

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Dobbs Ferry High School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 505 Broadway  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Dobbs Ferry State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 10522-1118

County Westchester County

Telephone (914) 693-7645 Fax (914) 693-5227

Web site/URL https://www.dfsd.org/hs E-mail falinoj@dfs.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. Lisa Brady E-mail bradyl@dfs.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Dobbs Ferry Union Free School District Tel. (914) 693-1500

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 Louis Schwartz  
(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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the 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	60	71	131
10	68	48	116
11	51	55	106
12 or higher	62	55	117
<b>Total Students</b>	241	229	470

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 6 % Asian
  - 4 % Black or African American
  - 21 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 64 % White
  - 5 % 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 2018 - 2019 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, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	468
(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. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malayalam, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, Ukrainian, Urdu

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %  
4 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 14 %

Total number students who qualify: 65

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %

62 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>4</u> Autism                  | <u>4</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>1</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>25</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>22</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>3</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</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: 9

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the 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.	35
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	7

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 13:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	99%	96%	97%	99%	96%

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 2019.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	129
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	78%
Enrolled in a community college	17%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	1%
Joined the military or other public service	2%
Other	2%

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.

The Dobbs Ferry School District strives to develop independent, curious, and open-minded learners who think critically, work collaboratively, act ethically, and are knowledgeable about the world around them.

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 Dobbs Ferry School District is comprised of over 1400 students and includes three schools: Springhurst Elementary School, Dobbs Ferry Middle School and Dobbs Ferry High School (DFHS). The District is located in the quiet hamlet of Dobbs Ferry, NY, just 20 miles north of New York City. A close-knit diverse community that values education, our residents have high expectations for academic excellence and all students are encouraged to take coursework that stretches them intellectually while allowing them to maintain healthy balance and overall well-being. Class sizes are small and according to parents, students receive a "private school education in a public school setting."

We are also proud to share that this is our 21st year of being authorized as an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School. In addition to receiving authorization for the IB Diploma Program (DP) in 1998, DFHS received authorization for the IB Middle Years Program (MYP) in 2016. The IB is internationally regarded as an academic model, firmly rooted in its commitment to providing students with opportunities to develop the skills necessary to succeed in a globally interdependent world. The interdisciplinary approach to the IB is one that is widely viewed by colleges and universities around the world as a comprehensive approach for success in the 21st century. The curriculum, authentic assessments, promotion of international mindedness, and thorough teacher training are among the many reasons why the IB is regarded by many as the gold standard of pre-university academic study.

All students at DFHS are IB students and all staff and students strive to model the IB Learner Profile. This year's sophomores are our fourth class to complete an IB MYP Personal Project, and our school continues to focus on service learning and student wellness as fundamental goals in our mission to infuse "IB for All" into all aspects of our school. Our transition to the IB MYP has also resulted in preparing more students to access and succeed in our IB Diploma Program courses starting in grade 11. All students at DFHS enroll in at least two IB Diploma courses starting in grade 11, with all students taking an average of four. Overall, approximately 25% of our students pursue an IB Diploma each year, over 50% pursue an advanced NYS Regents diploma, and all pursue a NYS Regents diploma.

The administration, faculty and staff work diligently to teach students to be problem-solvers, to analyze information, to become effective writers and communicators, and to utilize their curiosity and imagination in order to prepare them for the future. Because today's students are "wired" differently, we were one of the first high schools in our county to move to a full one-to-one Chromebook program, we offer a robust three-year science research program that complements our instructional program, we have over 30 co-curricular options for students, and we emphasize the importance of service learning as one of our ongoing school-wide goals.

Our teachers also employ a combination of innovative technology and differentiated instruction to enrich the curriculum and motivate each student to achieve academic success, as well as master social and emotional learning skills. Specifically, the very nature of the IB program lends itself to support student well-being, and our faculty and staff examine how we can promote wellness along with social and emotional learning within our existing programs without it being an "extra" for students. This includes mindfulness and meditation breaks for teachers and students throughout the school day, interest-based learning experiences, a focus on service learning, and an expansion of our counseling and student support department. In addition, our district is in the midst of designing a K-12 Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum that will provide teachers and students with more explicit experiences throughout our existing curriculum and academic program.

