

***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) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

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

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

School Mailing Address 1 Scholar Lane  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Commack State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 11725-0150

County Suffolk County

Telephone (631) 912-2108 Fax (631) 912-2250

Web site/URL https://www.commackschools.org E-mail lboritz@commack.k12.ny.us

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. Donald James E-mail djames@commack.k12.ny.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Commack Union Free School District Tel. (631) 912-2000

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. Steven Hartman  
(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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 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	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	256	249	505
10	240	243	483
11	284	232	516
12 or higher	273	282	555
<b>Total Students</b>	1053	1006	2059

\*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):
- 0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 9.6 % Asian
  - 1.8 % Black or African American
  - 8.5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 77.7 % White
  - 2 % 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: 1%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	29
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	2118
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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

Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Greek, Pashto, Malayalam, Turkish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12 %

Total number students who qualify: 250

8. Students receiving special education services: 18 %

363 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>37</u> Autism	<u>10</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>118</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>136</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>52</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>3</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>3</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to 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	14
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	102
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	54
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	24
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	17

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 20:1

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	96%	93%	93%	94%	94%
High school graduation rate	98%	98%	98%	99%	98%

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	522
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	81%
Enrolled in a community college	13%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	2%
Found employment	3%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

Developing the mind, character, and physical well being of students through an environment that fosters academic excellence, maturity, and mutual respect.

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.

COVID-19 required schools to make critical adjustments to their instructional model in March 2020. As such, Commack Schools initiated a Reopening Task Force to identify items to consider related to the reopening of schools for the 2020-21 school year. The guiding principles that drove the work of the Reopening Task Force included the health, safety and security of our students and staff; strategies, full collaboration and support for students, families and staff members for each phase of recovery (before reopening, immediately after reopening and long-term support); monitoring the academic growth of our students through authentic assessment, and monitoring the social and emotional health of our students.

Based upon feedback from administration, parents/guardians, teachers, staff and students, and guidelines established by the New York State Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control and New York State Education Department, our school district created the Commack Model. The Commack Model provided a plan for reopening school buildings whether instruction occurred in-person, remotely, or a combination of the two. The Commack Model allowed for our secondary students to attend in-person instruction every other day with a focus on instruction in the core content areas. We moved from a nine period day of forty instructional minutes to a seven period day with fifty-four minutes, which is followed both in-person or virtually from home. On A days, students are in the building receiving live instruction for core academic classes: mathematics, social studies, English, science, and world languages. On B days, students have regularly

scheduled live, remote instruction for courses such as physical education, art, music, and a variety of electives. For those students who are not able to return to the brick and mortar classrooms, we offer a fully remote program. In order to accommodate the scheduling constraints of this model, in the areas of history, mathematics, science, and English we have leveled up our course selections and embedded extra support.

In addition to the academic portion of the Commack Model, we continually focus on the health, safety, and social emotional needs of our students. We emphasize the importance of maintaining good health and hygiene. We require that students adhere to proper social distance mandates, mask requirements, and the completion of daily health attestations. All individuals' temperatures are scanned as they enter the building each day, and students are further protected by individual sneeze guards on each desk. Each student has been assigned a Chromebook, which provides immediate access to new technology and serves as a connection to the classroom should anyone need to quarantine. Moreover, for those who participate in high risk athletics, our skilled nursing staff is on hand to administer all Covid tests as necessary. Students have access to co-curricular activities and honor societies. All of these measures detailed above have allowed students and families to remain engaged in the Commack Community during these most trying times.

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**

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Commack High School is full of student and faculty energy in the hallways, in the classrooms, on the fields, and in the community. Through student organizations and community partnerships, Commack pride is apparent in all facets of our programs, and student school spirit is infectious. From Friday morning student music performances in the main lobby, to student led productions and spirit days, all students have the opportunity to add to the character of the school. Even during the pandemic, students are encouraged to complete their Community Service and Involvement hours, further connecting them to areas within the school and local community.

A low student/faculty ratio provides a challenging academic environment for all students. According to the “New York State School Report Card” Commack High School is one of the highest performing schools in New York State. Last year’s graduating class consisted of 562 students, and the total school population was 2,113. Commack is a residential community of 39,000 people located approximately 50 miles east of New York City in Suffolk County. The county has a population of 1.5 million and adjacent Nassau County has a total of approximately 1.35 million. There are 90 public and private high schools located in Suffolk County. The Northern State Parkway, the Long Island Expressway, Jericho Turnpike and Commack Road are major arteries leading to Commack. The school district consists of one high school, one middle school, two intermediate schools and four elementary schools, with a total enrollment of 5,875 students.

