

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

Official School Name Nathaniel Hawthorne Middle School 74  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 61-15 Oceania Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Bayside State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 11361-2139

County Queens County

Telephone (718) 631-6800 Fax (718) 631-6899

Web site/URL https://www.ms74q.com/ E-mail bcontarsy@schools.nyc.gov

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\* Danielle Giunta E-mail dgiunta4@schools.nyc.gov  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name New York City Geographic District #26 Tel. (718) 631-6943

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 Not Applicable Not Applicable  
(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):
- 23 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 6 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 34 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	176	167	343
7	208	143	351
8	238	178	416
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	622	488	1110

\*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):
- 0.1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 65 % Asian
  - 3 % Black or African American
  - 13 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 15 % White
  - 2.9 % 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: 4%

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	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	24
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	44
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	1160
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Korean, Romanian, Spanish, Tagalog

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 39 %

Total number students who qualify: 437

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %

168 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>33</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>15</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>48</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>3</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>68</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.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	5
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	61
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	17
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	17
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	9

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1

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	97%	97%	97%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2020.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

Together Everyone Achieves More. TEAM 74’s approach to problem solving fosters a learning environment that allows students to soar, from good, to great, and BEYOND.

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

Our school’s operation this year has been a reflection of the larger arc of the pandemic. The school year began with all students learning remotely, engaged in online instruction. From the beginning of October to the middle of November, the school employed a hybrid model where one group of students learned fully remote, while another rotated through the building in a cohort model that had them learning in-person or online remotely, depending on the day. From the middle of November to the end of February, all students in the school were learning remotely, engaged in online instruction. From the end of February through the submission of this application, the school is in a hybrid model where one group of students is learning fully remote through online learning, and the balance of our students are receiving in-person instruction five days a week.

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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Established in 1954, the Nathaniel Hawthorne Middle School has a history of demonstrating excellence in education. We would like to introduce ourselves in this Blue Ribbon Application by using the name with which we most-closely identify, and the message which resonates throughout our community of Bayside, Queens. We are TEAM 74, and we firmly believe that through collaboration Together Everyone Achieves More.

The acronym of TEAM is our school's motto, the slogan for the students, family, staff, and our beacon towards excellence. The slogan is everywhere: newsletters, clothing (a.k.a. Hawthorne wear), bumper stickers, benches in the back garden, the lobby and Hall of Kindness, our morning announcements, Town Hall meetings, PTA meetings, every valedictorian speech at graduation, all virtual/social media platforms and just about everywhere one is to look in the building. The phrasing allows us to guide every meeting whether it is led by a teacher, a student, a parent, or a member of the administration. The approach serves as our compass, giving purpose to all actions and steps that we take. Through this united vision all members of the community have a framed reference and shared language for their conversations which serve to enhance our goals in achieving excellence and equity for all.

We are proud of the role we play in developing our students into the leaders of tomorrow through the lens of respect and social-emotional awareness. Similar to the ways in which our teachers meet, we believe in student voice, College and Career Readiness, and have a plethora of teams in which students are involved and challenged to be leaders among their peers and the community. Student leaders from all classes have been trained in Anchor Tools from RULER, Respect for All and the 8 Keys of Excellence from the Quantum Learning program. Students have conducted day long workshops with their peers resulting in class and school-wide charters and are part of the decision-making process for new initiatives doled out within our community playing a pivotal role in spreading tolerance, acceptance, and respect of the myriad cultures we celebrate.

Our Ambassador structure is a unique component within TEAM 74. Composed of 2-3 lead teachers from each department, Ambassadors meet with the administrative team to discuss new initiatives, problems of practice, and professional development. Ambassadors bring all work back to their departments to train, facilitate, create needs assessments, implement inquiry protocols and so on. Through the distributive leadership of the Ambassadors, our teacher teams have time afforded to them to meet, vertically (grade), horizontally (department), as well as by sub-groups of students for which they share across grades. During these meetings, teachers and administrators work together to ensure that all students are provided with curriculum which challenges them to be intellectually engaged, to feel safe to take risks, and to be inspired in taking ownership of their learning. Our major areas of study have been: growth mindset and social emotional learning, student-led parent teacher conferences, data-driven instruction, student engagement, instructional rounds, mindfulness for teachers, project based learning, diversity and knowledge of students, 21st Century skills, the Hallmarks of Advanced Literacy, and feedback.