Over 98% of the faculty hold master's degrees or higher and teacher mentoring and professional development is a priority for all staff. The District embraces parent involvement and our PTSA, Dobbs Ferry Schools Foundation, and other parent organizations play an integral role in our school family. These partnerships are fruitful because of the talent and dedication of the teachers in our schools and the continued commitment to excellence by all members of our school community.

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

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

One of the many qualities that sets DFHS apart from most other public schools is that we are a full IB World School that features both the IB Middle Year Program and the IB Diploma Program. As an exclusive IB World School, we are singular in our vision, our purpose, and our philosophy. As an IB World School, we are guided by the IB mission to develop citizens who seek to create "a better and more peaceful world," and all teachers in our school design curriculum and learning experiences around this IB mission, as well as our district mission to develop "independent thinkers prepared to change the world." In doing so, we focus specifically on the importance of service learning ("think globally act locally"), student and staff wellness, the responsible use of technology as a tool for enhancing all aspects of teaching and learning.

All teachers at DFHS design curriculum and assessments using IB MYP and IB DP unit design planners that are aligned to both the NYS Standards and the IB Learning Standards. In doing so, teachers systematically scaffold IB assessment criteria, evidence as it connects to IB MYP and DP rubrics, and a continuum of Approaches to Learning skills ("21st century skills"). In addition, teachers meet in grade level teams in grades 9 and 10 to plan interdisciplinary units of instruction, and all sophomores complete an IB MYP Personal Project. In addition, all teachers open each lesson with a slide (and focus) that includes the following IB areas: Essential Question; Approaches to Learning; Key Concept; Related Concept; Global Context. Being consistent in what we communicate across the disciplines and grade levels promotes greater understanding for students while allowing them to see the connections between the different subject areas.

**1b.** Reading/English language arts

All English courses at DFHS adhere to both the NYS Standards as well as the International Baccalaureate Learning Standards. In doing so, our teachers design units and lessons that are directly aligned to each of the respective standards to ensure that all curricula are aligned both vertically and horizontally. DFHS offers 9th and 10th grade English courses at both the Regents and Honors level, each of which is aligned with the IB MYP Learning Standards, as well as two-year IB DP Diploma English courses at both the IB "standard level" and "higher level." All students at DFHS enroll in one of the two IB DP English courses starting in junior year. The teachers in the English department meet regularly to plan, design curriculum and assessments, and to modify lessons as needed with their respective special education co-teachers. In addition, DFHS offers additional AIS support for students who are in need of assistance in reading and/or writing.

The teachers in our English department employ a number of instructional approaches that are designed to promote high levels engagement and skill development in all aspects of reading and writing. Specifically, teachers differentiate by setting goals via reading and writing conferences and by providing tiered reading texts, verbal prompts, visual prompts, and ongoing feedback and writing support using Google Docs. Teachers within the department also differentiate based on student interest and provide opportunities for students to select texts to study and writing topics to pursue. As one teacher notes, "student choice is prioritized, though direct instruction in terms of skills within small groups remains present." This approach of flexibly grouping students based on readiness (ability) and interest is typical among all teachers in the department, and helps all student to reach their full potential.

The DFHS English department consistently uses data from formative and summative assessments to analyze student performance. One approach that is used by all teachers is a diagnostic pre-assessment that is administered to all students at the beginning of the school year. Each pre-assessment is skills based and provides teachers with a "baseline" in terms of student readiness with regard to specific literacy skills. Students are then assessed periodically throughout the course of the year in order to measure student growth, and instruction is tailored to the individual needs of students throughout the year. The assessments that teachers administer differs based on grade level and the desired outcomes of the course. For example,

assessments in grades 9 and 10 are designed using the NYS Regents exam and focus on skills in reading and writing through comprehension and analysis using a close reading passage. These assessments are aligned with the both the NYS Standards as well as the IB MYP Learning Standards. In IB DP courses, teachers administer pre-assessments to gauge each student's ability to analyze writer's craft using an unseen passage/poem modeled after the IB Written Commentary. This is graded using the IB rubric and used to plan instruction that addresses the specific skills needed for success on the official IB Written Commentary. This assessment is aligned to the NYS Standards as well the IB DP Learning Standards.

