

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Malta Avenue Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 70 Malta Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Ballston Spa State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 12020-1599

County Saratoga County

Telephone (518) 884-7250 Fax (518) 884-7258

Web site/URL https://www.bscsd.org/Domain/396 E-mail sjohnson@bscsd.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Kenneth Slentz E-mail kslentz@bscsd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Ballston Spa Central School District Tel. (518) 884-7250

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. Jason Fernau
(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

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

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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	28	32	60
1	30	30	60
2	35	26	61
3	32	31	63
4	29	32	61
5	26	31	57
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	180	182	362

*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
 - 4 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 85 % 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: 5%

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

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	14
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	17
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	362
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Chinese, Filipino, German, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Malayalam, Papiamento, Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 6 %
23 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 29 %
 Total number students who qualify: 106

8. Students receiving special education services: 20 %

72 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>4</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>22</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>36</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: 1

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.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	96%	96%
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.

Post-Secondary Status	
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.

The Ballston Spa School District's mission is to provide an excellent education to all students that maximizes the potential of each student. In partnership with the family and community, our students will become responsible and well-rounded adults.

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 building started in a fully remote setting so as to allow staff, families, and students to focus on this new way of learning and gain proficiency before we returned to a hybrid model. The majority of students attend in-person and a contingent are fully remote learners based on parent choice. Through our “rolling appeals” process, parents can submit requests to move their child from in-person to remote or remote to in-person so long as our room capacity allows for it. Finally, as we have become increasingly comfortable with our model, we have added a half day of in-person learning so students who choose in-person learning now attend 4.5 days per week and the remaining .5 day is used for asynchronous learning and interventions. We have learned our way through the year as a school community and made ongoing adaptations to further support our students and their families.

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

PART III - SUMMARY

Malta Avenue (MA) Elementary School is located in the heart of Ballston Spa, NY, and was built in 1915. Our building is the cornerstone of education in the community. It is a true community school, where many students still reside within walking distance. The school's location, which is immersed in the historic neighborhood, makes it a constant visible presence. The playground and recreational field are valued resources for families beyond school hours. Students passing the school to go to the Village Center are reminded of their connection and belonging to their school community.

Many generations of residents have passed through our halls. Over the years the Malta Avenue school has evolved to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse demographic. With a more diverse student population, inspired by growth of technology-based businesses in the District, Malta focused on inclusivity and community building initiatives. Malta has always provided community learning experiences that not only connect students of different grade levels but also engage the broader community. Examples of this include partnerships with The Ballston Spa Education Foundation, Brookside Museum, Globalfoundaries, Saratoga Battlefield, Saratoga Performing Art Center, and other local businesses.

Family involvement has always been a priority at Malta Avenue. Malta Avenue staff members work collaboratively with Malta Avenue families and caretakers to enhance and increase family involvement. When there are extracurricular events like movie night, math night, board game night, and "Story-Time" night when staff read their favorite books as a Parents as Reading Partners kickoff, the neighborhood proximity makes it easy for parents to bring younger siblings and walk to the events, which results in greater attendance.

Our most notable example which aims to promote inclusivity and building community relationships is To Malta and Beyond. This is an end-of-the-year showcase of students' multicultural learning. Though much of the focus was on the multicultural art projects they learned about and created, it also displayed learning and projects from classrooms as well. Additionally, the event includes programs from the community that students could participate in. This has included everything from Irish storytelling and fables, to karate, dancing, drumming, and multicultural crafts. This program included multiple works from each student in school and was open to students and families.

In keeping with the Ballston Spa Central School District's mission to provide an excellent education that maximizes the potential of each student, we have worked with our staff, family and community to help our students become responsible and well-rounded citizens.

Through our programs, curriculum, and initiatives over the years we have strengthened the opportunities to bring this to fruition.

Our intentional and explicit teaching of our math curriculum was purposely mirrored after the NYS standards and has been updated to provide the most comprehensive way to provide all students with the math strategies they need in order to be successful.

Our district adopted a comprehensive research-based reading program two years ago which specifically identifies the needs of each individual reader and provides strategies to give students the tools to be successful, lifelong readers.

