

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

Official School Name PS 290 Manhattan New School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 311 E 82nd Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City New York State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 10028-4103

County New York

Telephone (212) 734-7127 Fax (212) 772-8879

Web site/URL https://www.ps290.org/ E-mail desposi2@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\* Mr. Kelly McGuire E-mail kmcguire@schools.nyc.gov  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name New York City Geographic District # 2 Tel. (212) 356-3915

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 Ms. Amy Saks  
(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):
- 39 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 24 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 71 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 134 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	23	25	48
K	40	31	71
1	27	30	57
2	40	36	76
3	33	45	78
4	23	38	61
5	34	42	76
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	220	247	467

\*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):
- 0.5 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 8.4 % Asian
  - 3 % Black or African American
  - 12.2 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.5 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 70 % White
  - 5.4 % 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: 6%

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	9
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	25
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	34
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	579
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

Spanish, Russian, Hebrew, French, Albanian, Bulgarian, Burmese, Farsi, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese, Tadjik, Turkish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 7 %  
31 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 13 %

Total number students who qualify: 60

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %

70 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>4</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>11</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>30</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>24</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 7

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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	37
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 13:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

<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.

Manhattan New School is committed to promoting a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture where our rigorous academic and social emotional curriculum reflects the intellectual curiosity of our students, preparing them for academic success and responsible citizenship.

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.

We began the 2020-2021 school-year in a three-cohort hybrid model with a fully remote option. Seventy-five percent of our families chose blended learning and twenty-five percent of our families chose the fully remote option. In November we moved to a two-cohort hybrid model with a fully remote option.

We were able to program our staff so that each grade had a remote teacher who worked with students whose parents chose 100 percent remote learning and a blended remote teacher for students who were learning remotely part of the school week. Many classroom structures and routines remained consistent even when students were learning at home. This consistency has been important not only during the regular, expected schedule but when we had to be unexpectedly fully remote.

Students learned synchronously as a whole class, in small groups, in partnerships, and in one-on-one conferences. Students continued to have Art, Music, Physical Education, and Technology with their specialty teachers. Students also worked asynchronously. We used Google Classroom as a place to post assignments, send announcements, and submit work.

Equity is always part of our decision-making process. We ensured every student had the technology and internet connectivity to successfully engage with academic and social emotional

instruction. Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) received additional support and check-ins to ensure their needs were met when working remotely. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) also donated supplies to any child who didn't have the necessary tools to be successful at home.

One year after the pandemic started, our students in Kindergarten through fifth grade are back full time, therefore eliminating their blended remote days while still offering a fully remote option.

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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Manhattan New School (MNS) is a vibrant learning community with rigorous academics, a rich social emotional learning curriculum, and a dynamic partnership between students, teachers, administrators, staff, and families. We strive to encourage a child's natural curiosity, to develop a love of learning, and to promote social responsibility as global citizens.

Manhattan New School was started by a group of teachers from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University in the fall of 1991 under the leadership of Shelley Harwayne, former Co-Director of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP). Manhattan New School began as an "option school" — a school founded upon a unique idea — and in 1994 became a fully recognized neighborhood public school: Public School 290. Initially, children commuted from across the city and currently most of the student body lives within the school zone. The MNS student body reflects the global diversity of New York City with children from many countries and over 15 different languages spoken at home.

Manhattan New School is a national professional development site for best practices in literacy instruction. Several staff members have written professional texts known throughout the country, and some of the texts are used as part of graduate level coursework. MNS has student teachers from Bank Street College of Education, Columbia University Teachers College, New York University, and Fordham University, some of whom go on to become long-term members of our community. MNS is a place where former students not only come to visit, but in several cases, have come back to teach. Currently we have three former students working as classroom teachers. MNS has a high teacher retention rate with teachers frequently staying for 20, 30, or even 40 years.

At MNS we pride ourselves on being a highly literate community with an abundance of books that support the development and love of reading, writing, questioning, and the sharing of ideas. All our curriculum, whether it falls within reading, writing, math, science, social studies, technology, physical education, music, or art, engages our students in meaningful explorations that develop critical thinking skills. Our students have the opportunity to investigate a range of big ideas, ask and answer important questions, and develop strategies that enable them to co-create their learning. Our students refer to themselves as readers, writers, mathematicians, musicians, artists, athletes, technologists, scientists, and researchers.