### **1c. Mathematics**

All mathematics courses at DFHS adhere to both the NYS Standards as well as the International Baccalaureate Learning Standards. In doing so, our teachers design units and lessons that are aligned to each of the respective standards to ensure that all curricula are aligned both vertically and horizontally. DFHS offers the full range of NYS mathematics courses (Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry), each of which is aligned with the IB MYP Learning Standards, accompanying Academic Intervention Services, as well as three two-year IB DP Diploma mathematics courses starting in grade 11. All students at DFHS enroll in at least one IB DP math course while at DFHS. The teachers in the mathematics department meet regularly to plan, design curriculum and assessments, and modify lessons as needed with their respective special education co-teachers. In addition, DFHS offers additional Math Labs for students who are in need of support, and offers leveled courses to ensure that all students are appropriately challenged.

The teachers in our mathematics department employ a number of instructional approaches to ensure that the needs of all students are met. This includes project-based and problem-based learning experiences that are directly connected to the importance of promoting "real world" application of mathematics. This is a fundamental underpinning of the IB MYP and IB DP. In doing so, our teachers utilize "flipped" learning approaches, instructional technology (ex. Google Sheets, calculator apps), explicit/direct instruction, co-teaching, and scaffolding of problems and notes to enhance conceptual understanding. In addition, all of our mathematics teachers have received IB training and regularly participate in peer networking and training to ensure that they are current on the newest instructional practices.

The teachers in our mathematics department also continually collect student data to assess performance and to differentiate future instruction. Both formative and summative assessments are administered periodically and include performance-based tasks, in-class exit slips based on unit essential questions, challenge questions to allow students to go "beyond" learning standards, and both midpoint and final assessments that are directly aligned with each respective NYS Regents and/or IB DP final paper. Furthermore, our department regularly analyzes student data to make instructional decisions as well as recommendations for appropriate placement. Recommendations are done prior to scheduling courses and students are appropriately counseled to ensure the very best placement based on student readiness, interest, and overall goals. This approach has also helped to proactively alleviate student stress while promoting overall student well-being.

### **1d. Science**

All science courses at DFHS adhere to both the NYS Standards as well as the International Baccalaureate Learning Standards. In doing so, our teachers design units and lessons that are directly aligned to each of the respective standards to ensure that all standards and curricula are aligned both vertically and horizontally. DFHS offers the full range of NYS science courses each of which is aligned with the IB Learning Standards, as well as three one-year IB DP Diploma science courses starting in grade 11 (IB Biology, IB Chemistry, IB Physics). We also offer Regents and non-Regents options as well as a Nature of Science elective so that all students can enroll in science for all four years of high school. The teachers in the science department meet regularly to plan, design curriculum and assessments, and modify lessons as needed with their respective special education co-teachers. In addition, DFHS has a robust three-year science research program with a dedicated science research teacher, Advanced Placement Computer Science, and a Advanced Science Skills elective for students who are preparing for science research and/or an IB DP science course.

The teachers in our science department employ a number of instructional approaches to ensure that the

needs of all students are met. This includes inquiry-based labs, utilization of one-to-one technology, online lab simulations, data logging probes, Google Expeditions, technology-based instructional games (ex. Kahoot, Quzlet), and flipped learning approaches. In addition, teachers gather data in many ways to improve student and school performance. Data are gathered and analyzed via performance-based tasks such as "real world" projects (ex. "Cell Campaign," Roller Coaster Design and Construction), dissections (pig and cat), Pear Deck, and IB Internal Assessments. Teachers also differentiated all aspects of curriculum and instruction using summative assessment data. This includes standards-based assessments, Test Wizard, item analysis, and formal lab reports.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

The DFHS social studies department was an early adopter of the new NYS Framework Curriculum and our teachers spent many hours planning years in advance to ensure that our students would be well prepared for the transition. All courses are directly aligned to the NYS Standards as well as the IB MYP/DP Learning Standards. In addition, DFHS offers AP World History to sophomores as well as multiple electives to all students (9-12) in areas such as business, financial literacy, and leadership.

The social studies department uses common language for historical thinking skills and focuses on vertical alignment when designing curriculum. In doing so, teachers focus on IB MYP "command terms" to further develop continuity, alignment, and deep understanding. Instructional approaches across the department focus on inquiry based lessons that connect to authentic learning outcomes. As an example, students in our Government course create Public Policy proposals that connect real life scenarios that impact local and state government. Our social studies teachers also integrate current events into their lessons while focusing on various enduring issues (ex. human rights violations, conflict, belief systems) that are timeless. In addition, the social studies department was an early adopter of one-to-one technology and believes in the power of using technology to enhance collaboration, access to information, and overall research.