As a school with first, second, and multi-generational immigrant households, we take every opportunity to celebrate cultural diversity through in-school activities as well as community engagement. We view diversity as our greatest strength, and have not lost sight of its significance in the past year as the pandemic has affected each of our households differently. In our endeavor to support our students academically, socially and emotionally, we recognize the role our teachers play at the center of our work-- if our teachers are supported, then they will feel safe in taking the same intellectual risks that we are asking of our students. In support of such ambition are our systems in place for teacher teams and professional development. TEAM 74 celebrates professional growth and takes the numerous opportunities afforded us through the New York City Department of Education to study strong school leadership, school culture, and student achievement. Our teacher team strategy is what allows us to successfully embrace the unthinkable changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our students are passionate, motivated to make a difference, and we leverage their world as the canvas for them to create. Their tasks challenge them to engage local leaders to solve problems, like when our students

contacted local politicians to obtain emission safety signs, warning idling cars at dismissal. The National Junior Honor Society and Student Organization are powerhouses of action in our school, and the centerpiece of their work for the year are their service projects and rallying together local businesses, alumni, and families to celebrate Lunar New Year. Challenging our students to respond to the world around them did not recede when we transitioned out of the school. Concerned about the 6th and 7th graders' emotional well-being during the pandemic, our 8th grade Friends of Rachel and our Student Equity Team students started a virtual recess for students to connect. Our teachers' creation of Google Classrooms as (virtual) community hubs have also gone a long way in keeping our students connected across our journey home.

We thrive in concert. Throughout this application, we hope you will clearly see TEAM in action and how the Hawks of the Nathaniel Hawthorne community continue to be there for each other as we--in the words of our mission statement-- endeavor to soar from good to great, and BEYOND!



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

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

TEAM 74’s core curriculum seeks to develop responsible life-long learners and productive citizens. Our school has a theory of action that if we view curriculum as a mirror for the self and a window into the lives of others, teachers can construct rigorous performance tasks that reflect student diversity. Student experience and outcomes will improve as a result of engagement with these tasks. Faithful execution of this work will allow students to soar, from good to great, and BEYOND. Through multiple instructional approaches, teachers provide differentiated, targeted, and responsive strategies aligned with the New York State Next Generation Learning Standards (NGLS) across all foundational subjects. To ensure we are addressing the standards across the school, teacher teams identify learning gaps and make curriculum adjustments through formative and summative assessments. We took the language and tenets of the NGLS Anchor standards for Speaking and Listening, Language, Reading, and Writing to create school-wide department goals and discussion protocols. Across grade levels and content areas, teachers have aligned rubrics to reflect accurate assessment of priority standards. As the nature of engagement has changed during the pandemic, student leaders initiated a revision of the TEAM 74 Classwork Rubric to ensure that assessment of Speaking and Listening standards were responsive to the shifts in their experience in fully-remote and hybrid learning environments. These rubrics and protocols serve to enhance student achievement and citizenship as they develop skills to work collaboratively, read and think critically, speak with good purpose, and develop leadership skills.

Core academic departments work collaboratively to study text complexity and to develop NGLSs aligned units. In recent years these units have been further revised in accordance with New York State’s Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CR-SE) Framework. In English Language Arts, our students experience four major units of study: Narrative, Argumentative, Response to Literature, and Informational. The curriculum builds a solid literary foundation for all students and prepares them for college and careers in the 21st century. Each unit of study begins with an overarching question that is centered on texts of leveled complexity. Mentor texts are used to analyze the craft, structure, and word choice of strong writing. In addition, the Hallmarks of Advanced Literacies are embedded into our instruction, engaging and emphasizing critical thinking and higher-order thinking skills. Using the school wide discussion protocol, students are engaged daily in speaking and listening activities through small group and whole class discussions.