A focus on the whole child approach is paramount at Malta Avenue. Character education has always been a priority at Malta Avenue. Our goal is to infuse character education into all aspects of our daily schedule, allowing older students to serve as role models by guiding younger students to discover the moral and performance traits of good character. It strives to empower teachers to create a positive and safe atmosphere for our students, while infusing the core values of character education. The focus and objective of the character education remains centered on educating our students about the importance of exhibiting good character. The structure and format of the character education program is always evolving and improving, as the main philosophy remains the same.

Our newest addition of a Social Emotional Learning curriculum and counselors at the elementary level have added, especially during this time of the pandemic, a way to meet the social and emotional needs of our students and families even more; strengthening their strategies of how to cope with issues now and beyond.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Ballston Spa Central School district believes that all children deserve a meaningful diploma, which means that our students will: read well-because we explicitly and systematically taught them to, write well – because we explicitly and systematically taught them to, think well – because we explicitly taught them how to through our instruction and learn well – because they can read, write, and think well. In order to achieve that mission, all selected curricula including assessment tools and intervention tools are vetted and aligned to the NYS learning standards. The seamless alignment to learning standards and the K-5 curriculum consistency in the descriptions provided below allowed for a seamless translation to online learning. Utilizing Schoology as our learning platform, all grade level teams worked together to transfer the established grade level materials to the virtual learning platform. In instances where the virtual mode of instruction required adjustment, the two district technology coaches supported teacher teams to overcome those obstacles. The predictable learning routines in all of our elementary curriculums were highly beneficial to both students and teachers when shifting learning modalities.

The K-5 ELA curriculum was adapted through a district-wide ELA Curriculum team process led by the Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment in the 2018-19 school year. The team consisted of the following: K-5 grade level teachers, ENL teacher, Special Education Teachers, Reading Interventionists and Librarians. The team determined the local criteria, needs and wants, then reviewed four ELA curricula that had earned solid standing on Ed Reports and Louisiana Believes through the lens of our local rubrics, Tri-State Assessment Rubric and NYS Next Gen ELA Alignment Rubric. The team presented their findings and preferences to the district Superintendent and the following curricula were adopted. Bookworms K-5 for core Reading and Writing instruction, with the addition of Wilson Foundations for grades K-2 and Heggerty Phonemic Awareness for grades K-1 to establish a strong phonemic and phonics base for all students. With the adoption of the ELA curriculum we increased the consistency and frequency of the formative and summative assessment process by using the curriculum based assessments inclusive within the curriculum. Grade level and vertical consistency was established with common evaluation practices and use of common rubrics. To better evaluate transfer of learning, the district implemented Achieve the Core Holistic assessments at grades 3-5. In addition to the aforementioned assessments, the district conducts benchmark assessments using both iReady and DIBELS, three times a year to ensure additional transfer of learning and capture a district view of progress.

Malta Elementary took the lead in the adoption of the K-5 Math curriculum that the entire district has now adopted, Eureka Math. Malta began using the NYS Math Modules in 2014-15 to respond to a lack of growth in their students overall math performance. By the fifth year of implementation Malta had achieved over seventy percent proficiency as a building on 3-5 NYS Math Assessments. The curricular consistency, honed instructional practices by all Malta teachers through coaching, grade level collaboration and a solid AIS support system provided a foundation in which all students achieve math literacy. Malta as a building has been instrumental in supporting the other three elementary schools as they adopt the Eureka Math curriculum for the 2020-21 academic year.

Following the new Next Generation Science Standards, the K-5 Science Committee led by the district Science Coordinator and Director of Curriculum have written three science units of study based on the Inquiry Model and with an intentional focus on honing the Science and Engineering Practices. Each grade level explores a physical, earth and life science unit which provides students an opportunity to explore a phenomena, conduct experiments, and research a related topic to produce a final outcome based on the CER (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning) model. To transition science instruction to a virtual space, the district utilized Nearpod to guide student learning and incorporate opportunities for observation where lab situations were not appropriate due to COVID safety regulations.

