (and teachers) has been the Theory of Knowledge or the development of understanding how we come to know what we know. These types of experiences prepare students in significant ways as independent learners.

A wide variety of electives provides venues for almost every interest. Students can explore work with young children in Early Childhood Education. This course creates a lab setting within the high school with a pre-school program for four-year-olds who work with high school students under the supervision of a teacher. Students gain insight into the stages of development and use the necessary knowledge to interact with the children. They create and implement developmentally appropriate lesson plans, study current research in best practices, and conduct classroom observations.

Attention to the “whole child,” a key component of our school’s vision, compels us to create these many opportunities for students. An alternative school, opportunities for independent study, programs for students in transition (due to physical or emotional challenges) and rich after-school clubs for every student make the Somers High School experience a great preparation for college and career.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Somers High school is a high-performing school of over 1000 students in which teachers design, implement, and deliver lessons using a variety of research-based instructional practices. Teacher teams design lessons that meet the diverse and individual needs of learners so that each student can meet personalized instructional goals.

Mindful of the importance of rigorous and relevant learning, Somers High School teachers work to build project-based learning into their curriculum. This work is ongoing and seeks to expand on the success of programs such as Science Research, Twenty-Time Project (Social Studies), and W.I.S.E. (Wise Independent Senior Experience). Assessments in these areas are performance-based and criteria for scoring is clearly laid out with rubrics that are shared and sometimes developed with students. Student feedback is a part of this process and classrooms become learning environments where everyone contributes and learns from one another.

In World Language classrooms proficiency in listening and speaking is measured by assessments such as AAPPL (ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages) from the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language that actually require students to listen and speak in the target language.

With an understanding that students benefit from learning in heterogeneous settings, opportunities for differentiation include work towards developing “menus” of learning options and the creation of an

“Embedded Honors” course in the Humanities where students have the opportunity to earn honors credit by choosing assignments throughout the learning period.

Technology has played a significant role in supporting students at Somers High School. The Whole Child Study team’s approach is effective because of the implementation of a data warehousing system in which all student learning and socioemotional metrics are stored. Intervention plans are created within this system and established criteria for progress monitoring are contained within the plan, as well. School counselors then monitor individual student plans and the program is reviewed periodically to improve the process.

Somers High School provides every student with their own "personal learning device" - a tablet computer that allows them access to digital curriculum materials and provides them with the opportunities to extend learning beyond the walls of the high school. Ensuring that students understand and make appropriate decisions around the use of technology is a topic we explore in many of the core curriculum areas. Technology has enhanced our ability to personalize learning for students. Within the classroom, technology has played a similar role in equipping teachers with the tools necessary to ensure the success of all learners. Specifically, teachers use electronic means to assign projects to students, develop groupings aligned to instructional goals, monitor student progress, provide timely and effective feedback to students as they work toward predetermined instructional goals, and to communicate with students and parents. Technology provides opportunities for multiple access points to curriculum. For example, students using Microsoft SWAY have created class presentations, and teachers have flipped their classroom using the same technology.

Somers High School leverages assessment software to determine student competencies in the core academic areas of Math and ELA from grades K through 9. The Renaissance STAR assessment platform is used to establish learning goals so that students are positioned to meet growth and proficiency targets. The use of baseline and post-instructional data are periodically evaluated by department teams of teachers to assess the growth and development of the students at a programmatic level. A data warehousing system is used to establish “early warning” criteria so that interventions can be implemented proactively rather than reactively. Teacher teams use a collaborative inquiry process based on the work of Nancy Love to investigate student performance on common assessments, and to facilitate the continuous improvement model.