The DFHS social studies department consistently uses data from formative and summative assessments to analyze student performance. As an example, teachers use Google Forms on a regular basis to gain insight into the day-to-day understanding of key concepts. In addition, our teachers gather data from performance based tasks and projects while analyzing formal data from standards-based exams that are aligned to the NYS Regents, AP World History Exam, and/or the IB DP exams. Teachers use data from these assessments to differentiate future instruction, design future units, and adjust all aspects of teaching and learning. In doing so, our teachers work closely with their respective special education co-teachers to ensure that the needs of all students being met.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

The IB MYP and DP curriculum that is employed across the board at DFHS is directly aligned to college preparation and to success beyond high school. The IB Learning Standards emphasize the importance of deep understanding of content along with the development of "Approaches to Learning" skills that applicable to any endeavor or field of study. This includes skills such as critical thinking, oral and written communication, problem solving, collaboration, adaptability, analysis, and initiative.

In addition, all of our school counselors are trained in all aspects of college and career readiness and simultaneously serve as the college counselor to our students. Our students also work with the same counselor for all four years of high school so that there is continuity, trust, and a consistent point of contact for our students throughout high school. As part of that work, all students utilize Naviance for college and career research and complete a variety of inventories and self-assessments to assist in the planning of life beyond high school. Furthermore, our counselors push-in to classes to teach lessons on resume building and career options. These same skills are further emphasized in many of our electives, including business and financial literacy, and for all seniors via "Senior Internship." Senior Internship is a culminating experience for all students to apply their schooling to a "real world" setting using the IB mindset of "thinking globally and acting locally."

Our school counselors also employ a number of programs and experiences for students in this area. This

includes individual college conferences for all students, organizing over 50 college visits to DFHS, a financial planning night for parents and students, a Board of cooperative Education Services (BOCES) technical education counselor presentation along with site-based visits, and Coffee and Chats for parents. This approach, coupled with our robust IB curriculum, has helped to ensure that all students are prepared for success for life after high school.

### **1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:**

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

A focus on the "whole child" within a small individualized school setting is what makes DFHS unique and one of the many qualities that sets us apart from most public schools. In addition to the differentiated programs within each of our respective major disciplines, our school offers a variety of experiences for students to enhance their education through the arts, health education, world language, technology, and other programs that directly connect to life-skills.

Students at DFHS access the arts in multiple ways in areas such as visual arts, performing arts, and film. In addition to providing students with elective opportunities in areas such as drawing and painting, sculpture, digital art, theater arts, and film studies, students have an opportunity to continue as performing arts students in orchestra, band, or chorus for all four years of high school. In addition, our school offers advanced academic opportunities in the arts, including IB Art, IB Music, and IB Film. Our students also participate in theatrical performances, concert performances, film shows, and art exhibitions.

Student wellness is also a top priority at DFHS and our efforts in that regard can be seen across the disciplines. All of our students engage in experiences in both health and physical education that foster the development and importance of life-long wellness. Our health education program exposes students to local and global health issues so that they may gain knowledge while developing positive attitudes and behavior. In doing so, we invite many outside speakers to work with our students, including NAMI (mental health), ROADD (alcohol and drugs), and the NY Blood Center (disease and disorders). This academic base is complemented by our physical education program as students engage in activities and exercise that promotes ongoing wellness beyond participation in team sports (ex. Yoga). This philosophy and approach helps to ensure that all students graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to be physically fit throughout life.

DFHS is also proud to offer all students with the opportunity to enroll in four years of language and has built a program to support this effort. As an IB World School, we believe that acquiring a language provides students with numerous essential skills and allows them to expand their perspective, learn tolerance and appreciation of other cultures, and deepen their understanding of their own language (vocabulary, grammar). Learning a second language also allows students to discover a tool that they can utilize in all facets of life beyond high school. At DFHS, we offer Spanish, French, and Italian all the way up to the IB-level and also introduced a IB Spanish Ab Initio ("from the beginning") course several years ago as a way to get more students involved with an IB language. Students at DFHS can also study multiple languages.