Key strategies within our school have encouraged growth within all of our students. Commack High School provides academic choice and challenge to all students through an array of college preparatory programs. Regents level and honors curriculum are offered to all students, as well as the challenge associated with dual enrolled college classes, IB and AP courses, and hands-on career and technical education. Students are provided access and opportunity to a variety of student-led organizations, which are tied to the community with the service opportunities provided. This year, we have conducted a three phase rollout of approximately sixty clubs and honor societies where in-person connections are fostered within CDC guidelines. Strategies within the school that guarantee the opportunities are afforded to all students include teacher and staff professional development and a building wide approach to student and staff involvement service opportunities. Staff are trained on multi-tiered levels of support, supporting the social emotional needs of students, particularly this year through a trauma informed lens, and raising cultural awareness. Students are always encouraged to take on leadership roles and work with staff mentors throughout the years. Additionally, there is continuous focus on opportunities that support and promote the 4C's; collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. This focus is an outgrowth of this unique year's guiding principles that include providing students with voice and choice and access and opportunity through continuity of education, meeting graduation requirements, flexibility and creativity, while following all health and safety guidelines.

Some 2020-21 programs that our school offers, steeped in Commack tradition, include live music lessons and marching band, homecoming king and queen, alumni celebrations, induction ceremonies, scholarship and senior awards, fine arts celebrations, New York State Seal of Biliteracy opportunities, our spring musical, virtual extra help for all students for all core classes daily, our student connections programs allowing all students to work collaboratively in school on their virtual day, daily dedication program where students and staff can publicly share their stories how a friend, or staff member inspired them or helped them through a difficult time, spirit days, competition events for all grades, senior day ceremonies for all varsity sports, and the list continues. Specifically, for our co-curricular clubs, we offer activities to support the passions of all of our students. For our teachers, we celebrate our successes focusing on turnkey experiences of professional development in the areas of curriculum and instruction, technology, collaboration, and how to creatively remain connected and engaged during this year.

For approximately 6% of our students and some staff who are completely remote, we also intentionally focus on supporting their mental health and well-being. Author, speaker, and Director of Innovation for the Future Ready Schools, Thomas C. Murray, facilitated a virtual kick-off for all staff at the start of this unique school year. Mr. Murray continued to connect, build relationships, and support the remote staff for several months through a Voxer book study about his book, Personal & Authentic.



The District also intentionally focused on supporting staff with all of their technology needs. They were provided personalized, one on one technology support with an instructional technology coach dedicated to supporting their changing needs. Workshops and office hours were provided weekly, as well as the ability to receive immediate assistance. The experts on our staff were utilized to create Google classrooms for all resources and tech assistance to support student engagement.

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

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

Our Instructional Task Force created the most effective model of instruction for our Commack students to return to the building. During the spring 2020 state shutdown, the core academic areas conducted an in-depth analysis of student skills. Based on this analysis, it was determined that when students are physically present at school, increased core academic face to face time was essential. Additionally, with our hybrid model, access to technology and distribution of 1:1 Chromebooks was crucial for our long term success.

As a result of the pandemic, there were drastic changes to our operating schedule due to staffing, resources, and family choice for instructional modality, which necessitated a need to level-up in multiple disciplines to meet the needs of our learners. Throughout the school year, teachers and administrators collaboratively planned, implemented, and reflected on curriculum and the delivery of instruction. Initially, after school quarantine support was provided for students in need. After input from all stakeholders, changes were made to allow quarantine students the ability to access the class through live streaming. The after school quarantine support for all students became a virtual departmental support class taught by members of our staff.

We are entrenched in a school-wide effort to promote authentic assessment that focuses on 21st century skills such as, communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Our school administered authentic assessments as the mid-year checkpoint assessment in each department. In addition, we are working with Jay McTighe to create authentic final assessments as replacements for traditional final exams. We are using criteria established by McTighe in his book, *Designing Authentic Performance Tasks and Projects*. These criteria include products with certain characteristics such as student ability to transfer learning into novel, real-world applications and tasks. Other characteristics considered include: real or imaginary audiences, student choice, and opportunities for peer review, feedback, and student reflection.

We offer several pathways that are tiered. Students may opt to engage in the IB Diploma Program, or they can take individual IB or AP courses to earn college credit, as well as college distance learning opportunities. Additionally, they can take a Regents-level sequence that results in a Regents Diploma or a Career Development Occupational Studies (CDOS) sequence for students looking to pursue vocational training.

#### **Social Studies/History/Civic Learning and Engagement**

The mission of the Social Studies Department is to actively engage and educate students in the social sciences as well as the study, analysis, and interpretation of historical thought, culture, and records. It is our hope that our students develop into internationally minded young adults who will make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.