When students experience difficulty in demonstrating proficiency of targeted learning standards, intervention systems are in place to ensure that they have the opportunity to spend additional time acquiring content in a different setting. This setting, called the Success Center, is staffed by teachers from all departments and is available for students to take advantage of at all times. If a higher level of support is needed, a student can be scheduled formally. A “Whole Child Success Team” comprised of counselors, teachers, support staff and administrators works to assess the causes of student struggle and to develop clearly articulated intervention plans during weekly meetings. Once created, plans are shared with students to increase agency over learning, with teachers in the Success Center to promote a cohesive approach to meeting the needs of students, and with parents to promote family engagement. Some examples of learning data investigated by the Whole Child Study Team include common formative assessment data, standardized assessment data, attendance, nurse visits, course grades, counselor interventions, and parent communications. The team understands that student academic performance is linked closely with student socioemotional health, and the data examined helps to target interventions that address root causes of struggle, rather than symptomatic treatment of individual issues that often manifest as difficulty acquiring content knowledge. The Whole Child mindset is a key component of this team’s mission, and is in alignment with the Districts commitment to educating the whole child.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Students feel that the school is an extension of their community and more than just a school, it is the hub of their lives. Their feeling of pride comes from the fact that the school provides students with an outlet for their individual and collective voice. One of the ways the school creates a path for motivation and engagement is through the abundance of co-curricular activities. Students can find their particular niche and way to get invested in the school and the larger community. One of the most popular clubs at SHS is the community service “STAT” (Students Taking Action Today) club, which plans events like the Midnight Run, donating clothing and food items to organizers in New York City. SHS Student Government brings speakers and events to campus, connecting peers with topics and ideas that relate directly to their lives.

It is the curriculum beyond the core courses that also keeps students motivated. From programs like the International Baccalaureate to Engineering courses as part of Project Lead the Way, students can find a course of study that allows them to dive deeply into subjects while also learning broadly. Students use these courses as jumping off points for further investment in the school, organizing Poetry Slams as part of the IB CAS project, or designing and building computer stands for teachers’ computers as part of an Engineering and Design course.

One of the key ways that the community supports its own social and emotional well-being is through the peer leader program. Juniors and seniors mentor freshmen and new students from the time they visit the school as eighth graders and throughout their first year at SHS. The peer leaders provide social and emotional support to their cohort.

Just as students feel they are essential members of the community, so do Somers High School teachers. The system uses every opportunity to recognize the good work that teachers are carrying out every day. Teachers are recognized weekly in the Principal’s “Friday Flyer” as well as in the district’s “Tusker Herd” newsletter and Facebook page, which highlights excellent teaching and experiences that the faculty and staff are providing. Teachers have opportunities for support and growth through their professional learning communities and the learning coach. There are continuous learning opportunities through in-service courses that support both new and veteran teachers as well as those who are taking on new roles, teaching new courses, or seeking new ways to support students’ social, emotional, physical or academic success.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Somers High School has a unique bond with our families and community members, recognizing our inherent responsibility in a town that takes great pride in its school system. Directly engaging and collaborating with families and community members is a routine that we embrace as a welcomed partnership. Somers High School conducts a wide variety of parent and community programs, activities, and advisory groups. Through multiple communication media we strive to reach a mutual understanding of needs, engage in the most effective development of school initiatives, and maintain an ongoing dialogue of information to best convey student achievements and school challenges.

Partnership committees between the school, families and the community are a cornerstone of our approach to education. They include, but are not limited to, such groups as the PTSA Education Committee, the Health and Wellness Committee, the No Place for Hate Committee, the Somers Education Foundation, multiple athletic booster clubs, a booster club for the performing arts (STARS), the Somers Science Research Foundation, and Partners in Prevention, which is a drug and alcohol prevention coalition. Each one of these groups is directly tied to Somers High School. They each support and inform families and the community of their individual efforts, and the accomplishments and challenges students are facing in the arena which they represent. Most recently, the PTSA has partnered with the school administration to present a viewing for families and community members of the film “Screenagers”. This film was followed by a panel discussion with audience members on the issues presented.

Our school also routinely presents information to families and community members through annually scheduled programs. These programs range from daytime workshops through our College and Career Center, to regular evening programs intended to address needs at developmentally appropriate stages. These programs include a High School Orientation Program for parents, an 8th Grade Student Orientation Program, a Back to School Night, a school-wide Curriculum Night, a school-wide Financial Aid Night, a Junior College Night, an introduction to the Career and Technical Education Center, a Senior College Night, a Senior Mock College Interview Night, a fall schedule of college admissions visitations, a spring schedule of community professional visits, an alumni presentation to seniors, and a Pre-Summer College Night for Juniors. This represents a sample of the programs offered to address family and community needs.