Units of study embed real-world application performance tasks which promote domain-specific vocabulary and discourse. In Mathematics, daily lessons provide students with opportunities to deconstruct problems, allowing them to build procedural fluency through conceptual understanding. Inter-visitations, data analysis, continuous reflections, and the sharing of best practices creates professional learning opportunities and instructional knowledge to assess and impact student progress. Specifically, the Algebra for All initiative has leveraged these collaborative practices to improve student readiness for Algebra 1 with an in-depth look at mathematical discourse. Working together during inquiry sessions, math teacher teams reviewed performance tasks, activities, and formative and summative assessments.

In the course of daily instruction, lessons engage and challenge students to raise questions, read critically, consider many perspectives, and gather evidence in support of their interpretations. In Social Studies, teachers have invested time to ensure that all units incorporate six key Social Studies practices: gathering, interpreting, and using evidence; chronological reasoning and causation; comparison and contextualization; geographic reasoning; economics and economic systems; and civic participation. The resulting curriculum asks students to “think like historians” as they unpack the forces and events that have shaped life for them as members of multiple, overlapping communities: their homes, the community of Bayside, the borough of Queens, the City of New York, the State of New York, the United States, and the larger international community.

TEAM 74’s teacher-developed curriculum relies on teachers being effective consumers of information, as well as active participants in system-wide and national conversations around best practices in the field. The resultant, organic Science curriculum has been borne out of a variety of sources, including Amplify, NBRS 2021

Discovery Education, and teacher-created project-based learning assignments. Through partnerships with Urban Advantage and NGSS, teachers complete professional development workshops to support cutting edge Science instruction and promote active engagement with science practices within the classroom. As a result of this hands-on approach to curriculum development, teachers are able to look to make revisions to their lessons and tasks informed by student performance, thereby ensuring that students are receiving instruction that is appropriate for their individual needs.

Central to TEAM 74's successful navigation of the transitions brought about by the pandemic has been the mindset that the shift to virtual classrooms is an opportunity to grow rather than a hindrance. The transition to online learning has not changed the content covered in our courses, but has caused a shift in the methods we use to teach. What used to be hands-on labs competing in the classroom, are now done at home with the use of readily available household supplies or replaced with computer simulations. Classroom debates have transitioned over to discussion boards utilizing Jamboards and Flip Grids. Class field trips are now done through videos using Nearpod and edpuzzles or virtual reality. Not lost in this process has been the need to have accurate interim and periodic assessments to accurately capture student progress. In this regard, the iReady platform was maximized during our transition to remote learning aiding in remediation and enrichment. As a result, leveled supports and scaffolding have continued to be available so that students can make necessary improvements and demonstrate mastery.

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

While we are creating an environment wherein all students can soar from good to great, and BEYOND as part of their experience with us for three years, we pride ourselves on the steps we take to ensure that our students are able to excel in the next phases of their development. College and career readiness is a transcendent theme inside of New York City schools, but it is in the middle grades where the rubber truly meets the road. As part of our instructional program, we offer an accelerated track to all students who demonstrate a readiness to take it on. This Specialized Program enables many of our students to graduate with a handful of high school credit and exam requirements satisfied in 8th grade, thereby paving the way for them to be able to take a broader range of upper-level and Advanced Placement courses in high school. Additionally, we have a partnership with St. Francis College whereby 7th and 8th grade students are given the opportunity to work alongside graduate students in the field of science at the college campus. They attend seminars, perform labs, and engage in field work with Brooklyn Bridge Park and the East River as their classroom.