All social studies courses, regardless of the level, are vertically aligned and centered around the NYS Social Studies Framework and Social Studies Practices. Our advanced social studies courses which fulfill the state requirements include: Global History 1 Enriched, AP World History Modern, IB History 1, and IB History 2. We have a wide variety of elective courses that serve the diverse interest of the student population as they range from challenging IB elective courses such as IB Economics, IB Psychology, IB Global Politics, and College Sociology (Syracuse University Project Advance) to more traditional courses like American and Global History on Film, Holocaust Studies, and Psychology and You.

There are multiple formative and summative assessments in each course as well as quarterly authentic assessments to measure student learning. Courses have blended assessment strategies veering from the traditional pen and paper in-school exams to utilizing our hybrid model to assess student learning at home through Google Forms/Docs and Castle Learning. Each marking period, students receive a grade for their content understanding, which is largely based on summative multiple choice assessments and they also receive a writing grade based upon their demonstrated essay writing skills along with authentic writing

tasks. This style of assessment allows teachers to guide instruction based on student understanding of the content curriculum. Authentic assessments, which are also utilized regularly, include opportunities for students to apply their learning in a real world context. For example, our juniors, when studying the Constitution, selected a Principle or Amendment and connected it to a recent event through a letter writing campaign where they asked their appropriate government official to address the matter based on their perspective. Common midterm exams are modeled based on the course's respective Regents/AP/IB exam and have played an important role in providing data on student performance in skills and content and allow teachers to make instructional adjustments which has contributed to students' success on their culminating exams. Research elements exist in all courses and focus on helping students to find appropriate and multiple sources to support their argument while recognizing the challenges faced by historians when studying the past.

Department meetings are a collaborative time for teachers to share best practices and align curriculum and assessment. A focus on instructional technology has resulted in the department utilizing software such as FlipGrid, Screencastify, and Kami.

## Science

Our science program encourages all students to engage in four years of science study. The core science subject areas of Earth Science, Life Science, Chemistry and Physics are the foundation of these studies and the course requirements are tailored to the Regents and International Baccalaureate (IB) curricula. IB course offerings include: IB Biology SL, IB Biology HL I and II, IB Chemistry SL, IB Chemistry HL I and II, IB Physics SL, IB Physics HL II, IB Sports, Exercise, and Health Science, and IB Environmental Systems and Societies. College credit-bearing electives include: College Geology (Suffolk CC), College Chemistry Forensics (Syracuse University), College Anatomy and Physiology (LIU), and College Marine Biology (Suffolk CC). Other departmental electives span the wide array of our students' interests: Mysteries of the Universe, Forensic Science, Horticulture, Marine Biology, Topics in Chemistry, and Conceptual Physics.

We have a robust and award-winning Science Research Program offered in grades 9-12. Students learn basic research skills in 9th grade and compete in Toshiba/NSTA's Exploravision contest. As the students progress from 10th-12th grades, they become more independent in their project work, often working with mentors outside of the school in universities and research institutions, and aim to compete in local, national, and international science fairs like LISEF, ISEF, Regeneron STS, JSHS, and others. Our research program is also partnered with Stanford University in doing work to develop novel fruit fly lines that scientists around the world use to study a variety of diseases in their own laboratories. This program allows our students to learn and collaborate with scientists from around the globe weekly via Zoom.

Pedagogically, science teachers have transitioned to the 3-dimensional approaches of the NGSS/NYSLS which dovetail nicely with IB goals. This means that students are regularly planning and carrying out an investigation and data analysis, rather than solely memorizing specific information. Online simulations as well as carefully planned in-person lab activities have maintained the student-centeredness of our instruction while maintaining standards of safety. Some science courses have instituted a program of self-paced units in which the students have choice in the activities they do to master the subject material. The teacher acts as a facilitator and monitors each student individually as they progress through the units of study.

In all courses, formative assessments occur daily in a variety of ways, notably in Google Forms, Castle Learning, Test Wizard, Vocabulary.com, Quizizz, Quizlet, and with polling functions in Zoom and Nearpod, JamBoard, and Mentimeter to name a few. Lab practicals, website design, lab simulations, and various types of presentations, both in-person and asynchronous, are collectively developed and are regularly infused into the units of study. Summative assessments depend on the course, and include the Regents exams administered by NY State, IB exams, and departmentally developed midyear and final assessments. In the last administration of the Regents exams in June 2019, the average passing percentage for all four core sciences was 90%.