The Dobbs Ferry School district was also a pioneer in the area of instructional technology at the beginning of the last decade. We piloted our one-to-one Chromebook program back in 2012 and we had a full one-to-one program in grades 6-12 by 2015. The principal of DFHS, also focused his dissertation on how a one-to-one Chromebook program leads to the development of 21st century learning skills. In addition, teachers regularly implement technology-based approaches (see Part IV) and our school continues to be a leader in how to best use technology in a way that enhances teaching and student learning. Our district also has a full-time instructional technology coach as well as a dedicated and superb Director of Technology.

DFHS also has many other programs to ensure the success of all students. Our Life Skills program, for example, is a special education program that is individualized to meet the needs of students with high needs. Students in this program focus on many skills, including reading comprehension, mathematics, life skills, workplace readiness, and community based outings. In addition to our Life Skills program, we provide students with vocational opportunities via BOCES and specialized learning through programs such as

ACCESS VR and the Pleasantville Lab. Finally, our teachers have been trained in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) and we offer a "Strategies for Mindful Learning" course for students who have difficulty regulating emotions.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

We are proud of the fact that we make exceptional use of our resources at DFHS to ensure that the needs of all students are met. This is critical for all students, including those who are performing below grade level, as well as those performing above grade level (see 3b). As noted in Section 1, all teachers at DFHS use assessment data to identify the specific strengths and weaknesses of all students so that they may differentiate instruction. In addition, we offer many support classes and programs for students who are either performing below grade level academically and/or in need of additional support in areas such as organization, social and emotional development, and enrichment.

Our school counselors work closely with our teachers and staff to develop academic programs tailored to the individual needs of all students. In doing so, both general education and special education students are provided with a number of course options, including Advisory, Homework Support, Content Lab (special education), Organizational Technology, Mindfulness Strategies (DBT), Math Labs, and English and Math AIS. In addition, all teachers at DFHS schedule a minimum of three weekly "T-Periods" (extra support) for all students, and our school provides additional NYS Regents tutoring as well as peer tutoring for any student who requires additional support.

Our counseling team, along with our faculty and staff, also implements a number of approaches and strategies for students who are in additional need of support. This includes grade level team meetings that include teachers, counselors(s), parents, and students to discuss the individual academic and/or social-emotional needs of students to ensure that all students are successful. Furthermore, our team utilizes Response to Intervention (RTI), and our counseling team meets weekly with our assistant principal to develop plans for specific students who are struggling. Our counselors also have individual parent-student meetings for students in need of support, and our Dean of Student Affairs leads our attendance team to ensure that students are attending all classes.

Finally, we expanded our counseling and mental health staff over the past several years to include a third school counselor, a full-time social worker, and a full-time Student Assistance Counselor. Our counselors work closely with the same students for all four years of high school and our mental health professionals complement their efforts by meeting with students who are struggling in any area that is impacting academic performance. Our expansion in this area has also allowed our school to use more restorative practices in lieu of more "traditional" punitive consequences for misbehavior.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

Another feature that sets DFHS apart from most small public schools is the wide array of offerings and supports that we have in place to support students who are performing above grade level as well. As noted above (3a), we have a number of courses, programs, and supports in place to ensure that students who are struggling make exceptional gains across the board. The same is true for our students "in the middle" as well as our high performing students.

As an IB DP World High School, students have an opportunity to pursue a full IB Diploma starting in grade 11. This diploma serves as an international standard of excellence and is perhaps the most rigorous academic experience that a student can pursue worldwide. In addition, we offer all NYS Regents exams at DFHS and provide all students with an opportunity to pursue an NYS Advanced Regents Diploma. In order to support these pathways, DFHS offers honors classes in all areas, and has instituted a new science progression that allows students to choose between three IB DP science courses starting in grade 11 (Chemistry, Biology, Physics). In addition, IB DP courses are offered at a "Standard" (SL) or "Higher" (HL) level and we offer a number of challenging electives for students who are interested in deeper study in many areas, including

business, financial literacy, advanced science skills, AP World History (sophomore year), and AP Computer Science.

DFHS also offers a full three-year science research program for students starting in grade ten. This competitive science research program complements the IB MYP and DP and allows students to explore and research scientific concepts in an in-depth way. The rigor and quality of this work and experience is very much aligned to the types of experiences that students will engage in at the college level. Finally, DFHS offer students with a number of co-curricular opportunities to expand their academic pursuits. This includes peer tutoring, National Honor Society, Model UN, History Bowl, Legislative Branch, and the IB DP Extended Essay. DFHS offers a great deal for a small public high school, and we continue to evaluate our programs each year to ensure that our school adapts and adjusts to the needs of our current population.

