

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Sallie B Howard Charter School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1004 Herring Avenue E  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Wilson                      State NC                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 27893-3311

County Wilson

Telephone (252) 293-4150                      Fax (252) 293-4151

Web site/URL https://salliebhowardschool.com/                      E-mail sfoster@sallieb.net

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. JoAnne Woodard                      E-mail jwoodard@sallieb.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Sallie B. Howard Charter School (98A)                      Tel. (252) 293-4150

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

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Maurice Barnes  
(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, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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 current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

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, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	62	52	114
1	55	56	111
2	54	61	115
3	62	62	124
4	47	69	116
5	47	68	115
6	54	60	114
7	43	68	111
8	42	47	89
9	12	31	43
10	5	8	13
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	483	582	1065

\*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
  - 0 % Asian
  - 59 % Black or African American
  - 35 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 3 % White
  - 3 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 17%

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

This includes the 8th graders that transferred out to go to high school prior to the 2020-2021 school year.

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	171
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	171
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	1030
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.17
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	17

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

Spanish, French, Wolof, Punjabi and Hindi

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 14 %  
153 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 78 %

Total number students who qualify: 830

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %  
105 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <u>18</u> Autism                  | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                 | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness           | <u>20</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>6</u> Developmental Delay      | <u>31</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>23</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: 24
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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	6
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	32
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	19
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	23
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 27:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	95%	94%	93%	94%	93%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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 2020.

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

To provide every child – privileged or underprivileged – with the kind of education that nurtures their gifts, talents, and potential and enables them to become more than they ever thought they would be.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Our school, including all grades kindergarten to 10th, has operated in fully remote, online teaching and learning for the 2020-2021 school year. Students receive live instruction via Zoom for 4-5 hours each day. At the beginning of the school year, there were plans to bring kindergarten students into the building using the hybrid model. These discussions happened at the leadership and board level for several weeks. Given the circumstances we were living in and the parent input collected during the first two quarters, we decided to keep our school 100% online. We occasionally allow small groups of students to come to the school for instructional activities such as state testing, rehearsals for electives like Dance or Theatre, or to perform experiments in the science lab.

17. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

We use a lottery system. Parents of existing students must re-enroll their child(ren) each year during a Spring enrollment period between February and April. Parents of new applicants must register to enter the lottery pool beginning in February. From the re-enrollment pool, we know how many spaces are available for new students. The lottery is conducted in May to accept new students.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Remember the classmates who were just as smart or talented as you, but didn't get the opportunities or support you had? If only someone had taken an interest in them, believed in them, encouraged them, or opened doors for them to develop their gifts, talents, and intelligences, they might have become more than they initially believed they could.

If you could reach back and be that caring and committed person who helped those classmates recalculate their pathway to the future, no doubt you would.

At Sallie B. Howard School for the Arts and Science, we are that caring and committed community. Established in 1997, we are a free, public charter school in Wilson, NC, a rural, low-wealth area located an hour outside of our state's capital. We serve over 1000 students, primarily African American and Hispanic, in grades K-10, and we offer a newly-launched high school biotechnology program. We are named after a local legend – Mrs. Sallie Baldwin Howard – who was born in Wilson and went on to become an actress, playwright, educator, and world traveler.

Sallie B. Howard students are inquisitive, energetic and proud. There is no shortage of talent among them, but in this small town, there is a systemic deficit in opportunity. That is where Sallie B. Howard School comes in.

We provide students with opportunities they would not have access to because of income. Our curriculum allows students to discover and develop their talents beyond reading and math. Whether it's in the sciences, visual or performing arts, technology or sports, there are so many areas at Sallie B. Howard where students can thrive. Our curriculum approach is inspired by psychologist Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which acknowledges a variety of human abilities: visual-spatial, linguistic-verbal, interpersonal, musical, logical-mathematical, etc.

Our goal is to engage all students through a diverse array of educational experiences – study abroad, arts programs, STEM exposure, an international faculty – to help them build confidence and generate success in their academic journey.