Our school has been recognized as a College Access for All school by New York City because of our commitment to preparing students for what comes next. This is evident not only in the rigor of our instructional program, but also in the experiences we create for our students so that they see themselves in leadership roles as soon as they demonstrate readiness. We start our visits to high schools and colleges for our students in 7th grade. While we were fortunate enough to receive funding for this in previous years for travel, these programs have actually been able to expand during the pandemic as our students participate in virtual visits that are not burdened by the same cost and logistics of in-person travel. Career Day is a one day event where 8th grade students have the opportunity to listen to a number of different presenters from a wide representation of the workforce. Guest speakers include parents of the school community, MS 74 alumni, local businesses, as well as members of our staff's families. Students are able to ask questions as speakers share their knowledge and expertise to give greater awareness of opportunities that are available to students when they graduate from the schools beyond their time as part of our school.

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

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

TEAM 74 is proud to be the only middle school within the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) that offers seven different disciplines as major course sequences: Studio Art, Graphic Art, Dance, Chorus, Band, Theatre and Moving Image. Students are able to self-select their preferred artform in

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sixth grade. Aligned to the NYCDOE Blueprint for the Arts, all majors provide students with a three year scope and sequence that allows them to develop a deep understanding and passion as they prepare for high school and BEYOND. All disciplines within the department utilize a team-developed Analysis Chart as a formative assessment tool. Emphasizing process over product, students write their observations, questions, and suggestions during in-process and final critiques. In concert with core academic departments, usage of department-wide accountable talk protocols ensures that all students have the necessary conversation starters to encourage student-to-student feedback, thereby promoting discourse and increased ownership of their preferred medium.

Our 8th grade students have opportunities to create portfolios, audition numbers, and other elements required for high school applications and auditions. Authentic summative assessments are highlighted within the community with live performances, exhibits, and festivals. Authentic learning experiences expose them to the richness that New York City provides. Each year TEAM 74 students gain entry to specialized arts high schools, and have multiple opportunities to submit their work in various contests across the NYCDOE. With the transition to remote learning, Google Classroom has provided students with an alternative manner to obtain their arts instruction, staying connected with their passion, even during a pandemic that has provided many obstacles.

The Physical Education and Health Department at TEAM 74 has understood the pivotal role that wellness has played in students' lives well before the onset of a pandemic that has tested our mettle in heretofore unseen ways. Their units of study provide our students with additional opportunities to make connections between physical fitness activities, sports, and mental health both inside and outside of school settings. Students utilize sentence starters, task cards, visual aids, technology/music, and the Mood Meter to ensure that students have a range of supports to express themselves. Additionally, we provide our Adapted PE students with opportunities to participate in Basketball, Volleyball and Track Tournaments each year with students across the NYCDOE. As the liaisons for our School Wellness Council, department teachers take the lead on various initiatives throughout each school year, culminating with the hosting of our annual Family Fitness Night for all TEAM 74 students and families. While it was virtual this past year, it still was attended by over 150 members of the community!

The Foreign Language department works closely to align units of study project-based tasks, and learning experiences for all students across two years of instruction in Spanish. Students in 8th grade have the opportunity to take the NYS Spanish Language Proficiency Exam. Technology, library and media are offered throughout all grade levels. Technology such as Promethean boards, document cameras, computer labs, laptop and iPad carts are accessible to all students on a daily basis. This robust inventory of devices ensured that during the pandemic all students who required a device to participate in remote learning had one. Lastly, TEAM 74 offers the following additional curriculum programs to build life-skills and character development; Computer Science For All, SEP (Software Engineering Program), Global Scholars through Global Cities Inc., and Respect For All (RFA) initiatives that combats bullying and harassment.

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

TEAM 74 strives to provide exceptional educational services to meet the needs of students with varying learning styles and to close the gap for students that are traditionally underserved/underperforming. Our educational model is based on key elements including a culture of high expectations for all students, small and personalized learning communities, a team of highly qualified teachers and school leaders, and a school-community (Parents & Elected Officials) as partners in the success of our students. We utilize a proactive approach to identifying the specific and unique needs of our students. Our students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) receive Special Education services tailored to meet their individual needs, primarily through the existence of self-contained and integrated co-teaching classes on every grade level. For our students who require specialized programs, such as; Horizons for students with Autism to ACES (Academic, Career, Essential Skills) for children who are alternately assessed. In addition, TEAM 74 tailors instruction for English Language Learners (ELLs) based on the Bilingual Progressions and current data such as the EDAT, NYSESLAT, TEAM 74 meetings and student feedback.