We believe in the power of conversation and embed opportunities for students to work collaboratively and share their thinking. We also understand that while many people "talk to learn" other people "think to learn."

At MNS we believe that students learn best when they have a growth mindset and have tools and strategies to make choices about their learning. One of our goals is to ensure that each child has the confidence to view challenges as opportunities for exploration and growth. Our school culture and environment support the whole-child by attending to their emotional, social, cultural, and academic needs.

From March 2020 through the end of the 2020 school year, our priority was guiding students through the trauma caused by COVID-19 by providing them with both connection and consistency. As a school we reminded ourselves of the importance of connection and created structures and routines that would maintain a strong school connection while teaching and learning remotely. We leaned on some of the foundational practices of Responsive Classroom and RULER such as Morning Meetings, Closing Circles, Mood Meter check-ins, and positive self-talk.

Part of providing consistency during remote instruction meant maintaining our students' love of learning. We believe in fostering authentic habits in our students, so we discussed teaching strategies that readers and writers use in moments of uncertainty. As a community we embraced the healing power of writing by documenting and reflecting on our experiences living through a pandemic. We created additional opportunities for connection by reading and discussing books on topics such as mindfulness, gratitude and perseverance.



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

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

Manhattan New School’s core curriculum is aligned vertically and horizontally to ensure all students receive a rigorous and standards-based curriculum. Professional Learning Communities worked to align our English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics curriculum to the Next Generation Learning Standards.

Every June, grade level teams reflect on units that were taught in relation to sequence, pace, successes, and challenges. Teachers, with the instructional coach, administration, and staff developers, plan a new pacing calendar. The calendar includes big ideas, essential questions, teaching points, assessments, resources and materials.

When planning for the 2020-2021 school year we considered potential learning losses. Our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), along with our District Math and Literacy Leaders and the Staff Developers at TCRWP, decided to move forward with grade level curriculum and address gaps in learning through differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction would increase student engagement by providing learning scaffolds or enrichment opportunities.

This year the majority of our formal assessments were administered when hybrid students were in the building, with the belief that the work students complete in school is a more authentic reflection of their learning. We also adapted our assessments for students who were learning remotely so they could be administered via Zoom.

At MNS our instruction is grounded in the understanding that learners need explicit and timely feedback. Each student has a portfolio that includes student work, self-reflections, rubrics, checklists and teacher, parent, and peer feedback. Students and teachers work together to set goals, assess progress and plan next steps. This gives students a choice and a voice in their learning, leading to greater investment and engagement.

Weekly planning time is also spent analyzing student work. Each week, the instructional coach and teacher teams use protocols to make observations about student work, revise units based on data from both formal and informal assessments, and plan whole class and small group instruction.

In the spring of 2020, teachers spent a significant amount of time creating asynchronous resources for students such as recorded lessons. Upon reflection, the ILT determined that the time teachers spent recording lessons would lead to greater student growth if it was spent analyzing student work, providing feedback, and planning next steps. We decided to utilize student-facing videos and digital programs that aligned with our ELA and math curriculum. These resources allowed teachers to maintain the pace of instruction when our students were only in the building fifty percent of the time.

Our reading curriculum is based on the Units of Study for Teaching Reading from TCRWP. This year we added the TCRWP Reading Virtual Teaching Resources to support students on remote days. Students at MNS develop a love of reading and the authentic habits of a reader. Our students have choice over their Independent Reading Books and learn how to select texts based on purpose. Reading partnerships and clubs are an important part of our curriculum. Students learn how to develop ideas through talking with their peers and from writing about their reading. Read Aloud occurs every day and for a variety of purposes, including fostering conversations, modeling reading strategies and introducing students to different books and ideas.

Reading progress is formally assessed using the TCRWP Running Records. Running records are analyzed for evidence of fluency, word solving strategies, and literal and inferential comprehension.

Our writing curriculum is based on the Units of Study in Opinion, Information and Narrative Writing from TCRWP. This year we added the TCRWP Writing Virtual Teaching Resources to support students on remote days. The students at MNS discover the power of their voice and develop authentic habits of writers such as writing for an audience, providing and receiving peer feedback, and revising to enhance meaning.

Students are immersed in mentor texts to learn about features of genre and to learn a variety of writing craft. Students have choice over their writing topics based on the genre being taught which increases engagement and also teaches students how writers generate ideas. Our focus is always on the writer's progress as opposed to the final writing product.