### **3c. Special education**

The DFHS special education department provides a range of supports and services for students who have been identified as having a disability according to federal and state guidelines. Students with disabilities are assigned a case manager, and our school provides a variety of individualized special education programs, including: related services, assisted technology, and accommodations/modifications in the general education classroom and/or special education setting. The continuum of available services includes consultation with classroom teachers, small group and/or individualized instruction, and co-teaching in the general education classroom. At DFHS, all special education teachers have been trained in the IB Program and we have a full inclusion co-taught model that allows all special education students to enroll in at least to IB DP courses (English and Math). A range of diagnostic services are also offered by our school psychologist, special education teachers, the speech and language therapist, occupational therapist and physical therapist to assess students' needs and plan appropriate educational programs. All programs are developed using a team that includes general and special education staff, families and students.

To support our full inclusion model, DFHS enrolls special education students in content labs in both English/Social Studies and/or Mathematics/Science. Content Lab teachers review curriculum and content from each of the respective core disciplines and students are pre-taught and/or re-taught core material. Students also receive training in assisted technology when needed. Content Lab teachers also work closely with each student's IEP to ensure that individualized goals are addressed along with organization strategies, test taking strategies, study skills, and advocacy skills. Students also receive a .5 elective credit for enrolling in content labs.

### **3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered**

All identified ELLs/MLLs at DFHS receive required services based on Federal and NYSED mandates through a free-standing English as a New Language (ENL) program and English as a New Language Integrated Content Support co-teacher model and/or by a certified dual-certified teacher. Students are screened upon entrance to DFHS by a NYS certified ENL teacher using the Home Language Questionnaire and the NYSITELL examination, as well as through a parent meeting and interview.

DFHS regularly assesses ELL/MLL students both locally and through the NYSED testing program (NYSESLAT and Regents examinations). Students receive progress reports and report cards and are placed, as needed, in academic support classes in addition to ENL instruction such as AIS, our advisory program, and/or content labs (see section 3c). DFHS also offers new teacher training and ongoing professional development to teachers in order to deepen the cultural understanding and linguistic needs of our students. Teachers also collaborate regularly with our ENL teacher regarding specific students and their individual needs.

DFHS teachers also use data collected through assessments to track the progress of students and identify the areas of need to inform their instruction of ELLs/MLLs. Use of NYS approved accommodations are also provided for all local and state assessments. All DFHS ELL students have full access to all programs and services available to all students in the high school.

Former ELLs are provided with two full years of ENL support provided by an ENL teacher who is dual certified in an content area through a scheduled support course. The teacher continues to monitor student progress and collaborate with students' teachers to provide instruction to promote academic success. All DFHS ELL/MLL and former ELL students graduate from high school with their identified cohorts.

**3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered**

DFHS is well recognized within our county as being a fully inclusive school district that works tirelessly to best support the needs of all students in the least restrictive environment. The special education program at DFHS is noteworthy because all students are fully integrated into our classes, we do not have "separate" resource rooms, all special education teachers are "IB trained," and each teacher possesses a true co-teaching relationship with their general education counterparts.

As noted above in "Part IV Other Curriculum Areas," DFHS is now in its first year of offering a "Life Skills" program to special education students who had been previously out-placed from our district. This program had its inception at our middle school and has now phased up to our high school. The program is located in a beautiful wing of our school and includes home appliances such as a washer/dryer, kitchenette, and cooking appliances. The purpose of our program is to provide students with the "life skills" necessary for success after high school. Students learn to cook, clean, and the skills necessary for employment. They also run a small coffee cart "business" and make regular coffee and pastry deliveries (that they make!) every Friday at our school. Our "life skills" students are also enrolled in our music, art, and physical education classes.

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

DFHS puts a great deal of effort into fostering a school community that promotes student engagement along with a positive environment that supports our students' academic, social, and emotional growth. DFHS features both the IB Middle Years and Diploma Programs. These academic programs are differentiated in nature, and are designed to provide students with "real world" experiences that are performance based, interest driven (ex. Personal Project), and rooted in service learning ("think globally act locally"). In doing so, students are fully engaged and inspired on a daily basis with an academic program that allows them to make connections across the disciplines and beyond the walls of our school.