In alignment with the NYS Social Studies Framework, each grade level has an area of focus for building a strong foundational understanding of local, state, national and global communities: Kindergarten focuses on "Self and Others"; 1st grade focuses on "My Families and Other Families, Now and Long Ago"; 2nd grade studies "My Community and Other Communities"; 3rd Grade shifts to studying the "Communities Around

the World"; 4th grade turns the focus to state history "New York State and Local History and Government"; and the students in 5th grade begin a broader study of history around the world with a focus on "The Western Hemisphere". The Social Studies curriculum is under revision, to strengthen the inquiry model for learning and building stronger structures for CER (Claim, Evidence and Reasoning) as students explore both the past and present. During COVID, time restrictions to the instructional day have resulted in thoughtful integration of Social Studies around relevant ELA texts to build connections to the identified focus at each grade level.

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

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In addition to core curriculum, all Malta Avenue students attend art, music and library class once per week for forty-five minutes. Students attend physical education twice per week for a total of 90 minutes.

The visual arts program at Malta Avenue strives to challenge students with unique and varied projects that require a wide range of art materials and processes. There is a strong focus on multicultural art forms from around the world including the people, history, and culture that created them. A strong understanding of how and why these art forms are created is an important component to creating meaningful, purposeful art projects. Much of the visual art curriculum aligns with learning in the classroom to deepen meaning and engage students' thinking in more complex and investigative ways.

Physical education at Malta Avenue is an integral part of the educational curriculum in that it meets the students' needs for personal growth and development physically, mentally, and socially. The goal of the PE program at Malta Avenue is to empower all students to sustain regular lifelong physical activity as a foundation for a healthy, productive, and fulfilling life. The PE program at Malta Avenue seeks to deliver an activity-based curriculum designed in a sequential manner to meet the developmental needs of our diversified student population both as individuals and as team members. PE staff realize the importance of providing students with an opportunity to be successful by offering a variety of instructional experiences which will enable them to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The PE curriculum at Malta Ave includes: creative, well planned units/lessons/activities, a variety of methods and techniques, integration with other areas of instruction, adaptations or modifications of instruction to meet students needs, a wide range of experiences to promote student involvement and enthusiasm, and positive interactions between students and teachers.

The Malta Avenue Elementary School's library program focuses on literacy: informational literacy, digital literacy, media literacy, and of course foundational literacy. Through collaboration, research and thinking critically, students will become empowered learners, diverse thinkers and effective users in accessing, using, and sharing ideas and information while at the same time developing a deep enjoyment of reading for purpose and pleasure. The library program strives to foster connections within the Malta School Community and with the larger learning community to provide students with access to learning resources of all types and opportunities beyond the school walls.

Our District has created a K-12 Digital Literacy and Digital Citizenship curriculum that embeds the Library Standards and the NYSED Common Core, Next Generation and Computer Science/Digital Fluency standards. To help meet the needs of students and families during this unique school year, the District adopted a new Learning Management system, Schoology, providing one place to house educational content and student interaction, and provides a platform for parent and staff communication.

3. Academic Supports:

Malta's overarching goal is to improve student achievement using evidence-based interventions matched to the instructional and behavioral needs, and level of the child. Malta utilizes a multi-tiered system of support that provides additional academic and behavioral support to enable students to progress within the existing school-wide instructional program at a rate equal to their peers. Tier 2 interventions do not supplant Tier 1 instruction, but are strategic interventions provided in addition to what the student is receiving at Tier 1. All students receive Tier 2 differentiated instruction at their level of need in the classroom. Our struggling readers may receive targeted work in phonics instruction, while our most advanced readers are reading more sophisticated text to hone their comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Tier 3 interventions are designed to match the needs of students identified as at-risk through school-wide screening and progress monitoring measures. Tier 3 is an intensive, supplemental, individualized, and customized intervention provided to students in a smaller group format of up to five students, delivered with greater frequency (4-5 times per week).

All students who receive Special Education services, receive specially designed instruction in order to progress appropriately in the general education curriculum. The continuum of services includes Integrated Co-Teaching, Resources Room, as well as Speech Services, Occupational Therapy, and Counseling. Special Education is the delivery of specially designed individual or group instruction, special services, or programs to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. At Malta, students are supported at every level of need with services provided by the most qualified specialist.