Before each writing unit, teachers administer an On-Demand writing assessment. Teachers then make decisions about whole-class lessons as well as individual and small group support. At the end of the unit students have the opportunity to move through the writing process independently to demonstrate their learning.

Our math curriculum is based on Eureka Math and Contexts for Learning. This year we added Zearn to support students on their remote days. Zearn is an online program that is aligned with Eureka math. Our students develop an understanding of place value and gain automaticity by understanding the relationship between numbers. They also establish procedural fluency and are able to use strategies flexibly. Collaboration and discussion are key components of our math instruction. Students work on problems together, develop conjectures, discuss their thinking, ask questions, and reflect on the thinking of others. Teachers use pre-assessments, mid-unit assessments and end-of-unit assessments from Eureka.

Our science curriculum is aligned with the three dimensions of the Next Generation Science Standards and is based on Amplify Science. The three dimensions include: science and engineering practices, disciplinary core ideas, and crosscutting concepts. Our students incorporate these dimensions into their science inquiry of real-life phenomena by making detailed observations, asking thoughtful questions about their observations, and finding answers to these questions. Formative and summative assessments are used throughout each unit of study to evaluate each student's understanding. By the end of each unit, students are able to answer a scientific question by stating a claim supported by evidence gathered through the study.

Our Social Studies curriculum is aligned to the New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies and follows the New York City Department of Education Scope and Sequence. We use an inquiry approach and use thinking protocols from Harvard's Project Zero and the text Making Thinking Visible. Our students look at primary sources, artwork and historic texts. Conversations include civics lessons, questioning different perspectives, and issues of power. Teachers assess their students informally through conversation, student projects (incorporating additional curricular areas such as art and technology) and student reflections.

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

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

The early childhood program at MNS follows the interdisciplinary Units of Study for Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) for All. The 10-month program spans the following 10 units: Welcome to Pre-K, My Five Senses, All About Us, Where We Live, Transportation, Light, Water, Plants, Babies, and Transformation. All lessons and activities support the Pre-Kindergarten Foundation for the Common Core (PKFCC), the guiding principles, and state pre-K learning standards. The center-based program weaves inquiry, critical thinking, and purposeful play into each unit of study. Teaching teams create nurturing classroom environments and scaffold learning through rich interactions with students and communication and engagement with families. In addition to adhering to state standards, instruction is diversified through multicultural and inclusive literature and hands-on learning.

In order to meet the challenges of COVID-19, adaptations and modifications had to be put in place at the start of the school year for both blended and remote instruction. Careful consideration was given to furniture and seating arrangements, as well as good hygiene routines in the classroom. Attention to mental health and well-being was at the forefront of all lessons and activities. Along those lines, teaching teams developed a strong rapport with children and their families. Remote students followed routines similar to those in the classroom, including a combination of small and whole groups activities with emphasis placed on nurturing relationships with families.

The Pre-K Scope and Sequence demonstrates the alignment of academic standards which provide the foundation from early childhood to kindergarten through grade 3. It is divided into three sections to provide interdisciplinary learning (My Community and Me, The Environment and Me, and Change and Growth All Around Me).

Manhattan New School's early education program provides a foundation of learning in all domains including physical, social, emotional, language, and cognitive skills. The skills acquired through these domains set the stage for preparing children for kindergarten and beyond. Skills in each domain are assessed informally and formally. This year, the program adopted the Ages and Stages questionnaire, completed with the help of families, to assess children's skills in the learning domains and milestones.

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

All students, from pre-K through 5th grade, enjoy weekly art instruction. The curriculum provides social, cultural, and historical contexts for students to understand art, and it connects with classroom instruction. Students enjoy drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, jewelry-making, and computer art. Students actively engage with organizations, museums, exhibitions, and artists that contribute to the vitality of New York City. During remote learning, students have focused on studying still life and learned drawing and painting techniques while closely observing favorite objects from their daily surroundings. Art instruction is also a useful tool for children to express their emotions and experiences. Therefore, students have been taught and encouraged to use art during the pandemic to help themselves focus, relax, and decrease stress.