In addition to our academic program, DFHS has a number of programs to engage students that directly connect to their social and emotional development. With the belief that DFHS must have "something for everyone," our school features over 30 co-curricular clubs that are differentiated based on the interests of our student body. Each year, our clubs change and we create new clubs based on the interest of our current student body. New clubs that we are running in 2019-20 include GSA, History Bowl, STEM, Ecology, and Mindfulness. We also host a "club fair" for students at the beginning of each year for students.

DFHS also has a high number of students involved with athletics, with participation from over 70% of our student body. This experience adds further connection to our school while serving as a vehicle for uniting our school community. This is highlighted through our annual "MAC Field Day" in which our students unite within grade levels to compete in a set of differentiated events (sports, arts, performance, etc) in the memory of a beloved faculty member who passed away several years ago.

Finally, DFHS engages students with many additional activities and experiences to promote academic, social, and emotional growth. This includes assemblies as part of our "No Place for Hate" initiative, our International Feast, Spirit Days, trips to enhance student learning (ex. MET, DNA Lab, Six Flags), a student created Instagram page ("DFHVirtualCommons"), and our senior internship program. Furthermore, our school-wide focus on staff and student well-being has resulted in the creation of co-curricular clubs to support these efforts, student voice in academic programs, student wellness experiences (ex. meditation, yoga), and a full faculty staff wellness day.

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

At DFHS, we pride ourselves on the strong parent and community relationships that we have developed in order to ensure the success of all students. One of the unique features of our school district is that we actively include many different community groups into the design of our school. In addition to maintaining close working relationships with our local village government, including the Dobbs Ferry Police Department, our school community includes a number of parent organizations that help to support the various student groups within our community. This includes groups such as Trailguides (special education students), Spring (economically disadvantaged students), all of our sports booster clubs, and of course our PTSA. In addition, our Dobbs Ferry Schools Foundation has been instrumental in supporting many of our programs, including our IB Diploma and Middle Years Programs, that are designed to support the success of all students. All of these organizations have been instrumental to our school becoming a true "IB for All" community that supports the success of all students.

In addition, we work to include community, parent, and student "voice" so that there is shared decision making within our leadership structure. This includes our school-based leadership team (Compact Committee), our International Baccalaureate Diploma Program Committee, all of our hiring committees, and our survey/feedback platforms such as ThoughtExchange. In 2020-21, our school is investigating Challenge Success as another way to further include parents, teachers, students, and community members into our decision making and leadership model.

Perhaps the greatest quality that sets DFHS apart is our differentiated approach to communication.

Exceptional communication with parents and students is a point of pride for all staff members at DFHS and all members of our school community are informed as a result. As an example, DFHS was one of the early educational pioneers with regard to using social media as a vehicle for communicating important information, including the accomplishments of our students, with all members of the school community. Our DFHS Facebook page was created in 2013, and we also share information via Twitter, Instagram, and a Principal's Blog. Our high school website was also redesigned several years ago and is a "go to" place for all parents and students who need information. Furthermore, student achievements and/or challenges are shared with parents via our Parent Portal and by all our teachers via Google Classroom. Being a full one-to-one Chromebook school has greatly supported these efforts. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our administration and staff prides itself in being quick and immediately responsive all all parent questions and concerns that are shared via email. In fact, the building administration is 24/7 in this regard.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Creating an environment that honors our talented teachers is another of one of the top priorities for all of us at DFHS. In doing so, we have created a professional culture at DFHS that allows teachers to take control of their own learning in very much the same way that we challenge our students. It is our belief that teachers who are valued and supported feel higher rates of intrinsic reward, which will in turn translates to a better overall climate throughout our school, within our classroom, and for all of our students. This not only leads to higher academic success for all students, but also reductions in stress, anxiety, and anything else that might negatively contribute to overall student and teacher well-being.

Our approach to professional development is just one of the many ways that we have created an environment where teachers feel valued and supported. At DFHS, professional development takes many forms, and all are tailored to both the individual needs and interests of our teachers. As an example, all teachers regularly attend IB DP and IB MYP training, including our special education staff and school counselors, and all members of our faculty have been "IB trained." This is a critical component of our "IB for All" mission and has helped to ensure that all teachers are aligned with our school vision. In addition, our school-based professional development experiences are always varied and training is never delivered in a "one size fits all" approach. We regularly incorporate menu-based workshops that are facilitated by both teachers and students, EdCamps, one-on-one and small group trainings, and department specific professional development that is organized by our teacher leaders.