Students in grades K-5 whose primary language is other than English attend Malta Avenue and receive English as a New Language (ENL) supports and services. Currently, 6% of our student population is comprised of English as a New Language students. Our ENL teacher collaborates with students' general education teachers to provide ENLs with supportive and individualized learning opportunities. Depending on the student's level of proficiency, as measured by the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), students receive pull-out ENL services in addition to core curriculum, integrated services, or a combination of pull-out and integrated services.

As a recipient of the competitive McKinney-Vento Homeless grant, Ballston Spa Central School district homeless and displaced students receive additional 1:1 mentor services and tutoring services to support their academic and emotional well-being. The additional supports are intended to strengthen the stability for the students in both the school setting and as needed in their temporary living arrangement. The 1:1 contact and support are essential to creating the best environment for students with these challenging circumstances.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

The mission of the Ballston Spa Central School District is to provide an excellent education that maximizes the potential of each student. In partnership with the family and community, our goal is to ensure that all students become responsible and well-rounded adults. At Malta Avenue, our staff believes that in order to develop responsible and well-rounded adults, our students need explicit instruction in character education and social and emotional learning. Amidst the current unprecedented global pandemic, our priority as a building is increasingly to ensure student and staff wellness and safety. To achieve this goal, Malta Avenue continues to implement its character education program, and this year, we have adopted Second Step, a social emotional learning curriculum.

At Malta Avenue we believe that it is incredibly important for all students to recognize their own goodness and self-worth and see the goodness and worth of their classmates and their school community. Utilizing our character education curriculum, each month we focus on one theme which we call the character education word of the month. During morning announcements, students are reminded of the word of the month. Each month students from all classes are recognized for exemplifying the word of the month. Additionally, to enhance our positive culture, each month one student is nominated to be the Malta Man Sidekick. This adds an element of fun, surprise, and excitement to our Malta Avenue community. The Malta Man is our character education superhero who recognizes students with outstanding character. In our monthly newsletters, we celebrate our character education award winners with our community.

During the global pandemic, many of our students have faced additional hardships and stressors. In effort to support students during this challenging time, students receive daily lessons to strengthen their social and emotional learning. Additionally, at the beginning of the year, students completed a daily survey to communicate their feelings and emotional well-being with their teachers and counselor. Students who indicated that they were struggling, were seen immediately by our school counselor.

Additionally, Malta Avenue prides itself on creating a school culture founded on strong positive relationships. Staff members work tirelessly to ensure that all students know they are valued and can succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. Malta Avenue staff members greet students by name when they are dropped off at the front of the building.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Malta Avenue had both fully in-person classrooms as well as fully remote classrooms. In an effort to engage our remote and in-person classes, the Malta Avenue Student Council hosted multiple online events for all students to attend. For example, on Valentine's Day, all students were invited to participate in the 'Something Sweet' event with their grade level. Students were able to log on to a Google Meet and brought with them a sweet treat. Members of the student council then led all students through a Valentine's Day craft. These events have fostered relationships between our in-person and remote students and have enhanced our sense of community.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The motto in the Ballston Spa Central School District is: "Educating everyone takes everyone." Along these lines, Malta Avenue believes that strengthening relationships and building connectedness among all stakeholders is fundamental to our learning community. We value and prioritize strong partnerships with families and community members which has been a key to our success.

Our culture of community is developed and enhanced through ongoing communication. Families and caretakers receive weekly emails from the four Ballston Spa elementary school principals. The weekly email provides families with pertinent information related to District elementary school news. Additionally, parents receive digital monthly newsletters from the Malta Avenue Principal, which includes important upcoming dates, character education monthly award winners, student accomplishments and achievements, and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) events.

Our committed Parent Teacher Association (PTA) plays a vital role in enhancing the learning experience of our students. The Malta Avenue PTA meets monthly with the principal and Malta Avenue staff members to plan events and activities. The PTA has enriched the lives of Malta Avenue students by organizing activities and experiences such as: visiting authors, Pick a Reading Partner, book fairs, Super Science Saturday, and pumpkin decorating contests. During this unprecedented school year, our PTA has worked tirelessly to ensure that our students would continue to have access to these opportunities by transitioning all events to a remote format.