Prior to the Covid-19 shutdown, MNS students in grades K-5 received weekly music instruction in a designated music classroom and students performed in 1-2 concerts a year. The students in the 3rd grade learned to play the recorder. The program provides an introduction to orchestral music and culminates with an interactive concert at Carnegie Hall. Students in the 4th and 5th grades would choose between being a member of the school's concert band or chorus. Additional performing arts partnerships prior to March 2020 included The New York City Ballet and Wingspan Arts, a program that provided in-school instruction in dramatic arts.

During the 2020-2021 school year, all students have been attending synchronous music classes on Zoom. Music education includes an introduction to music theory (note and rhythm reading and musical terms), music history, multicultural music, vocal, and instrumental music, and has largely stayed the same, despite the virtual format. The students in the 5th grade band and chorus have continued to play their instruments and perform virtually. Students in the 3rd and 4th grade are continuing the recorder curriculum and are participating in the Carnegie Hall Link Up program. In addition, we partner with music institutions including Manhattan School of Music Opera Outreach and American Classical Orchestra. Both of these institutions provide a virtual concert for our students.

In Physical Education, the children in grades pre-K to 5th acquire essential skills and knowledge based on the National Standards for K-12 Physical Education. All classes have had essential nutrition lessons based on the National Standards for K-12 Physical Education as well. Students have gained knowledge in reading food labels, making healthy choices, the food pyramid, and introduction to food minerals and components such as fiber, protein, and carbohydrates.

Students' social-emotional needs have been addressed through personal health and fitness practices and discussions about how their emotions change and influence their behavior. Classes have ended by incorporating lessons in mindfulness utilizing breathing exercises, yoga and conversations pertaining to the benefits of learning how to help calm your mind and learn how to relax.

In technology students learn how to type, code, and to make smart and safe decisions online through participation in Google's Be Internet Awesome curriculum, which focuses on the fundamentals of good digital citizenship. They participate in an online program called Flocabulary, which uses educational hip-hop music to explore different themes such as self-compassion, handling stress, active listening, and time

management. All of these lessons reinforce the well-being of our students —especially during remote learning.

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

Teachers use formal and informal assessments to inform whole-class, small group, and individual instruction throughout the school year. These assessments include running records, On-Demand writing assessments, pre- and post-unit math assessments, and teacher observations. Based on this data, general education students are provided targeted instruction for specific goals. Special education teachers use specially designed instruction to meet these students' specific needs. Students who are performing below grade level are identified and Response to Intervention (RTI) strategies are implemented with the support of the Pupil Personnel Team (PPT).

We believe in the importance of early intervention in the lower grades. In grades K-2 we administer the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System 2 (ECLAS-2) to students in kindergarten and 1st grade three times a year to collect data on students' foundational reading skills. This data is collected by administration and analyzed by interventionists to determine which students need additional phonemic awareness and phonics instruction.

We also administer the Bridges Mathematics assessment to students in kindergarten and 1st grade three times a year to collect data on students' foundational math skills. This data is collected by administration and analyzed by interventionists to determine which students need additional support. Teachers who would like additional information about their students also use the Early Childhood Assessment in Mathematics (ECAM), however this is not administered school-wide.

The PPT, led by our Special Education Teacher Support Services/Individualized Education Plan teacher (SETSS/IEP teacher), meets weekly to help teachers address the needs of students. The English as a New Language teacher (ENL teacher) also meets with teachers to help make curriculum accessible to English Language Learners (ELLs). Although we have historically had a large number of students brought up to PPT, the number of students evaluated and determined to need special education programs or services has decreased. This reduction can be attributed to several factors. The PPT supports teachers in finding and utilizing appropriate strategies and accommodations. Our reading and math interventionist works in cycles with students who need additional support. The Instructional Coach works with teachers to modify and differentiate curriculum. The impact of this work is that students receive instruction in the least restrictive environment alongside their peers.

In 2016 we examined our standardized test data in grades 3-5 to understand why a greater percentage of our students in subgroups were not earning a 3 or 4 on state ELA and math exams. (3 being proficient in standards and 4 excelling standards.) Our analysis showed that all students performed better on the multiple-choice sections than on the constructed (written) responses. Major changes were made to our curriculum, specifically the adoption of the TCRWP Units of Study in Reading and Writing and Foundations, an Orton Gillingham based phonics program in grades K-2.