Michelle Obama often shares how she did not come from wealth or privilege: "Education got me here," she says. Indeed, we believe education is the great equalizer and has the power to transform lives and strengthen communities. However, an education is only as good as its teachers and staff. Our faculty at Sallie B. Howard consists of some of the most passionate, hard-working educators in the industry. We employ teachers from all over the world – Jamaica, India, the Philippines, Colombia, Mexico, South Africa and more. They're not only highly-trained and experienced, but they bring a worldly perspective to the classroom. Their presence helps foster an environment where different cultures, accents, languages and experiences are the norm, and students learn to see themselves as part of a global community.

We have long invested in the philosophy of a global education. Our study abroad program was written into our original charter in 1997 and launched in 1999. Since then, our students have traveled to Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, Mexico, India, China, Alaska, Australia, Cuba and South Africa. Every two years, we designate a country to travel to and invite middle school students to submit a research paper on that country and a personal statement on what traveling to that country will mean to them. Ten students are selected and all expenses (except the passport) are paid by the school. Students keep a journal during the trip and document their travels in a booklet assembled upon their return. These booklets remain in our library collection for all students to read and enjoy.

For over 20 years, we've worked hard to establish a culture that embraces diversity, creativity, excellence, and hard work. This ethos was indeed put to the test in 2020, as the pandemic challenged every aspect of our educational system. In March 2020, we went into 100% remote instruction and have remained there ever since. We vowed to keep our academic expectations high and maintain our curriculum traditions such as our arts electives, quarterly performances (Winter Recital, Dance Festival, Spring Concert, Art Gala), honor roll

celebrations and extracurricular activities (Science Fair, Spelling Bee, Oratorical Contest, etc). We continue to test and prepare students for end-of-quarter/end-of-grade exams. We've provided Chromebooks and iPads to all students and WiFi hotspots to homes with no Internet access. We set up a Tech Support team to help parents and students with device and connectivity issues, provided resources for free supervised remote learning programs and created safe spaces in our school building for struggling students to log into remote classes. We also extended the hours of our in-house therapist to make free counseling services more accessible to parents and students.

These circumstances have bonded our school together as a community. Our parent engagement is stronger, our technology proficiency has improved and our vision is even clearer. We only want the best for our children – a promise we strive to uphold every day.



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

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

Like most educational institutions around the world, Sallie B. Howard School of Arts and Science (SBH) had to adapt to the new reality created by 2020's global health crisis. While our normal in-person instruction model shifted to a fully remote schedule for all grades K-10, we kept our core curriculum and academic expectations the same.

Students receive 4-5 hours of live synchronous instruction daily (core classes and electives) on Zoom versus assignment-based asynchronous learning. Students in grades 2-10 attend four core classes of reading/ELA, math, science and social studies and an arts elective (or "Specials"). K-1 students also attend these classes (minus Specials), but in shorter periods with frequent breaks.

We invested in devices and accessories (extra monitors, projectors, web cameras, headsets with mics) and purchased online tools like Seesaw, Jamboard, Nearpod and Google Classroom to set up effective and engaging virtual classrooms. Classrooms are mixed with students with different learning abilities. Both Exceptional Children (EC) and English Second Language (ESL) resource teachers are on hand to assist students who need extra support. Regular classroom teachers have also set aside an intervention plan to be delivered during small group instruction times.

Even with these modifications, our instructional approach to teaching and learning has not changed. Our philosophy at SBH is that all students can learn if instructed explicitly and with a sense of urgency. We have a culture of high expectations designed to motivate and prepare students to meet rigorous academic standards and learn the value of hard work and commitment.

Our curriculum model is a combination of explicit and inquiry-based teaching that includes project-based learning. We follow the state's teaching standards for reading, math, science and social studies for all grade levels and strive to ensure that each child masters the fundamentals for each subject.