Content area teachers of ELLS design and scaffold instruction by utilizing graphic organizers, visuals, modeling and purposeful groupings to support students' strengths and target students' needs. Our Language Proficiency Team (LPT) analyzes and assesses ELL performance through creating portfolios that include results from EDAT data tool, NYSESLAT, ELA, Math tests to determine whether a student is improving or at risk.

Incorporating the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework, which includes Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). MTSS provides a method of early identification, intervention, and next steps. Our modified MTSS framework uses three tiers of support to assist all students at various levels. Tier One encompasses the entire school with core instructions and basic interventions. To gauge the instructional needs of our students, a universal screener is utilized for ELA and Math. The iReady diagnostic provides teachers with a complete picture of student performance and growth. In addition, the Child Support Team (CST) is composed of support staff at the school to meet the diverse needs of all. For example, the CST provides welcome bags to new students and provides school supplies to underprivileged students. In circumstances where our students are migrant and homeless, the CST identifies these students and provides support as needed.

Tier Two is for the segment of the student population of students who may need additional support in meeting their academic and behavioral goals. The centerpiece of Tier Two is Project BEYOND-- a mentor program that has been established at TEAM 74 for student who have been identified and selected using multiple criteria, including, but not limited to: their state assessment scores, academic profile, teacher recommendations, personal and home life, as well as other factors that may impact their academic, social and emotional well-being. Meeting monthly, Project BEYOND liaisons volunteer their time to create experiences that allow students to meet with success in an effort to create the momentum they need to get back on track. In the pandemic, we saw it fit to expand the criteria for selection in Project BEYOND to combat the feelings of isolation and anxiety brought about by quarantine. This has provided students with support that they would otherwise not have had, and has given them an outlet to have the conversations necessary to boost self-esteem and feel supported within the community.

Lastly, Tier Three is for individual students that display significant challenges and do not respond to the interventions and supports in Tier One or Tier Two. Tier Three gives these students individualized supports and can include assistance from outside agencies such as behavioral counselors or family therapists. The Student Support Team (SST) is composed of support staff, to provide targeted support for students who need additional academic and behavioral help to be successful in all settings. Such supports include; Academic Intervention Services, at-risk counseling, Resource Room and counseling services.

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

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

Whether in or out of the school building, we celebrate student achievements and acts of kindness. Our lobby is called The Hall of Kindness, and it is brimming with trophies, photos, and post-its of students doing good deeds which in turn, encourages smiles and others to do the same. Through our instructional program and extracurricular activities, we strive to create a nurturing environment where we encourage a love of learning, inspire children to explore, foster high self esteem, appreciate cultural diversity, encourage respect of self and others, instill empathy, and develop an appreciation for the arts. Our mission is to instill confidence, leadership, and a sense of responsibility in our students. Creating Classroom Charters gives students a voice in the classroom, promotes engagement, and fosters social emotional growth. This structure enables them to communicate how they wished to feel in the classroom and what actions might advance those feelings, thereby increasing ownership of their experience. Participation in Student Government is another avenue that empowers students to comfortably share their ideas, develop initiatives, and make a positive impact.

We are always striving to create a positive school climate, virtually or in the school building. At their core, clubs at TEAM 74 seek to cultivate the five pillars that are part of the National Junior Honor Society: scholarship, service, leadership, character, and citizenship. There are over thirty clubs that offer experiences beyond the classroom for like-minded students. Academic clubs like the National Junior Honor Society, Science Olympiad, Debate Team, Coding Club, and Math Team provide students with the outlets they need to indulge their passions. In the pandemic, these clubs were able to exist virtually with limited shifts in their operation. Our teacher leaders have gone BEYOND in ensuring that our sports, Drama club, Chorus, Yearbook, Charity Club, Green Team, Conflict Resolution and Friends of Rachel continue to support our students via dynamic approaches to engagement. As a result of our commitment to these initiatives, close to 900 of our students have participated in clubs and activities this year-- far exceeding their attendance and participation in a “normal” year.