## Mathematics

We have a very challenging math curriculum that includes IB Math Analysis & Approaches HL, IB Math Analysis & Approaches SL, IB Math Applications & Interpretations SL, AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, AP Statistics, AP Computer Science, PLTW/Computer Principles, College Calculus (St. John's University), College Pre-Calculus (Suffolk Community College) and Math Research. We also have many courses that meet the diverse needs of our students that include Advanced Algebra, Real Life Statistics, Geometry Applications, different levels of Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2. Our computer science program includes exposure to many different programming languages including, Python, Java, HTML, CSS, PHP, Javascript, SQL and Scratch.

Integrated co-teaching is available among our Algebra 1, Geometry and Algebra 2. Math offerings for students in special class include Algebra 1A and Algebra 1B, Algebra 1 with lab, Geometry with lab, Intermediate Algebra, Algebra 2 with Lab.

This year, teachers have been innovative in finding authentic ways to teach and assess their students while overcoming the many obstacles created by our current environment. Teachers have created video tutorials featuring full lessons with closure activities to assess students' understanding of the topic and material. They also meet virtually with their students outside of the school day to provide extra instruction. We have embraced many web based programs including Google Classroom, Delta Math, Quizziz, and AP classroom.

Assessments have been creative and include many practices that will continue into the future. Assignments that involve grading other student's Internal Assessments for IB in order to help them better understand the rubric so that they can improve upon their own papers were well received by the students. Finding ways to allow the students to work collaboratively without being physical in groups were also highly beneficial.

#### Reading/English Language Arts

Learning goals in the areas of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and language processes, as detailed in the New York State Next Generation Learning Standards, have been adopted by the English Department as standards to be achieved by all students. The curriculum attends to reading both literary and informational texts as well as writing for the purposes of persuasion, explanation, and narration. Additionally, there is an emphasis on research and media skills. Students closely read literature and informational texts for interpretation, critical analysis and evaluation. Students write as a means of asserting and defending claims, conveying ideas and information, and expressing real or imaginary experiences. Students speak and listen for comprehension and collaboration, integrating digital media as a means of presenting information.

All of our students are enrolled in an enriched English course in Grades 9 and 10. Our enriched English courses are designed to preview the type of coursework that is involved in either IB Literature or IB Language and Literature resulting in students enrolling during their 11th grade year in one of those two courses. The shift for our 11th grade students to all take the IB Language and Literature course occurred one year earlier than anticipated. In the 19-20 school year, 191 students were enrolled in the IB Language and Literacy course. For the 21-22 school year there are 310 students who have requested this course. The increase in the number of students who are taking one of our most challenging courses proves the success of our leveling up model in English. Our SAT average scores increased 50 points and our ACT average scores increased approximately 2 points from 2019 to 2020.

All students take English 9 Enriched, English 10 Enriched and Language and Literature 11 with integrated classes available for all. In grade 12, students have the option of Language and Literature 2, Literature 2, College English Composition, as well as English 12, which has an integrated option. There are also virtual and live electives to include Communications/Public Speaking, Film Study, International Baccalaureate Theatre Arts, Language and Music, Sports Media, Introduction to Acting, Introduction to Video Production, College Television Studio Production, College Advanced TV Studio Production, Video Highlights, Video Portfolio, and Writer's Workshop.

In our hybrid model, online platforms such as Kami, Padlet, Flip Grid, and Google's Apps for Education have helped us continue student collaboration in text analysis and response. Additionally, these apps, along with Turnitin.com, have given us new means to receive and evaluate student assessments.

All of our major summative assessments are built on formative assessments and carefully designed processes. This includes written assignments, presentations and commentaries/oral recordings. These assessments are also created with differentiation in mind for all students. For English Language Learners (ELLs) and special education students, we have developed graphic organizers and text frames to help all students work toward successful completion of our summative assessments. Upon completion of summative assessments, teachers reflect on the effectiveness of instruction and the formative assessments, and changes are made to improve for the future. These changes are often developed through teacher professional growth plans.

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

As a natural outgrowth of our academic programs and extra-curricular opportunities, Commack High School prepares all students with the skills to be college and career ready. Embedded in the curriculum of IB, AP, dual-enrolled classes, as well as all college preparatory curriculum, are the underpinnings of assisting students to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners. Commack’s curriculum focuses on students cultivating inquiry-based thoughts, being principled with integrity, enhancing inter and intrapersonal communication skills, becoming risk-takers, reflective and balanced. Through Wilson Tech Career programs, internship placements in the community and required Business courses, students have opportunities to be leaders, understand civic responsibilities and align work-based learning opportunities with prospective careers. Through the multitude of student led organizations both within the high school and partnered in the community, students are able to put the curriculum and proficiency into action amongst their peers and have real-life opportunities to show the skills they have been both implicitly and explicitly working to develop.