We also place a strong emphasis on teacher well-being in order to ensure that our staff knows that they are valued and supported. For example, we have facilitated numerous workshops and experiences for teachers that have focused on meditation, yoga, and mindfulness. This served as a welcome escape from the day-to-day stress that teachers face and directly translates to a more relaxed environment in our classrooms for our students. Learning "by doing" also provides teachers with a new set of skills so that they are now regularly incorporating breathing and mindfulness into their daily lessons. This year, our district expanded upon this by having a district-wide faculty wellness day so that teachers could engage in physical activity in addition to the other types of mindfulness activities that they are now accustomed to doing. This approach once again emphasized the importance of valuing and supporting the wellness of all members of our school community, including our teachers and staff.

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

A great deal of our success at DFHS can be directly connected to the leadership model that is in place and how it allows for empowerment at all levels of the organization. Our principal is now in his ninth year and leads the high school with the philosophy that teachers and staff are talented professionals who will excel within a structure that promotes empowerment, growth, communication, reward, and a positive school culture. This philosophy is shared by our assistant principal, and she has worked closely alongside our principal for the past eight years to build a structure that supports this belief system.

At DFHS, all professionals are considered to be "experts" in their respective areas and they are looked upon by the administration as vital members of the school community as a result. Together, as a team, all members of the organization work to ensure that our policies, academic programs, and resources are best

maximized to ensure the success of all students. The "system" within the high school includes many key members, including a Dean of Student Affairs, teacher leaders who take on many leadership roles beyond the scope of teaching, directors (athletic and special education), International Baccalaureate coordinators, a pupil personnel team, a safety and security team, technology coaches, and much more. Within this system, the principal communicates with all members of the organization and has a true "open door" policy so that school leaders, teachers, and students have easy access to enter and ask a question or share an idea at any point in a school day. In addition, the school administration has fully empowered all members of the staff to make decisions, to take risks, and to seek resources, support, and training as needed.

As a result of the effectiveness of the leadership structure, parents and students are well supported and are able to easily navigate our school system. In many ways, our high school is atypical of most others in our county in that there is very little "red tape," parents and students have full access to all members of the organization, and there is a strong positive feeling about the high school in our community as a result. This approach has resulted in teachers who continue to develop a wonderful student-centered curriculum that allows all students to maximize their full potential.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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There are so many noteworthy features that contribute to DFHS standing out as a "model" high school. Perhaps the most distinctive is the fact that DFHS is a true "IB for All" school. Too often, high schools are not fully inclusive and there are clear "tracks" that exist that favor some while leaving others behind. At DFHS, all students are "IB students" and this mindset is instilled on the first day that students enter as freshmen. As an IB MYP School, all students engage with a robust IB curriculum that culminates with the completion of an interest and research-based Personal Project that is completed by all students in grade ten.

From the first day that he began in 2011, our principal has been dedicated to ensuring that all students successfully access the IB Diploma Program starting in grade 11. To accomplish this, a great deal of curriculum work was done with teachers in grades 9-10 to design both subject-specific and interdisciplinary units of instruction in order to ensure that students were best prepared for the rigors of the IB DP starting in grade 11. Simultaneously, all faculty members received IB training, including special education teachers and counselors, and the IB DP was expanded to include co-taught sections, more IB DP course options, more course options in grades 9-10, two-year IB DP courses, and an expansion of the arts and languages. By 2015, all students at DFHS were taking a minimum of two IB DP courses (English and Math), with all students taking an average of four. The leadership model that was discussed in Part V (above) directly supported this work, and our authorization as an IB MYP School in 2016 further enhanced these efforts.

Our commitment to "IB for All" has truly set DFHS apart from most public schools due to the fact that we successfully engage all students with a robust "college level" curriculum that truly prepares students for success in whatever path they pursue upon graduation. The IB curriculum is skills driven, performance based, and is designed to develop a citizenry that is determined to create a "better and more peaceful world." Given that, we are proud to be a true IB World School and not just a public high school that offers an IB program. This major distinction is truly what makes Dobbs Ferry High School a special place to be for all of our students.