Socialization and the development of students’ emotional intelligence has taken on newfound importance during the pandemic. In support of these critical areas, we established a virtual recess period for each of the three grades, as well as student-run peer mentoring sessions. We had virtual luncheons, a Zoom dance, and an 8th grade Zoom Promotional Ceremony. Every event that the TEAM 74 community considers foundational to its excellence was able to take place virtually. School events like the celebration of Lunar New Year, Family Fitness Night, Science Night, instrumental and vocal performances, and the spring musical are traditions where families, students, and teachers share in a celebration of student excellence, fun activities, and a sense of community.

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

The school’s belief that Together Everyone Achieves More extends outside of the walls of the building and into the community in which it plays the role of a key hub. The school has a robust presence on social media, as well as via a monthly newsletter that is posted to the school’s website, after being sent to families via our school messenger platform (which translates it into our families’ preferred languages). The school has active, healthy relationships with its local elected representatives, and there is a long history of their presence in our students’ lives-- not just at celebrations, but also as guest speakers and visitors to our classrooms. Most recently, they made themselves available to 8th graders in Social Studies classes to speak to the role (and responsibility) of government in the wake of the turmoil at the Capitol that presaged the Inauguration, and more recently they leapt at the opportunity lead the community through a moment of healing in response to the recent uptick in anti-AAPI sentiment, both nationally as well as in New York City.

At the center of TEAM 74’s success is the relationships that have been forged with its families. We are proud of the robust, active presence of our Parent-Teacher Association. Parent leadership and school leadership share the same key values of commitment, ownership, and integrity, which allows the conversations that take place in core team meetings (School Leadership Team, Safety Committee, etc.) to

focus on improving the quality of student experience. Recognizing the need to adapt to life during COVID-19, the PTA invested in a premium Zoom account that allowed for expanded access for families to the monthly Virtual Town Hall series. These meetings have become a vital conduit of information and opportunity for dialogue between school leaders and concerned parents so that the school can be its best for students through dynamic shifts in policy.

Beyond the essential need for communication, we cannot forget about the power of connection, especially given the isolating nature of the pandemic. Through its sponsoring of after school activities and events (and the lending of its Zoom credentials so the events you read about in other sections of this application can take place), our parent leaders allow our school community to retain some of the connective tissue that would otherwise be felt and developed were we all in person; this was most-closely felt by their supplementation of the operating cost for our after-school clubs and sports so they could continue virtually. Across this past school year, we have been particularly mindful of parents of our sixth grade, who alongside their children, never had closure on the experience of elementary school before virtually joining a new community. To this end, the PTA has hosted numerous parent-facing events to further the essential bonds that keep our community together.

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

Our school uses Quantum Learning Professional Development approaches to create an environment where students flourish through the use of safe spaces and risk-taking. One of the grounding components to Quantum Learning is their use of the shared language of their Eight Keys of Excellence (shown as phrases in ALL CAPS throughout). The Eight Keys are principles designed to produce a well-balanced and productive learner. Our staff also embody the Keys in their professional roles.

Our Ambassador model personifies the key of OWNERSHIP, in which the lead teacher role provides a direct pipeline from administration to teacher teams. Ambassadors empower teachers to have a voice in the school. The distributive leadership model allows teachers to make contributions to curriculum and school culture. As a result of the structures put into place, our switch to remote learning encouraged Ambassadors to meet with their departments, collaborate with administration on the social-emotional well-being of staff and students, and continue to take ownership within the community.