Our instructional technology program prepares our students for their future. Students engage in video conferencing transporting them on virtual field trips to museums, laboratories and schools throughout the world. Authentic experiences to prepare for college and career include: Touchit interactive displays, Smart Boards in every instructional room, multi-use video conference labs, a Mac lab for music production, a full audio and television recording studio, robotics lab, student computer labs, CISCO programming lab, Stanford University Fly Lab, Android tablets to support Project Lead the Way (PLTW) curriculum, WACOM art design tablets, digital signage displays, and 3D printing and laser woodcutting machines.

Specific examples include our IB Global Politics class competing in the “nation building” game with students across the state; Sports Medicine classes diagnose injuries using virtual renderings; Environmental classes use the sand table to recreate naturally occurring geographic phenomena; and classes using devices to access scholarly databases for research.

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

The art and music programs support students’ acquisition of essential skills and knowledge through all grade levels in the high school. These courses are taught on alternating days and involve additional work on opposite class days when they are not specifically working within the class period. Students are taught similar concepts virtually, and teachers continue to offer feedback to assess a variety of forms that include but are not limited to video submissions, photographic submissions and recording technology. We are able to continuously teach concepts appropriate to our courses and age levels. Most importantly, we are still able to teach intrinsic values that the arts possess, which include discipline, diligence in a craft, collaboration, time management, emotional pleasure, amongst many others.

When it comes to nutrition, New York State has provided free breakfast and lunch to all students in the state from K-12 since the pandemic began. The program has reduced the stress and pressure for the families who were affected by pandemic in any way. In the physical education and health department we have shifted our

focus to the social and emotional needs of our students. We continue to focus on activities that keep the students engaged and connected to the school system and staff. We also emphasize the importance of fitness and activity in their life and how it will affect overall mental health. Through our District Anti-Vaping Task Force, our students were active in creating over 150 PSAs with the goal of raising awareness and changing public attitudes and behavior related to vaping. The entire Commack community voted on the most effective PSA campaign videos targeting audiences of high school students seeking help, parents, and middle school students.

The study of a second language occupies a unique position in today's world. From the college-bound student to the future employees of a global society, the Commack High School World Languages program offers a variety of courses that meet the diverse language learning needs of our student body to include all levels of Spanish, French, Italian, American Sign Language, and Latin and Ancient Greek. In recognition of the importance of bilingualism, we are proud to offer the NYS Seal of Biliteracy for those students who have studied and attained a high proficiency in two or more languages and meet all State requirements.

All Career and Technical education programs are offered to students in grades 11 and 12. Commack recognizes the importance of occupational and career training and provides this opportunity to all students. Internship programs are offered to every student in grades 10, 11 and 12. These opportunities allow students to observe and work with a mentor to gain insight into a prospective occupation. Every student also works with their school counselor to complete interest inventories, and career surveys and plans throughout their years at Commack High School. Further, the IB Learner Profile is embedded in all disciplines focusing on attributes that develop responsible members of local, national, and global communities where our learners strive to be inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective.

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

Commack High School Special Services Department offers a comprehensive network of supports that spread across a continuum of services. For all learners at CHS daily tutoring is provided in all disciplines by our faculty during weekly extra help and daily evening sessions. For all ninth and tenth grade ELA students a push-in program is offered to support differentiation. Based upon the recommendations of the Committee on Special Education students are provided with individualized education plans to meet their needs. Programs that are available vary from a least restrictive environment to a restrictive special class setting. Programs are recommended based upon many factors including but not limited to teacher reports, educational testing, cognitive testing, and group discussion. Goals in the area of determined need are created to assist students with closing the achievement gaps in the area of study skills, reading, writing, and mathematics. Goal progress is reported quarterly and expected to be achieved in one school year. Specific programs include but are not limited to consultant teacher direct/indirect, resource room, integrated co-teaching in core classes (12:1), special class (15:1), special class (8:1:2), and work-based learning. The various program offerings are geared toward individualizing instruction to assist the student in meeting their IEP goals. The unique work-based learning program (WBL) provides students with the opportunity to work in various areas of employment. WBL offers experiences including retail, food/restaurant preparation, and grocery. In addition to program support, a vast array of related services are provided to students with the intention of assisting them in providing access to their education program. Services can include psychological counseling, speech/language, physical therapy, occupational therapy, vision, and hearing. In addition to special services, Commack offers Homework Helpers after school to assist students with homework completion in addition to working on strengthening students' executive functioning deficits. Commack Special Services is dedicated to providing students support aligned with a free and appropriate public education.