In the midst of the COVID pandemic, Malta Avenue has relied increasingly on its PTA. For example, one unique challenge that Malta Avenue staff has faced this year was to provide students with much needed recess during the day, abiding by CDC safety guidelines. Typical recess activities such as playing catch, climbing on play structures, playing board games, stacking blocks with friends, or playing cards with a friend were no longer possible. The Malta Avenue school community reached out to the PTA in an effort to develop possible solutions to provide all students with meaningful and enjoyable recess opportunities. Our PTA created a solution by purchasing and creating individual break bags for each student. All in-person students received recess bags which contained age-appropriate recess activities for students to use during recess.

As a school we are grateful for partnerships with our community, helping to fulfill the diverse needs of our students. Since 2017, the district, in collaboration with the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern NY, has been operating in all four elementary buildings. The program provides easy-to-prepare food for the weekend to students who may otherwise go without. Weekly deliveries were able to continue throughout the school closures and changes resulting from COVID-19.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

In the midst of one of the most challenging times that we have lived through, Malta Avenue teachers have been forced to adapt to learn new teaching methodologies and technologies. In the spring of 2020, as the world entered the global pandemic, our teachers provided students with emergency teaching. Many teachers provided instruction at home for students while simultaneously caring for their own children.

During the summer of 2020, when the reality of a prolonged global pandemic set in, the Ballston Spa School District created a comprehensive reopening plan and professional development plan. Multiple committees were formed comprising all stakeholders to elicit feedback, ideas, and best practices from all community members. Through these diverse committees, the District was able to develop a professional development plan to support all teachers as they embarked in pandemic teaching during the fall of 2020. The professional development plan prioritized providing training and support for teachers on safety and logistical procedures and strategies for in-person instruction, as well extensive training on new technological platforms that teachers needed to provide effective remote instruction.

Leveraging the expertise, wisdom, and leadership of the Malta Avenue teaching staff has always been essential. Through on-going faculty, grade level, department, and Building Leadership Team (BLT) meetings, Malta Avenue staff provided feedback on additional professional development and training needed to support teachers and students during the 2020-2021 school year. A remote teaching Professional Learning Community (PLC), was created to allow for greater collaboration and sharing of best practices for our remote teachers district-wide. Additionally, teachers have been encouraged to choose from a wide array of in-house professional development opportunities throughout the year.

At the start of this year, a Building Leadership Team (BLT) was created to identify specific goals that align with our District goals and initiatives. The purpose of the BLT is to promote shared decision making that relies on the expertise of Malta Avenue staff members.

The teaching staff at Malta Avenue has put forth exceptional efforts to integrate new digital platforms, techniques, and strategies to meet the needs of our students during this extraordinary time. As a building, we intentionally celebrate the accomplishments of the teaching staff and our students by expressing on-going

gratitude for the time and dedication that they have given and planning events such as coffee cart days, where the administrative team delivers coffee and treats to teachers as a token of appreciation.

4. School Leadership:

The Malta Avenue Elementary School could best be described as a calm within the storm in NYS and in the District itself, largely due to the fact that up until the 2020-2021 school year, the school had the same principal leadership for the previous 17 years. This stability, in turn, led to stability within and amongst the staff who were consistently leveraged by the principal for their experience, skill sets, and knowledge of their children which has made them well-known and beloved by the parents and students within their school community. This thoughtfully and purposely built culture of stability and care was proven effective time and time again in serving the school's children and families during the period when the future of the school's existence was questioned (moving out of its' village location to a new location); during the major period of adjustment to the new Common Core Standards/NYS Learning Standards and the significant changes to teaching and learning that were required; during major construction on the building which caused relocation and adaptation; and in adapting to a new era of school safety and security. In each of these periods of change, student performance rarely waivered and when it did, the principal leveraged her team to diagnose, design, and implement the necessary supports that the students needed to return to top form and experience success.