The keys of COMMITMENT and THIS IS IT live in our Teacher Teams. Our Teams collaborate to create, analyze and implement strategies that work best for our students. Our Teams were able to navigate the transition between hybrid and remote learning with unity. Teacher Teams adopted shared spaces, both virtually and in-person, to maintain the strength of our teams. These spaces allow for ongoing professional development to take place during the pandemic.

The teacher voice heard in Teacher Teams centers around the keys of INTEGRITY and SPEAK WITH GOOD PURPOSE. As a staff, we collaborated on a charter that would embody the values and feelings we want to feel each day. The Charter acknowledges the thoughts and contributions of our peers as well as inspire our peers to share our personal classroom ideas and struggles. During teacher team meetings, staff turnkey information learned at professional developments as well as best practices from their classrooms. For example, staff shared new remote teaching practices in a safe space and collaborative google classroom.

Through our in-house professional development, staff are encouraged to lean into new learning experiences and take risks, which connects to the key of FAILURE LEADS TO SUCCESS. Our teachers have participated in both in-person and remote Instructional Rounds, where intervisitations between staff members, result in the development of school-wide trends. These trends identify our grows and produce our next round of professional learning. Teachers are empowered to take their “failures” and work together to find solutions and grow professionally.

Finally, BALANCE and FLEXIBILITY are daily reminders as we transition between hybrid and remote models that we must embrace that there is no script that is going to provide us with the professional learning we need. Through deepening knowledge of our students, and the role teachers play in supporting them, we build the ship for our voyage.

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

Embracing the philosophy of distributive leadership, TEAM 74 soars from good to great, and BEYOND. At the core of all decision making at the school is the Administrative Cabinet, which consists of the principal and four assistant principals. Each assistant principal has a diverse portfolio of areas of school function to supervise. In response to the rapidly changing environment brought about by the pandemic, the Administrative cabinet kept its weekly meeting slot of Monday mornings and added a second meeting time of Friday afternoon so that school leadership could start and end each week with a clear sense of what needs to happen to keep the community headed in the right direction. Comprising school administrators, teachers with administrative duties (dean, programmer, and staff developer), and the parent coordinator, Extended Cabinet meets bimonthly to discuss protocols, strategize, and run through current events affecting the entire community. This year, Extended Cabinet has been leadership's main platform for discussing how the school is going about implementing the required shifts in programming and adherence to health and safety protocols.

Beyond the Cabinet structures, TEAM 74 has a shared decision making team composed of teacher leaders, known as the Ambassadors. Selected through an annual application process, teachers serve as the voices for their departments. In concert with the Administrative Cabinet and the staff developer, this group plays a key role in developing and facilitating teacher team meetings. In these meetings, Ambassadors align protocols, share agendas, and discuss department updates while planning for future work. As a result, they are able to facilitate the professional needs of the staff based upon needs, desire and support for teaching and learning through shared voices within all departments.

Each year, teachers create individualized goals that prioritize self-identified areas for growth, as aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and our school's Theory of Action to support our Instructional Focus on student engagement. These goals are monitored through periodic conversations with administration to support collective growth and student achievement. Utilizing systems and structures for evaluating teacher practice, supervisors and teachers are empowered to evaluate current practice. One system used to assess our staffs' professional development and quality of teacher team work, has been the facilitation of instructional rounds by our Ambassadors. Teachers visit multiple classrooms and gather low-inference data to identify and assess patterns and trends. This process provides insight into how our Theory of Action and Instructional Focus is coming alive in the classroom, and what additional supports are needed. Data and findings from rounds are shared with the staff, and next steps are workshopped in departmental meetings. While this process was created and implemented prior to the pandemic, our shared commitment to continuous improvement made it possible for the light of learning to burn during the darkest winter in recent memory.