Students who are identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) receive additional academic support based on their level of proficiency. As students move through the prescribed New York State proficiency levels, their stand-alone class time reduces and then is eliminated. Eventually,

students receive only push-in support during English or another core content area. Class time during stand-alone periods is devoted to language acquisition and support for core subjects. The push-in classes enable teachers to modify and tailor the curriculum and assessments to fit the needs and performance level of the students. Often, ENL teachers will provide additional support such as graphic organizers or frames for textual responses. These tools provide necessary differentiation to enable ELLs to succeed in their coursework. ELLs are initially identified according to state regulations in a process that begins with a home language questionnaire (HLQ) that families complete during registration in a public school district. Based on the HLQ, students are asked to interview and then ultimately take the state identification exam (NYSITELL) if teachers determine they are potentially ELLs. The NYSITELL results place them in a proficiency level and start them on a path to becoming fully proficient. Commack High School is proud of the continuous articulation between general education and special education teachers, support staff, and families in order to meet the needs of all students.

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

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

Keeping students connected has always been a fundamental guiding principle and part of the culture of our high school family. In a recent study of our school culture, 96% of our students felt connected to an adult in the school. The remaining 4% were directly linked to our mental health staff for support. As part of our continuous focus on engagement, we rolled out three phases of co-curricular activities, clubs, honor societies, supported music, art, technology, athletics, community service, and service learning. We also celebrate daily dedications of inspiration. Some of the highlights of this year's programs include: our lunch period activities where student captains in each lunch period lead socially distanced group activities that promote discussion, socialization, and peer leadership. Further, we created multiple Spirit Weeks and "pop-up" spirit days supported by the student body and faculty dressing up according to themes. Students and faculty submitted pictures of their participation through Google Forms, which were then posted to the community. The Senior Class participated in the Class of 2021 Royal Court Ceremony and voted to elect a Class King and Queen. A socially distanced ceremony honoring the Court and the King and Queen was held live and also live-streamed to the community. The month of May has been coined, Mack MAYhem; a month-long series of competitions between grade levels and faculty with a theme of relationship building and school spirit. Competitions are a mixture of in-person and remote allowing for a wide range of student participation which include building small parade floats, socially distanced field-day competitions, trivia, and an all-remote evening of virtual game-show games.

At Commack High School, all our honor societies and student leadership organizations have been actively running remotely since the start of the 2020-2021 school year, and they have hosted both virtual and in-person induction ceremonies. Our marching band, consisting of approximately 180 students, recently resumed practice and activities. This coincided with the opening of all of our athletic teams and competitions. This year, our theater students will be performing Little Shop of Horrors as the in-person spring musical which will also be streamed for the entire community including our senior citizens as a special thank you. We will close the year with events such as the all-inclusive Commitment Day Parade, which celebrates the next step in the journey of our graduating seniors as they move on to college, career, military, trade school or employment. Our seniors will also engage in a Senior Walk where they will parade in their caps and gowns through the halls of their elementary schools while the primary students and faculty enthusiastically cheer and wave signs of encouragement and congratulations. Our students will also enjoy end of year barbecues that include music, field games, and opportunities to sign yearbooks.

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

Commack High School has found that consistent, transparent communication with our students, staff and family/community members is paramount to our success and school improvement. Commack takes pride in valuing the input from all stakeholder groups and holds multiple focus groups to reflect on practice and improve upon programs. Commack's many committees, comprised of all stakeholder groups, provide opportunities for student and family voice to be heard and considered. There are committees for School Based Management, Parent Advisories, Parent Task force for Re-Opening, Parent Focus Groups for Strategic Planning in each academic and co-curricular area, strong relationships with the PTA, SEPTA, and a School to Business partnership which fosters community voice and choice. Throughout the pandemic, Commack has continued to engage parent participation through in-school meetings, virtual meetings and virtual events. All school sponsored events (college and career readiness, civic engagement, PTA, student led organizations, and more) have the capacity to run virtually, which has kept our communication with the community consistent and timely. The high school also provides recorded virtual presentations on all topics, departments and curriculum to parents on a consistent basis. Additionally, throughout the pandemic, Commack shifted some of the programs (such as internships) to a virtual setting, complete with video resources, both live and recorded, as to continue to afford our students a school to business partnership. As resources and opportunities come to our attention, Commack fully investigates and researches potential avenues for our students to further enhance their skills and growth. Commack has partnered with large community and regional companies (CISCO, Northwell Health, local hospitals and businesses) to provide



virtual academic programs to students throughout the pandemic. Not only does Commack research programs to ensure appropriateness for our students, but we also mentor and guide students through applications and placements. Much of this is happening on a larger student level, as we introduce our teachers and classes to such organizations to maximize opportunities for a larger group of students.