In more recent years, the school zone has experienced an increasing change in demographics which once again required the principal and her staff to invoke their culture of stability and care to make the needed adjustments in programs, supports, trainings, and communications to allow our families to have the same experience that families have experienced at Malta Avenue Elementary year after year. Similarly, the make-up of the staff has changed due to promotions, retirements, program changes and locations, and a decreasing enrollment. One of the key promotions that took place was to the long-time principal who stepped into a district-level leadership role. Here, the experience and skillset of the staff was once again relied upon as a principal search committee led the way in selecting our new building leader who started during the pandemic closure and who has been charged with continuing to lead the school through our curricular and student support changes all while yet another building project is underway. Having the power of the story of Malta Avenue in their corner, the District has every confidence that the principal and the staff will lead the way through these changes all while achieving excellent outcomes for our children.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Inclusivity has been a core value at Malta Avenue since its inception in 1915. As the demographics of the community have changed over the years and become increasingly diverse, our curriculum and programs have been intentionally chosen to celebrate and promote diversity. In the fall of 2019, the District implemented the Bookworms English Language Arts curriculum. While there were a myriad of reasons for the selection of this curriculum, the diverse texts embedded in this program align directly to Malta Avenue's goal of fostering inclusivity and a culturally responsible community.

Malta Avenue continues to both develop its own programs that promote inclusivity and celebrate differences, as well as bring into the school a wide range of programs and organizations that aim to promote cultural competency and celebrate diversity. For example, Malta Avenue has brought the World Dance and Music programming to its building. We included programs from the community that students could participate in as well. Additionally, the Malta and Beyond program is an end-of-year culmination that celebrates the school community's multiculturalism.

Construction of GlobalFoundries in 2009, has given us a unique opportunity to expand our global connections. Our international students represent multiple countries which allow us to embrace cultural and character differences. We host an International Night to expand parent, teacher and community involvement.

During the global pandemic, Malta Avenue continues to be responsive to the needs of its community. Through ongoing conversations with students and families, we seek to provide students and families with supports that are needed. For example, during remote instruction, many families did not have access to an internet connection. Our District secured hotspots for families in need. Staff members often delivered hotspots to students' homes. Additionally, our remote teachers often plan a materials pick up day for students' families to pick up learning materials for their child. When families are unable to come to the school, Malta staff members deliver materials to families.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

While Malta Avenue has employed multiple effective strategies to ensure the academic, behavioral, and socio-emotional success of our students, our enhanced Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) process has been essential in meeting the diverse needs of our students during the global pandemic. Malta Avenue staff members have always placed what is best for the student at the forefront of all decisions. Additionally, Malta Avenue staff members invariably focus on meeting the needs of each child in all areas of their learning.

For many years, Malta Avenue has had a strong Instructional Support Team which consisted of dedicated teachers, a school psychologist, as well as an interventionist. Staff members referred students to the team who displayed significant academic deficits. Team members worked with the child's teacher to create a plan to help the student find success in the classroom.

With the goal of continuous improvement, Ballston Spa School District enhanced its MTSS process. As part of the larger MTSS process, the Malta Avenue Teaching and Learning Support Team (TLST) was created with the goal of identifying the Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies to support the teacher in helping the student achieve success in the general education classroom. The TLST works tirelessly to identify resources and strategies that provide instructional and behavioral continuity and complement existing curriculum. During each TLST meeting, a targeted and personalized Intervention Plan is created for each student which includes progress monitoring tools as well as a follow-up meeting date to review progress.

During this challenging year, many of our students have experienced significant hardships which have resulted in unique academic, social, and behavioral difficulties. The utilization of our TLST has helped to support our students by focusing on a wide variety of data. Using multiple data points, as well as increased communication with the student's family, we are able to create comprehensive and effective intervention plans. Many plans include both targeted academic interventions as well as social and emotional interventions.

Depending on the intensity of intervention, the TLST reconvenes for a follow-up meeting every 3-6 weeks. During the follow-up meeting, progress monitoring data is reviewed and the intervention plan is revised or continued depending on the success or struggles that the student has experienced since the initial plan.

Malta Avenue's success can be attributed to the staff's unrelenting desire to support all students. Teachers work collaboratively to identify struggling students and develop support plans to help students succeed. The enhanced MTSS process and formation of TLST has helped Malta Avenue staff to focus more effectively on meeting the diverse and unique needs of its students.