As a result of these changes, from 2016-2019 the percentage of students in grades 3-5 who earned a 3 or 4 increased from 78% to 89% on the state ELA exam and 77% to 88% on the state math exam. The percentage of students who received a 3 or 4 on the state ELA exam within a variety of subgroups increased as follows: Students with Disabilities increased by 28 percentage points, students who are Economically Disadvantaged increased by 31 percentage points, and our students who are Hispanic or Latino increased by 10 percentage points. The percentage of students who received a 3 or 4 on the state math exam within a variety of subgroups increased as follows: Students with Disabilities increased by 12 percentage points, students who are Economically

Disadvantaged increased by 29 percentage points, students who are English Language Learners increased by 34 percentage points, and our students who are Hispanic or Latino increased by 7 percentage points.

During remote learning and hybrid learning the school rose to the challenge of meeting the needs of diverse learners. Fully remote students with IEPs continued to receive all services (physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and counseling) virtually or in-person. Students performing above grade level received the benefit of our extensive libraries and engaged in student writing projects. In math, challenges were embedded in the curriculum to push students' mathematical thinking and analysis.

English Language Learners in all grades receive both stand-alone and integrated ENL instruction to develop English language proficiency in core content classes. The goal is to make content accessible and to enrich children's language development using all modalities of learning. Similar methodologies were implemented during this past year.

ENL students' curriculum is aligned with the Next Generation Learning standards and NY State Scope and Sequence for Science and Social Studies. Explicit ELL instruction is delivered by teaching language through context and scaffolding through the use of photographs, illustrations, Total Physical Response (TPR), language experience methods, shared reading and writing, guided reading, and use of technology for images and translation. The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL), and ELL interim assessments can be used as a guideline for instruction. Results from the interim assessments reveal the areas of strength and weakness for each English Language Learner and offer teachers the opportunity to design differentiated instruction appropriately.

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

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

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) has always been a key component of the MNS curriculum. The MNS teachers have completed an extensive study of RULER, an initiative of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. Evaluations of the program have shown that it improves student achievement and social skills, and that it helps classrooms become more supportive and student-centered. During this past year, our robust SEL practices were fully maintained for both in-person and remote students. Some key classroom strategies include the use of Mood Meters, Classroom Charters, Meta-Moments, and Peace Corners.

We have also studied and implemented Responsive Classroom practices. Responsive Classroom principles include the beliefs that how we teach is as important as what we teach, that learning occurs through social interaction, and that our teaching of individuals is informed by knowing students both culturally and developmentally. Some key classroom strategies include interactive modeling, which incorporates academics and social skills, logical consequences that set clear limits and help students learn from their mistakes, and intentional teacher language that helps children envision their best selves. Our guidance counselor leads our whole school in a Mindful Monday Moment, incorporating a meditation, breathing exercise, or review of the RULER strategies. We find this is a great way to kick off our week as a community, and to center students in their learning practices.

Both RULER and Responsive Classroom help our children develop strategies for self-regulation and positive peer interactions. The impact of this work is that our students understand their individual and collective needs and are empowered to advocate for themselves and others.

MNS has fostered a number of collaborative partnerships with organizations outside the traditional academic curriculum and mandates. We believe these programs provide all students with opportunities to develop themselves as well-rounded individuals. Many of the programs go beyond typical school experiences and therefore give students equitable access to the diverse and cultural opportunities New York City has to offer. With these experiences in the visual and performing arts, science, history, physical education, and technology, students will be prepared for the ever-changing demands of middle school, high school, college, careers, and beyond.

Some of our most beloved programs include: Kindergartners studying and hatching ducklings in partnership with the Cornell 4H Incubation and Embryology Program, 1st graders creating and performing their own ballet in partnership with the New York City Ballet, 2nd graders learning to swim in partnership with Asphalt Green, 3rd graders studying and playing chess in partnership with US Chess Academy, 4th graders studying and performing dance in partnership with the National Dance Institute, and 5th graders learning about our Constitution, reading and writing briefs and holding mock court sessions in partnership with Constitution Works and the New York City court system.

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

MNS has always recognized that family engagement is a powerful factor of a strong school community and individual student success. To keep families informed, the administration crafts a weekly email to all parents and guardians with important updates, reminders, and communication of Department of Education (DOE) guidance. Email communications are disseminated on a school-wide level, or shared with specific grades or cohorts, such as remote learners. During COVID-19, school emails have been a vital guide for families, providing a critical connection with the school and the broader NYC DOE.