In grades K-2, phonemic awareness, letter recognition and vocabulary are taught for reading; students practice crafting simple sentences for writing. Everyday math principles such as counting (in 10s and 100s), addition and subtraction, measuring, comparing and contrasting as well as telling time in minutes and quarter hours are also taught. Mental math is encouraged. K-2 students experience science through exploring the world around them; they observe the weather, compare living and non-living things, describe the characteristics of animals and complete projects such as hatching chicks in incubators. In social studies, students learn the lives of prominent figures in history; they read maps, study land features and discuss how people grow and change through life events.

In grades 3-5, students are expected to be more logical and analytical in their approach to each subject. They are required to prove their responses by providing evidence. These "work habits" are especially emphasized in essay writing exercises. Students learn to read a variety of texts (dramas, short stories, fables) and identify themes, character attributes and narrative structure. Standard grammar conventions are taught along with handwriting and spelling. Math instruction at this level is application-based with an emphasis on understanding the "why" of certain principles. Multiplication and division are mastered in 3rd grade using area models; measurement conversions, fractions and geometry are practiced in 4th and 5th. Physical science, earth science and life science are examined through various quarterly projects and experiments. Third graders discuss civics and community and how individuals shape history. North Carolina history and government are covered in grade 4; U.S. History is taught in grade 5.

Grades 6-8 build upon the concepts learned in prior grade levels. The complexity of reading texts increases and students are tasked with having to analyze and evaluate central ideas and character motivations. Writing assignments require students to analyze, explain and defend their stance on various topics. Math instruction involves projects that demonstrate how math is applied in the real world. We dive deeper into fractions and add functions, equations, expressions and graphing calculators into the mix. In science, we continue exploring physical, earth and life sciences and often integrate the arts to teach complex ideas. For example,

we analyzed Newton's 2nd Law using the "Three Little Pigs" fairytale and demonstrated peristalsis through visual art. In social studies, students discover ancient Africa and Asia, examine European world history and study geography; they channel their learnings in research reports and class projects.

Grades 9-10 are all about deeper analysis and application of curriculum standards. At this level, students take English I and II and are able to read and comprehend texts with multi-layered themes and evaluate the nuances in character development and reasoning. They write both formal reports using MLA/APA guidelines and craft narrative pieces illustrating personal and fictional experiences. Freshmen study earth and environmental science and sophomores take biology, where cell function and structure are discussed as well as ecology, evolution, genetics and molecular biology. These classes are preparation for the biotechnology path in the 11-12 grades. We offer Math 1, 2 and (for some students) 3 in 9/10 grades which cover algebra, functions, geometry, trigonometry, statistics and probability. For social studies, students examine current events and learn to develop arguments for and against certain ideas. We host school-wide debates to allow students to communicate these arguments verbally. Civics, economics, and personal finance are among the social studies courses offered.

We use research-based instructional practices aimed at instilling strong work habits, critical-thinking skills, creativity, passion, and joy among students. We want to develop their intellectual capacities and cultivate 21st century learners – students who take ownership of their education and have a voice in structuring their curriculum.

Our instructional model is based on the principles in Doug Lemov's book "Teach Like a Champion" and Paul Bambrick-Santoyo's book "Get Better Faster." Inspired by these sources, we've implemented the following instructional practices:

**Exemplars:** Our teachers create well-prepared lesson plans with a clear alignment of objectives, instruction, assessment and expected student responses. They hold students accountable to acquire and demonstrate mastery of the concept and the required work habits.

**Chunking:** To reduce the cognitive load, facilitate comprehension and boost long-term memory, we use a brain-based instructional strategy called "chunking" to teach new information to our students. Students receive information in bite sizes which are easy to process and retain in long-term memory.

**Aggressive Monitoring (AgMo):** This method is used in every classroom to catch student misunderstandings in the moment and subsequently adjust their thinking. Student misconceptions are removed before they register in their brains.

**Work Habits:** For students to show and demonstrate that they are cognitively engaged in the lesson and are able to process information at the expected level, they are required to use work habits in each classroom. This involves annotating their work, explaining their answers, showing their work (math), etc.