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

TEAM 74 believes that students learn best through intellectual engagement in a safe and respectful learning environment. This is accomplished through best practices aligned to Social and Emotional Learning strategies, 21st century skills and knowledge of students. Through access provided from the learning style survey, teachers gain knowledge of their students in order to meet the needs of their students. To assess needed adjustments to curriculum, teachers meet to develop and refine curriculum that first reflects our student population and expands the minds of students by teaching them about other cultural groups represented in New York City, the U.S., and the world. Ambassadors use data analysis to facilitate inquiry work which includes activities, projects, assignments that allow for student choice, giving kids ownership over how they demonstrate their learning. This work consistency strengthens our instructional core by supporting student progress and teacher practice.

One of the driving initiatives to ensure equity, cultural awareness, and respect in the classroom, is our involvement in Respect For All. Some Respect for All initiatives include conducting student workshops, where students explore Emotional Intelligence around the RULER concept, including

creating class charters. In addition, staff professional development was conducted around Quantum Learning's "8 Keys of Excellence", Growth Mindset, SEL, Staff Charters and Mindfulness. As a link to our Respect For All initiatives, our students are involved with Rachel's Challenge, Friends of Rachel, Uncommon Athlete, and Sanford Harmony.

As part of our shared commitment to ensuring equity and access for all students, TEAM 74 has created a Teacher and Student Equity Team to focus on current events and social movements through shared community conversations. As part of this work, we have met with initial success by implementing student-facing social justice surveys, while taking a pulse of teacher comfort levels engaging in conversations around equity and current events. This approach has allowed us to become closer as a community when shared voice has been needed the most. Following a spring spent in isolation while navigating the stormy waters of discourse on race in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, we held a community event, in which the video/book entitled "The Hate U Give" was discussed. Feedback from these events have provided an opportunity for members of TEAM 74 to keep diversity, equity, social justice and anti-bias education at the center of our decision-making calculus, while centering student voice and participation, thereby solidifying their connection to antiracism in education.



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

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In any normal school year at MS 74, a student's typical day begins in Homeroom, where they have the opportunity to connect with their peers, hear the morning announcements, and begin their day with a sense of connectedness and belonging that is vital to their academic success and socio-emotional development. When the school building closed in mid-March 2020, all of the community's energy went into (1) making sure our students were safe, (2) ensuring they had the required technology to access learning remotely, and (3) transforming teaching and learning so that it could take place in this new, fully-remote environment. Lost in the triage of SY 2019-2020 was a sense of how to keep our students connected beyond the core functions of teaching and learning.

Connectivity and student experience lingered in the back of our planning minds, but the uncertainties of how we were going to operate to start SY 2020-2021 dominated the conversation across the summer and into the fall. When we were in hybrid instruction in October, a singular problem presented itself: what is the most efficient way to capture student attendance for fully remote students, students who were learning remote on that day, and the cohort of students who were in the building? Daily attendance for students in the building was simple enough, but due to the complexities of the schedule, not all students learning remotely on a given day were online at the same time. It was while navigating this moment that a collaborative conversation took place on the staff, wondering what the re-introduction of a 10-minute Virtual Homeroom might look like. Select TEAM 74 teachers agreed to swapping ten minutes of their zero-period planning block to later in the day to facilitate the creation of Google Classrooms to be dedicated Virtual Homeroom spaces for all students who were learning remotely that day.

At first, the primary function of these Homerooms was to take attendance, confirming that our students were safe and that they had the required access to necessary technology. Shortly after their creation, we recognized them as central hubs for engaging our students with our Advisory curriculum related to the Eight Keys of Excellence, with assignments and polls posted daily for their engagement. This structure also provided a medium for us to post the student-voiced morning announcements in Homeroom to make it feel like our remote students were in the building with their peers. In November, Virtual Homeroom took on a new level of importance as the whole school was engaged in fully-remote learning. While on a handful of levels the return to remote felt like a step backwards, all of our students starting their day in community with one another, engaging in SEL activities, and hearing the morning announcements was a dose of needed normalcy. Indeed it has been a vital piece of connective tissue and the only reason that we can boast that (at the time of submission of this application) we have actually improved attendance this year with a YTD daily rate of 98.2%.