The school website is updated weekly to provide a convenient resource for parents. For instance, caregivers can find the school calendar, the weekly and monthly cohort schedule, COVID protocols, and engaging events for families and students.

The administration has always valued the importance of a two-way dialogue with families. The principal

hosts regular grade-wide “Coffee Meetings,” as well as broader-audience Town Halls to share information and updates and to provide parents with a forum to ask questions and share feedback.

This year, such remote meetings were held more frequently than in the past given the numerous informational updates and many challenges faced by students and caregivers. Parents were able to provide a vital window into their child’s remote learning experience, which represented 50% of instructional days for hybrid students and 100% of instructional days for fully remote students. The administration used parent feedback to increase virtual small groups and one-on-one instruction. This year, teachers and support service providers increased academic and mental health outreach, office hours for parents and students, and instructional and support sessions for students. In response to parental feedback, the administration shared academic resources for at-home use, including free instructional videos and lessons from TCRWP.

Group meetings have never replaced the important role of one-to-one conversations with families. Previously, families were always welcome to meet in person with the Principal, Assistant Principal, and Parent Coordinator, and to speak in person or by phone with teachers. This year, the administration, Parent Coordinator, teachers and service providers had frequent private phone or video conversations with families and students in order to best meet their unique needs. Appropriate action was always pursued, whether it entailed consultation sessions with the Guidance Counselor or a switch from remote learning to in-person instruction for a student in urgent need of academic, service, or social-emotional support.

Additionally, the school regularly offered resources from valued organizations such as long-standing partner ChildMind.org, as well as the Ackerman Institute for the Family, ScientificMommy.com, self.com, virusanxiety.com and others.

MNS has always been characterized as a close-knit and involved community. The administration and Parent Teacher Association recognized the need for boosting student enjoyment and school spirit. To replace in-person events that brought caregivers into the classroom and provided a lens into academic progress, the school created virtual programs for parents and remote activities and celebration days for students.

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

At Manhattan New School, professional collaborations and development are the cornerstone of who we are as educators. Collaborations occur throughout the day, week and year in formal and informal ways, strengthening our ability to set goals and support students’ academic and social emotional learning.

Grade level teacher teams meet on a daily basis to discuss students and coordinate instruction ensuring the continuity of learning for all of our students during COVID-19. This planning time informs instructional decisions and allows for consistency within the grade. Teachers share resources, collaborate and are able to make modifications and differentiate instruction for students who are at-risk or who have been struggling during remote learning.

Remote and in-person walk-throughs are conducted to share best practices and to avail teachers of instructional practices that their colleagues are implementing. This also allows leadership to check in on how the school environment showcases student work and highlights our culture and values.

Staff members are invited to attend morning open Zoom calls to talk about concerns they have and to connect on an interpersonal basis. The administration reaches out to individual teachers and visits classrooms to check in with staff to make sure they feel valued and supported. The staff meets with staff developers for professional development either one-on-one or in grade level teams. The professional development teachers have been engaging in with Teachers College over the past two years, has provided consistency and increased the depth of our literacy instruction. We have also availed ourselves of district-level support in mathematics that has also supported teachers with a revised pacing calendar and specific mathematical content to focus on this year.

As a school we created systems to ensure that our teachers were supported in helping their students academically and emotionally. Each grade level has a team of teachers that meets daily. This team includes

in-person teachers who work with hybrid students on their days in the school building, blended-remote teachers who work with the hybrid students on their days at home and remote teachers who work with students who were learning exclusively at home. The daily collaboration ensures that students are receiving the same academic instruction and that concerns regarding engagement and emotional well-being are addressed. Service providers, administration and specialty teachers rotate throughout the grade team meetings to offer additional support and perspectives.

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

The administration's philosophy and structure of MNS is grounded in the belief that leadership is a shared responsibility involving a diverse group of stakeholders who assist in decision making. Listening to and gathering feedback from stakeholders informs the way decisions are made. Along with the assistant principal, instructional coach and interventionists, the principal consults with individuals and teams to ensure greater and more successful student outcomes both academically and social-emotionally.

Scheduled monthly meetings with the School Leadership Team (SLT) are supplemented by conferring with the lead parent of the team to make sure concerns are being addressed on a continuous basis and that ongoing projects, such as parents and teachers partnering to plan a civics curriculum, are sustainable and viable. This shared leadership has proven effective, solidifying the connection between the administration, parents, teachers and students. The SLT ensures that all stakeholder groups are able to actively participate and contribute to the mission of the school.