No process of learning is complete without immediate and interim assessment. We regularly monitor students' academic growth and understanding through formative and summative assessment cycles. Students are assessed daily, weekly, and quarterly to ensure that they are meeting the rigorous academic needs of their grade level. Daily "exit tickets" provide teachers quick and immediate feedback to customize their practice and improve student learning. Weekly quizzes serve as formative tools to assess students' cumulative understanding. Common Formative Assessments (CFA) take place once during a quarter to assess student understanding of work covered. At the end of a quarter, an End-of-Quarter (EOQ) Assessment and NC Check-ins are administered to assess mastery of all concepts taught during the quarter. Benchmark tests weigh heavily (50%) on the total grade.

After benchmark testing, teachers complete a data sheet which requires them to list the proficiency of all students -- including EC and ESL -- and write their reflections about the data. Instructional coaches meet with teachers to analyze the data and determine which challenges need to be addressed. School leaders also review the data to assess where the schoolwide reading, math and science proficiency stands. The school data offers insight into the next steps for interventions for students.

### **1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):**

From the elementary grades through high school, Sallie B. Howard students are taught with the expectation that they will have options upon graduation. Those options include attending a four-year college, a community college or trade school, joining the military or going straight into the workforce.

In 8th grade, all SBH students take a College Career Readiness (CCR) class which exposes them to college programs, trades, entrepreneurship and more. Students learn job interview skills, how to write a resume, taking the SAT, and applying for financial aid. They visit college campuses, meet key professionals and business owners and participate in mock job fairs. This course encourages students to dig deeper into their interests, identify the fields they may want to pursue and plan for their future.

Our newly-launched high school takes a similar forward-thinking approach. In addition to the standard course of study, we offer pre-professional training in biotechnology, dance, theatre, visual art and music. These classes are taught by experienced artists and professionals who are at the top of their game. High school majors take part in hands-on experiences, internships, and dual credit courses at Wilson Community College, where we have a long-running partnership. Our students will have an opportunity to leave high school with college coursework on their transcripts, saving them both time and money in their future endeavors.

A significant part of our high school curriculum is the biotechnology path. This program was chosen specifically to capitalize on the billion-dollar biotech and pharma industry right here in the Wilson County area. Eastern NC is teeming with biotech jobs. Our goal is to prepare students for this market and equip them with all the tools they need to build a fulfilling and lucrative career.

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

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

While most schools have removed their arts programming, arts instruction is a critical part of our school curriculum. We believe that when you create opportunities for achievement beyond reading and math, you open up the possibilities for students to find success in their education. As a result, students feel motivated to apply themselves in areas they may not be gifted in because they are happy to be in a setting that values and gives space to their talents.

All K-10 students attend arts classes daily; it's required and counts toward their grade. Arts instruction begins at the K-1 level as an exploratory phase of all disciplines (music, dance, theatre, visual art) and moves to more in-depth training starting at 2nd through 8th grade. By high school, the arts curriculum is on a pre-professional track and requires certain skills for students to participate. Additional electives such as computer skills (4-8), physical education (K-10), crafts & décor (4-8), foreign language/Spanish (HS) and CCR (College Career Readiness – 6, 8) are also offered at different grade levels for the entire year (with the exception of high school Spanish, which is taken in semesters). The number of students attending these classes in the recent year are as follows: computer skills (78), physical education (161), crafts & decor (67), foreign language/Spanish (14), CCR (89).

We've worked hard to maintain the quality of our arts curriculum during remote instruction. Classes are 55 min and taught via Zoom; assignments are managed using Google Classroom. We've kept our quarterly performance schedule and converted our shows – Winter Recital, Dance Festival, Spring Concert and Art Gala – into a series of video recordings that we publish on our Facebook, Instagram and YouTube channel.

Our Study Abroad program has paused until travel is allowed, but we've taken advantage of the ability to connect virtually with high-profile individuals from around the world. We've been fortunate to have special guests Zoom into our classes, including Misty Copeland, actress Madalen Mills, actor Ken Page, directors

David E. Talbert and Esteban Roel, science writer David Pogue and visual artist Luis Peralta Del Valle.