Somers High School recognizes that the effective communication of these offerings and information pertaining to the community partnerships noted above is key. In order to inform families and the community, and to encourage ongoing and new participation, Somers High School utilizes such tools as Facebook, a Weekly Bulletin, a Counseling Newsletter, the Remind App, Yammer, Microsoft Teams, One Note, Infinite Campus Student Management System and our local cable network's Educational Access Channel.

3. Professional Development:

Somers High School (SHS) prides itself in being a professional learning community. Modeling our practices after the work of Richard DuFour, we strive to create a professional community whose reason for existence is to ensure the success of all student learners. To that end, our meetings, our plans and our conversations focus on student learning. Our guiding questions are the following:

1. What is it we want students to learn – to know, understand and be able to do?
2. How will we know our students have acquired the desired learning?
3. What will we do when students struggle to learn or have already acquired/mastered the desired learning?

Our professional development approach works to build the capacity of both teachers and administrators to answer these guiding questions. Working to identify student learning targets (question 1) teacher teams have been trained to use the Rubicon ATLAS curriculum mapping tool and have had exposure to Grant Wiggins' and Jay McTighe's Understanding by Design unit design model to develop curriculum units that utilize essential questions, identify related state standards and name required learning. As a result, all curriculum is mapped in the ATLAS system and is subject to revision each year.

In response to the second question, teachers have worked to collaboratively develop common assessments so that they can examine student learning using the collaborative inquiry model outlined by Nancy Love. The data derived from common assessments allows teachers to identify, at both a programmatic and student level, learning strengths and areas of challenge.

Finally, classroom instruction is the area where teachers can now respond to learning challenges in order to meet the needs of all students. To this end, Somers High School has, for the past three years, employed an instructional or, as we call her, a "Learning Coach," who works directly with teachers to create targeted and engaging lessons and deliver these in classrooms. The SHS Learning Coach works with both teams of teachers for data review and unit plan development and individual teachers for specific lesson plans, differentiating instruction and actual co-teaching or classroom feedback sessions.

SHS has department leaders in each of these areas: Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, English, World Language, Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Health and Physical Education and Special Education. These leaders meet weekly as a team with school administrators to ensure that professional learning opportunities focus on improved student learning. They then meet with their departments to both plan and implement professional work. As New York State has adopted new learning standards in recent years, the study of these standards and development of updated curriculum has helped to ensure that we are preparing students for success on state assessments as we plan engaging classroom experiences that build student skills in critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity. The teacher leaders also work on building their own capacity to lead change and innovation within their departments. Recent texts that have guided

their learning as leaders include Leaders of Learning by Richard DuFour and Robert Marzano (Solution Tree Press, 2011) and Common Formative Assessment: A Toolkit for Professional Learning Communities at Work by Bailey and Jakicic (Solution Tree Press, 2011).

Faculty meetings, after-school study groups, summer curriculum work, department meetings, professional development days throughout the year and work with the school's learning coach have contributed to the success of Somers High School students and a school culture driven by continuous improvement.

4. School Leadership:

The culture of Somers High School is one in which teachers, administrators, and support staff work together to support the whole child. We ascribe to the philosophy of distributed leadership, where all stakeholders responsible for the education of our children exhibit leadership qualities, regardless of the formal role or position they assume.

The building leadership team consists of the principal, two assistant principals, a director of school counseling and student support, and a dean of students. In addition to working directly with students and their families, the two assistant principals also oversee the various academic departments in our school, serving as liaisons between the departments and the administrative team. They help to hire and evaluate new staff and work with teachers on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In their work with students, they each take responsibility for two entire grades and move with the cohorts from 9th grade until graduation, thus maintaining a multi-year relationship with students that results in individual success. They are supported by our dean of students, who also works directly with students in matters of discipline, including attendance. Our director of school counseling helps to support our entire counseling program, including our College and Career Center, and also oversees the various student supports that we have in place to assure students find success.

The building administrators are supported by curriculum leaders who are lead teachers from each academic department. The leadership team meets weekly to discuss important matters related to the operation of the school and our curriculum leaders serve as conduits of information between this team and their respective departments. Decision-making is often distributed through this leadership team as well as through various committees focused on specific aspects of our school program or improvement plan. One such committee that is in place this year is a scheduling taskforce that has been working to research and investigate various high school schedules in consideration of moving away from our current traditional schedule of nine 40-minute periods per day to a schedule that encompasses longer blocks of time for instruction.