The Commack High School community is grateful for our academic affiliation with eight colleges and universities. Ninety-seven percent of our graduating seniors participate in one college level course while approximately sixty-five percent of our seniors participate in five or more college level courses. Our work with institutions of higher education and communication with our community have continued to strengthen through our video messages, website, social media, and direct connections. Since the Commack community does not have a Main Street, Commack High School and all of its facilities serve as a central location for community members and families to identify as their hometown hub.

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

Each year, Commack High School takes on a new theme that focuses on building a professional culture of support and excellence. With the challenges of the pandemic, this particular year was dedicated to the theme of “Commack Strong.” One of our students created a logo, and we distributed decals and writing pads to the staff to further support our message. Each of our faculty meetings this year needed to occur via Zoom as we couldn’t fit our large numbers into one space with the current CDC guidelines. Our high school family is celebrated weekly in our Teacher Newsletter/Calendar, at Faculty Meetings, Board Meetings, Department Meetings, CORE and Lead Teacher Meetings and direct emails to the staff as well as postings to social media.

This year, when making the transition to the hybrid model we knew we needed to adopt a new platform that was student and staff friendly. In a period of nine days, we rolled out the Google Classroom platform. With this transition, we needed to provide support for all of our educators, students, and parents. Our staff is a strong professional community that has worked tirelessly on transitioning to the Google Classroom platform, integrating technology into the classroom for instruction while focusing special attention to mental health. The Google Classroom has assisted our teachers in creating an organized structure to support the delivery of instruction and increase the ability to communicate with students and parents. Google Classroom has been identified by our focus groups as something we want to hold onto as we plan for the re-opening for the 2021-2022 school year. Concurrently, our 1:1 Chromebook device rollout for all students and staff created a new layer of learning that forced some teachers who were reluctant to embrace educational technology to transform into some of our leading experts and cheerleaders. In our organizational structure, we have Tech Building Coaches, a Lead Tech Teacher, and a Tech Support Team. From the moment we began our technological transition, our team offered continuous live and virtual office hours and posted a CHS Technology Resource section in the CHS Google Classroom. Our technology staff and Google Certified Educators regularly post information about resources such as: Go Guardian, Jamboard, Android Issues, Student Help Center, Approved Software Resources, Padlet, Kami, Presenting Live Lessons, Google Collaboration, Document Tricks, eSV Support, Screen Recording, Student/Teacher Resources, Tech Newsletters, Chromebook Assistance, Zoom, Infinite Campus Assistance, and more.

Additionally, in order to support the mental health of our students and staff, we offer mindfulness videos, self-care strategies on how to identify and manage anxiety, and support information created by our mental health staff that focuses on coping strategies and social emotional learning. All members of the high school community feel valued and supported.

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

Simon Sinek once said, “Leadership is not about being in charge. Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge.” This has been a mantra for our Commack High School leadership team. Taking care of those in our charge has been most challenging in this stress-filled year of uncertainty. One of the most important roles of the principal is to take care of all the members of the school family with a deep understanding that all individuals are unique and have their own story. In order to carry out our commitment to our students, the delegation of work is divided among assistant principals, curriculum leaders, lead teachers, teachers,

teaching assistants, aides, secretaries, custodians, security, coaches, central office staff, and our beloved nurses. Our parents are true partners who work with all school personnel on reopening plans, advisory boards, task force committees, budget development, event planning, and fundraising efforts.

From video presentations created by the principal, curriculum leaders, and central office staff, to the creation of QR codes to instantly connect with a mental health provider, the importance of treating the high school community as a family is woven into all that we do. The leadership marathon that we live involves treating everyone with respect, working to our greatest capacities, listening to the voices of our students, parents and staff, being flexible, creative and transparent, and doing the best we can every day. For our team, leadership is adapting to changing events, communicating clearly, connecting with compassion and passion, setting realistic goals when the impossible is being asked, digging to the deepest fiber of our beings to do the right thing whether we want to or not, and taking responsibility for our actions. We continue to design and redesign curriculum to fit a hybrid model while maintaining the highest level of excellence in instruction. We re-examine systems and routines to balance the stress of our students, staff and families. Most intimately, we have kept our guiding principles as a driving force throughout the year. Building and flying the plane at the same time is the leadership challenge that we endured throughout the entire year.