We've continued other extra-curricular activities and hosted them virtually, including our annual Science Fair and Spelling Bee. We had teams of students participate in the local Optimist Club Oratorical Contest and the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow STEM Competition. We even launched new activities. Our high school established its first-ever Student Government Association this year, and we created a student blog entitled "The Eagles' Outlook."

Our character-building program has also remained intact during remote instruction. P.R.I.D.E (Perseverance Respect Integrity Discipline Excellence) is a set of values we teach and practice throughout the school. Students who demonstrate these principles are rewarded during quarterly Honor Roll and Perfect Attendance celebrations, which were held this year as drive-through parades in the school parking lot.

None of these classes and activities would be possible without technology. At the beginning of remote learning, all students and teachers were equipped with Chromebooks, iPads and WiFi hotspots. We set up Zoom training sessions for students, parents and teachers, and hosted an in-person, socially-distanced "Tech Night" for parents to receive live instruction on using their devices and software. We also created an email helpdesk where parents can contact our Tech Support team for assistance throughout the year.

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

Sallie B. Howard School serves a primarily low-income student population. As research suggests, students from low-income backgrounds often have learning gaps. Sallie B. Howard School is well-equipped to address these learning gaps. From those who struggle to those who are academically gifted, all students can be successful at our school.

We provide many support options for students performing below grade level. In conjunction with differentiated classroom instruction, students receive before and after-school tutoring, small group instruction, intercession tutorial classes, and a summer enrichment program for students in need of remediation.

Students performing above grade level are exposed to a more rigorous curriculum through differentiated in-class instruction and extracurricular competitions and programs. Science is a particular strength at Sallie B. Howard. Our students have won state and national STEM awards, including becoming two-time State Finalists in the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Contest for 2020 and 2021.

Our most gifted Arts students are also very active, consistently receiving high praise and marks for their talent. The SBH High School Dance students recently won 1st place honors at the Fusion Dance Competition in March. Our Visual Art students regularly contribute to community art projects such as "Eyes on Main Street," while our Theatre students dominate essay and speech competitions hosted by the local Optimist Club.

Our high expectations for achievement also apply to our exceptional children. We believe exceptional children can and will achieve at rates similar to their non-disabled peers. This mindset is essential to the success of our students. We have largely eliminated the practice of self-containing exceptional children. Only students labeled as "severe" and "profound" are taught in a self-contained setting, however they participate with their regular education peers in elective classes. Most of our exceptional children are now being taught in a regular education setting by a regular education teacher with support from the exceptional children's resource teacher. This enables the students to receive the same core content instruction as their non-disabled peers. EC teachers and assistants provide both in-class and resource support to ensure that students' needs are being met according to their IEP (Individualized Education Plan). We also utilize a variety of

research-based instructional technology in all core classes, including IXL, Nearpod, Whiteboard, and other tools to engage and enhance students' learning.

For our English Learners, we offer a comprehensive EL program to assist them in developing the social language and literacy skills needed to succeed in school and on state assessments (ACCESS, reading and math). These services include scheduled ESL instructional interventions to remediate reading and comprehension gaps, co-teaching, push-in/pull-out sessions in collaboration with classroom teachers, and direct writing instruction to prepare for yearly language tests. Teachers often use visuals in vocabulary lessons and, depending on the EL's reading level, will include translations of the vocabulary definition on a Power Point slide.

We offer our EL/content teachers continuous support and professional development opportunities to keep our instructional practices up-to-date and increase student language development. Finally, we promote close and consistent communication with parents of ELs via the Remind app, workshops and parent meetings.

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

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

Even in the midst of a global pandemic, our goal at Sallie B. Howard School has been to provide students with as much normalcy as possible. We refuse to accept that this year will have to be instructionally and socially compromised. While we have adapted schedules and practices to account for the differences in remote versus face-to-face instruction, our expectations for students and staff performance remain unchanged. Our students will receive high-quality instruction daily.