Our school operates as a professional learning community where decisions regarding curriculum, instruction and assessment are put in the hands of groups of teachers who all teach common subjects. Working together in PLC teams, our instructional staff seeks to always answer the four questions that guide a PLC: what do we expect our students to learn, how will we know if they are learning it, how will we respond when they don't learn, and how will we respond if they already know it. Working together as a PLC, we focus the entirety of our professional time on improving student achievement and supporting students to find success.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At Somers Senior High School, failure is not an option. We believe that all students can master a rich, rigorous, and varied curriculum. Our professional learning community engages students in challenging learning experiences that are personalized to their specific passions and talents. However, it is not just the curriculum that is personalized for students, but the supports each student receives as well. Our supports are designed to meet each learner at his/her own readiness level and help bring that student to the next level academically, socially, and emotionally. Our well-developed RtI process allows us to determine the needs of the students and provide necessary supports. Through programs like our Transitional Support Program, the Writing Center or the Success Center, students receive the academic and social-emotional supports that are personalized to their own needs.

Our Professional Learning Community works tirelessly to address the four most critical questions in any educational institution:

What do we want our students to learn;
How will we know they have learned it;
How will we respond when students fail to learn; and
How will we respond if students have already learned it?

Common assessment is the answer to the second question and is a critical component of the learning cycle. Assessment allows us to get information about how students learn, what students know and what they've yet to learn. It allows us to give students feedback about their learning and enables us to set attainable goals.

Our assessment system is a balanced system. Most time is spent in "formative" assessment – the assessment that informs teaching and forms the learning. Formative assessments include but are not limited to daily classroom questions, teacher conferences with students, classroom tasks and classroom quizzes. These checks for student understanding help teachers to adjust instruction to ensure student learning. Periodically, we conduct benchmark assessments. These benchmark assessments include common teacher-created unit tests, performance-based assessments and standardized local tests such as the STAR Reading and STAR Math. These assessments help us to measure student progress and allow us to gauge the effectiveness of our curriculum and instructional programs. Both formative and benchmark assessments are assessments for learning.

The final segment of a balanced assessment system is the summative assessment. Summative assessments typically occur at the end of a learning period and include final exams and end of year state exams. They occur on an annual basis and provide district and school accountability data.

Our Whole Child Success Team engages all relevant professionals in a weekly review of data and decision making to support successful learning for all students. Oftentimes, intervention occurs within the classroom setting with teachers who provide individualized instruction to support student learning and meet student needs. More intensive intervention – provided by a specialist or in a special setting - is provided for students whose performance falls well below the benchmark across a number of assessment measures. All students who receive intervention services are monitored periodically to ensure that the intervention is achieving the desired learning results. Learning success occurs when students receive timely feedback about their learning and all members of our school community work together to ensure that success.

The Whole Child Success Team may recommend some of the following supports for students through the RtI process:

Our Transitional Support Program provides support to students who have been absent from school for an extended period of time due to illness or hospitalization or who struggle to attend school on a consistent basis. A full time teacher in partnership with our school psychologist oversees the program. Students receive counseling and academic support with the goal of transitioning them back into a full-time schedule. The TSP teacher serves as a liaison to the students' subject teachers, helps students coordinate and prioritize the completion of missed assignments, and works with the student to become current in all classes. Depending

on the specific needs of the student, they can receive TSP services for very short or more extended periods of time.

A full time English teacher runs the SHS Writing Center. Students in any grade in any class can access writing support by making an appointment or by dropping into the center. In addition to providing support to students in the Writing Center, teachers often partner with the Center when assigning writing assignments. Collaboratively, the Writing Center teacher and the classroom teacher will provide rich and differentiated support so that all students can achieve success and improve their writing.

Our Student Success Center is a source of great pride at SHS. Throughout the entire school day, our Success Center is staffed by a full time ELA teacher, a teaching assistant, as well as English, Social Studies, Math, and World Language teachers. All students have the option to drop into the Success Center and seek academic support whenever they are free. In addition, at-risk students are identified by the Whole Child Success Team and are assigned to the Success Center for support in study and organizational skills, Math, or ELA, depending on the needs of the student.