While keeping our vision in mind and planning for the future, the principal and assistant principal participated in International Baccalaureate (IB) training as Head of School for the incorporation of the Career Planning (CP) program to complement our existing Diploma Program (DP). The teachers, curriculum leaders, assistant principals and principal were engaged in the application process and prepared for the five year self- study of our existing 20 year IB program.

Finally, to face the health challenges of this year, the principal, assistant principals, central office staff, athletic director and our nurses have all worked together to process our positive COVID-19 cases and hundreds of weekly COVID-19 tests to support our robust athletic program. Above all, the connection with students, families, and staff related to the social and emotional well-being of all has been the highest priority for Commack High School's educational leaders.

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

Classroom teachers establish rules and guidelines that foster equity, cultural awareness, and respect in the classroom. Our Global History ninth grade students spend an abundance of curricular time learning about the origins and major beliefs of many world religions. This develops a broader respect and understanding for the cultural diversity of our community. A foundational principle of the social studies classroom is analyzing sources from multiple perspectives. Students are taught to evaluate sources from multiple perspectives to understand how purpose, audience, and background can influence the author's position. Through this lens, students learn to respect other cultures and demonstrate respect for a diversity of opinions.

Teachers in social studies classes have their students regularly reflect on current events as a way of connecting the past to the present. Oftentimes, this is done thematically as students study issues of culture, civic participation, and equality; they connect their learning and experiences to current events. Socratic seminars and traditional debate on current events allow students to express informed positions while learning to respect the opinions of others and respectfully disagree with other viewpoints. Healthy dialogue about current events has continued digitally by responding to Google Classroom discussion board questions as it is important for students to learn appropriate online behavior as part of their civic duty. Students are given opportunities to share their views and possible participation in social movements both in the classroom and online, both facilitated by teachers.

With recent social justice campaigns in mind, our district has instituted a Multiracial Curriculum Review Committee. The charge of this committee is to identify cultural assumptions in the curriculum and engage in a K-12 review of our program to determine how we may learn from our

past to improve our future. The committee membership consists of curriculum specialists, teachers, parents, a Board member, administrators and adhoc student members. Our committee began to review our current curriculum, State standards and how students currently engage in critical conversations about culture.

Further, our staff and students participate in the District Legislative Advocacy Committee which was established to assist the Board of Education in implementing solutions regarding legislative matters. The Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education members, Commack residents, Grades 9-12 students, Commack staff, and members from the collective bargaining units assess the impact of existing and proposed State and Federal education legislation, promoting legislation that supports the District's mission, and communicating vital information to our residents. This year's advocacy platforms presented by our students to our local senators and assemblymen include support for school funding, school safety, mental health, tech equity, and alternate pathways for graduation.

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

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One strategy that is continuously refined and noted as the most instrumental practice to our school's success is listening to the voice of our entire school family. Commack tradition is steeped in the close knit relationships fostered in every stakeholder group. Every member is valued and appreciated. This past year, our high school family needed each other to overcome significant challenges. All voices are heard in planning, reflecting, adapting, brainstorming without judgement, supporting new instructional practice and technologies. Trust and respect are critical when decisions are made that directly impact the health, safety, well-being and academics of our students.

Our intention is to graduate students who excel in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Embedded in these 21st century skills and as a follow up to a study on the culture of our high school family, we formatted the year with the following themes: sources of strength in relationships; in maintaining health and wellbeing; in academics; and with the final focus: how are we a source of strength for others? During homeroom, students and staff engaged in weekly discussion revolving around a Master Teacher quotation that was broadcast throughout the building. Voices were heard and their ideas and suggestions were embedded in all of our planning for the year. We built in check points and acted upon changes. For example, after our midyear focus groups, we examined trends in feedback from our stakeholder groups. It was overwhelmingly apparent from our students, faculty, and parents that they wanted more movement in the building. In our seven-period hybrid model with fifty-four minute periods, it was challenging for students to remain in the same space for the entirety of the day; it also proved equally challenging for staff to race from class to class. At the half-way point in the year, we listened to the feedback and enabled students to move from classroom to classroom while also keeping their small group cohorts together. Further, as a result of listening to the voice of our staff, we created a beautiful space filled with computers, couches, tables, chairs, a coffee station, refrigerator, all wrapped in the artwork created by our staff as a collaborative space for planning and interdisciplinary work. Additionally, as an outgrowth of listening to our CHS family, we created an Action and Collaboration Team (A.C.T.) whereby the multi-tiered system of support addressed the academic needs, behavioral issues, and the social emotional needs in order to provide a structure for student success. We focused on a global perspective of access and opportunity as well as choice and challenge with the goal of offering students personalized opportunities for creating pathways to college and careers. Our success is a result of listening to the voices of our teachers, students, parents, and community members.