To minimize screen time, we have reduced our instructional periods to 55 minutes each for the four daily class periods. Ample breaks are provided for students and staff to get away from the computer so they can refresh and recharge.

Our school has purchased laptops for every student and WiFi hotspots for those without reliable Internet connectivity to ensure equitable access to instruction. Our teachers have been trained to deliver virtual instruction through a variety of instructional tools and platforms, including IXL, Nearpod, Jamboard, Whiteboard, Google Classroom, Zoom, Kami, SchoolNet, and numerous others. We have encouraged our staff to experiment and find the programs and platforms that best engage their students and to utilize them with fidelity.

While instructional platforms and tools can help promote student engagement, we all know that it is the personal interaction between the students and their teacher that makes the magic happen. To this end, we offered our teachers training from the Ron Clark Academy to help them generate ideas to increase student engagement. Simple practices such as enthusiastically greeting students as they enter the Zoom session, calling their names frequently throughout the lesson, maintaining a high energy level and rapid pace of instruction, and simply looking into the camera when you are speaking to the students, have all been found to increase student enjoyment and engagement in the lesson.

Many of our high school students expressed to us that the pandemic was taking an emotional toll on them. So we listened and implemented a few measures to create more social time and bonding among their peers. We set up casual lunchtime Zoom meetups for students and established “Flexible Fridays” where students (those who aren’t failing the class) can opt to not attend the live class that day and receive their assignments on Google Classroom.

While we have altered some instructional practices and procedures, we remain unyielding in our expectation for instructional outcomes for our students. They only get this year once and we want to make it one of their best.

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

Our most successful strategy for engaging parents in supporting student success and the work we do at SBH has always been the respect and dignity we show our families and their children. That may seem too simple and obvious as public educators, but families from low-income backgrounds aren’t always treated kindly by the educational system or society in general. SBH parents appreciate the extra care we put into helping them create the best educational environment and circumstances for their child.

This year, we worked hard to make sure COVID-19 did not destroy our connection to parents and the community. We distributed Chromebooks and iPads to our 1000+ students and provided WiFi hotspots to families with limited or no connectivity. We set up an email helpdesk as a way for parents to contact our Tech Support team with questions or issues with their devices. We increased our social media communication, boosted critical messages with ad dollars and began hosting assemblies and announcements on Facebook live.

For parents needing supervision for their child during remote classes, we referred them to several of our

community partners offering free and affordable daytime instructional support: Sipnayan, The Spot, Save-a-Youth and Level Up. We have worked with these organizations for years on after-school programs and extra-curricular initiatives.

Additionally, we modified our meal service program by packaging breakfast and lunch as to-go meals and serving them both curbside at the school and at various bus drop-off locations in the area. To address the community's growing food insecurity exacerbated by the pandemic, we expanded our meal service beyond students to include anyone in the neighborhood who is hungry.

For many years, we have partnered with Wilson Community College to provide educational resources to our parents, students and staff. Located next door to our campus, WCC has hosted workshops for parents, ESL classes for non-English speaking parents, licensing courses for international teachers and more.

Our latest partnership with WCC will offer our high school biotechnology students dual credit courses and certificate courses in biotechnology research. We are also working on an agreement to share our faculty and facilities with WCC to support their new associates degree in fine arts.

Finally, we take pride in our relationship with the Hispanic community and, from day one, we made serving their needs a priority. Official school announcements and communications are shared in English and Spanish. School events always include Spanish translation or are hosted separately in Spanish. Our ESL department hosts workshops to provide parents with skills to help them help their students with schoolwork. We make sure translators are present at parent-teacher meetings and conferences and our front office staff is bilingual. Furthermore, we honor and recognize cultural celebrations such as Mexican Independence Day and Day of the Dead (Dia de los Muertos).

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

When our world changed profoundly in March 2020, we all had to make a huge shift in operations, instruction and communication. The methods we had all been trained on and had utilized forever were now gone. What followed was a new normal of remote learning, increased dependence on technology and a constant vigil over the wellbeing of our staff and students.

At the heart of this transition are our teachers. They bring our strategic plans and vision to life. They are on the front lines of the education industry and are the first to feel the impact of social challenges that our parents and students face.

We frequently survey teachers to find out what is working in their classroom and what isn't, and we adjust accordingly. Professional development has occurred from the ground up with teachers expressing what they need to be successful and school leadership responding to meet those needs. This has created a culture of teacher empowerment rather than compliance. Teachers have a real voice in decision-making and policy at Sallie B. Howard. After all, they are the ones closest to the work.

We already asked a lot from our teachers in pre-COVID times. However, adapting to the pandemic required an even greater effort from them, so it was critical that we provide teachers with as much support and resources as possible. Prior to schools officially shutting down in March 2020, we set up training sessions to get teachers and students proficient in Zoom. We then began purchasing numerous programs and devices to enhance their virtual classrooms and instruction, including additional monitors, whiteboards, web cameras, headsets with mics as well as programs such as Google Classroom, Study Island, Edpuzzle, Jamboard, Generation Genius and so many more.

During Teacher Appreciation Week last May, our leadership team hosted a festive drive-through parade in our school parking lot in honor of our teachers. We made posters, played music, distributed gift bags and cupcakes, and cheered the teachers on as our heroes.

To respect and encourage work-life balance, we have a policy of avoiding sending emails or directives to staff after 5pm and on weekends. We also have a liberal "simply ask" policy for educational supplies.

Teachers are welcome to submit requests to have the school cover costs for classroom materials up front or to be reimbursed for them. We encourage teachers to explore resources that will help them deliver quality instruction.

To support the work of our bus drivers, cafeteria and custodial staff – all roles with a high risk for COVID-19 exposure – we added an on-going monthly bonus to their paychecks.

During the holidays, all staff can choose to receive either a turkey or Walmart giftcard for Thanksgiving and at Christmas, staff receive Amazon giftcards and are celebrated (pre-COVID) at an annual semi-formal holiday party with live music and amazing food.

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

The leadership philosophy at our school stems from the principle of doing good for others. We believe in the oneness of people, irrespective of nationality, race, gender, color or ability. Inscribed at the main entrance of our school are two quotes: one by Ramana Maharshi (“How should we treat others? There are no others.”), and a second quote by Thich Nhat Hanh (“We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.”). School leaders speak the language of oneness and encourage staff to find ways to help anyone who enters our doors.

Diversity is another leadership philosophy that we are intentional about. We hire staff from around the globe and strive to bring the world to our children to instill in them an appreciation for diversity.

We have a well-established and collaborative leadership structure. The Executive Director leads the school assisted by the Assistant Director, who also heads the Business, HR and Technology departments as well as the school cafeteria, construction and maintenance. Two principals lead the K-5 and 6-10 teams and are supported by the Dean of Arts and Dean of Student Services. These six people constitute the executive leadership team which is the decision-making body of our school. The leadership team meets weekly to discuss and act upon current issues and future plans.

The Executive Director ensures the smooth functioning of all operations, and, with the Assistant Director, checks in with leaders to discuss progress and challenges. The K-5 and 6-10 principals support their respective teachers with coaching and lesson modeling and meet with parents as needed. The Dean of Arts leads a team of more than 10 professionals who administer a rigorous pre-professional arts program. The Dean of Student Services is responsible for school discipline, community relationships, bus and transportation management.

During the global health crisis, our leaders have grown closer and more aligned in their mission to protect students and staff while delivering a high quality of instruction. To adapt to the instructional transition, we began meeting daily on Zoom to assess the day’s activities. When considering decisions to return to campus, we sought feedback from parents and staff via surveys that we posted on our website and social media. We held frequent brainstorming sessions for solutions to pandemic-induced problems such as higher rates of failing students and low attendance.

Our leadership team also established a “simply ask” policy regarding requests for instructional resources and classroom supplies in order to remove any hesitation from teachers about asking the school to make purchases. Leadership and staff relationships are built on the premise of no judgment and feedback. Everyone is encouraged to seek help quickly and not wait for someone to reach out to them.

#### **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

We take pride in the cultural diversity at our school. Our students and staff come from many different countries, backgrounds, and experiences. We are intentional about recognizing and participating in cultural celebrations that are important to our diverse body of students and staff.



Some of those celebrations include Mexican Independence Day, Diwali, Festival of Colors, Jamaican Independence Day, Black History Month and more. It is commonplace for members of our school to announce these celebrations and educate the students about these traditions.

It is also customary for staff to greet students in the morning in languages that represent the student's heritage. For example, if a student from the Philippines joins our school, they will be greeted in Tagalog ("kumusta"). A student from China will be greeted in Mandarin ("ni hao"); those from Mexico or Colombia are welcomed in Spanish ("hola"). We currently greet our students in 15 different languages. The students appreciate the fact that their culture is respected enough to be acknowledged every day.

Nearly 40% of the students and families we serve are Hispanic. Their culture and needs make up a large part of our SBH community. We publish all official communications, verbal and written, in Spanish and English. We have both English and Spanish-speaking receptionists and office staff. We provide Spanish translators for school meetings and parent-teacher conferences as needed.

Every two years, we host a 3-week Study Abroad tour for middle school students that immerses them in the culture, history, language and cuisine of another country. Our goal is to provide students with a life-changing experience that reminds them that they are 21st century learners and global citizens.

Finally, we are aware that students may be emotionally vulnerable to the impact of current events. 2020 was a year of social and political unrest and the effects of that climate were felt among many of our middle and high school students. Subsequently, they expressed an interest in having an open discussion about race and politics. Our social studies teachers routinely incorporate current events in their lessons and held several mock debates about the events of 2020 to encourage students to think through their opinions. For students or staff struggling emotionally, our in-house therapist set up extra hours for counseling. We also posted 24-hour crisis hotline information and self-care tips on our social media pages.

No matter the issue, we have an open door policy for SBH families to communicate their needs to us. We are committed to ensuring that our students' experience is productive and enjoyable.

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

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The key to our success during this period of remote learning is the same principle our namesake Sallie Baldwin Howard would often repeat: keep expectations high for students and staff! The pandemic has presented numerous challenges for everyone, but never once did we believe those challenges meant that our students would not be required to learn. We are still working to get as many students as possible to cross the achievement finish line. We embraced no excuses and no exceptions. We conducted live Zoom classes daily rather than solely assigning tasks in online programs. We believe in our students' ability to rise to the occasion and fulfill their potential. Why? Because we've seen them do so year after year.

This isn't our first time facing hardships. We opened our doors in 1997 with 283 students housed in a row of trailers parked in a vacant East Wilson lot. These early years were productive and full of important lessons, but we had our share of struggles. From high staff turnover to low achievement test scores to the politicized stigma of charter schools, we experienced almost every education-related obstacle you can imagine.

So how did we make it 24 years later with over 1,000 students, a high school expansion, a state-of-the-art biotechnology lab, and three consecutive years of a "B" grade for exceeding academic growth and achieving proficiency on state exams among a demographic not expected to achieve? We maintained high performance expectations for our students and ourselves. "Anything we can conceive and believe, we can achieve." We committed to the promise of providing a rich, dynamic education to all students, regardless of their background. When the students saw the urgency of excellence from our teachers, leaders and staff and understood that we believed in them, they achieved. They worked hard, improved their test scores and discovered abilities that they never knew they had.

In Feb/March 2020, when it became clear that the upcoming school year would be different from anything we'd experienced before, we strategized our response around two goals: protecting the health and welfare of our students and staff and preserving our students' academic achievement. This meant modifying our instructional schedule, adding more technological resources, enhancing daily lesson plans, investing in teacher training, and increasing our digital communications. Motivated by a spirit of excellence and faith, our teachers, leaders and staff worked tirelessly to adapt to these difficult circumstances. And in this spirit, we continue the mission to create 21st century global learners by providing an education that nurtures our students' talents and shows them they can be more than they ever thought they would be.