In conjunction with parents, through the PTA, relationships have been forged resulting in creative and innovative ways to support students. For example, last June, the graduating fifth graders were able to participate in a thoughtful and meaningful graduation ceremony due to the efforts of shared planning with parents. This process begins with meeting with the PTA presidents on a regular basis, thereby reading the pulse on parental concerns. Since the onset of the pandemic, leadership has engaged parents in Town Hall meetings either on a weekly basis or when warranted by new events or as new guidelines were issued. These meetings were followed up with grade level "Coffee Meetings" to answer any lingering questions or concerns parents had. Additionally, the Parent Coordinator conducted surveys for family input, and outreach to continuously provide families with updated information. The goal throughout this crisis has been to extend the administration's "open door" policy towards families, providing them with reassurance and connecting with them on a personal level.

Grade team leaders are representatives from each grade who assist in disseminating information to teachers and are integral to helping gather feedback from the staff. The principal also connects with students on a personal level, forming a student counsel that meets once a week to work on community-based school projects that have the students' footprint. Connecting with students happens at various times during the day, greeting students in the morning at arrival and being at the front doors in the afternoons during dismissal. The constant communication with the staff on a daily basis through staff letters, staff meetings and grade-level meetings kept the staff apprised of DOE guidelines and directives that needed to be followed.

Utilizing reflection and feedback in conjunction with one another as a cyclical practice has allowed us to constantly revise what we were doing and why. We have been able to use methods of backwards planning and questioning to engage in cycles of feedback to create action plans that have a direct impact on planning and instruction. We have seamlessly gone from being fully remote to a blended remote model with three cohorts to two cohorts and have now brought all of our students back full time. Making these programming decisions was the direct result of reflective practices and gathering feedback from teachers and families. Meeting every day as a Cabinet allowed us to put action plans in place on an ongoing basis. Schedules were revised and teachers adapted their planning and made instructional moves in grade level teams, allowing individual teachers to plan specific content and then come back together as a team. We instituted "Reflection Fridays", so staff had the time to reflect on the week and make decisions based on what students needed and how to adjust curricula to meet the students at their "zone of proximal development" as it applied to remote learning. Students used the day to catch up on work and complete assignments, having time to reflect on their own work from the week.

## 5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Manhattan New School is a diverse community with families from all over the world, and we celebrate our diversity in a variety of ways. All classrooms house extensive libraries which we systematically curate to ensure that they serve as “windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors” of students’ own identities and the identities of others. (Rudine Sims Bishop). Our School Library Committee invested time finding and analyzing books that represent a variety of perspectives, prioritizing “own voices” texts.

This year we formed a Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee to address the diverse strengths and needs of our students and families. This committee has grounded its work in professional development led by Dr. Sonja Cherry-Paul, the Social Justice Standards and the text “Courageous Conversations about Race,” by Glenn E. Singleton. Currently we are analyzing school-wide data involving our students of color and special education services. We chose this topic because data across New York City shows a disproportionate representation of students of color receiving special education services.

At MNS it is important that we celebrate cultural traditions. One of our community events with the greatest participation is our annual International Festival. Students, families and staff members come together to learn about various aspects of the cultures represented at MNS. Additionally, our school partners with community businesses to include cultures that may not be represented by our school population. It is important to us that our students appreciate and value the diversity of our community and our world.

We leveraged long-held school wide rituals and practices around social emotional practices in Responsive Classroom and RULER. Teachers engaged in creating Identity Webs, from Sara Ahmed’s book "Being The Change," which helped them to reflect on who they were as kids and students in the midst of a pandemic.

Despite social distancing mandates of COVID-19, MNS continued to prioritize the work of its DEI mission this year. To best reflect our community, parents were offered the opportunity to join staff in meaningful discussion and planning sessions of anti-bias and anti-racist initiatives to ensure that all students and parents feel that their voice is heard, their experiences are recognized, and their differences are celebrated and reflected in the curriculum.

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

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Reflective practice is a common process used by teachers, administrators and students at Manhattan New School. As a result of the pandemic, we were forced to approach our teaching and learning differently. This was a challenge for new and experienced teachers along with students and families. Our previous strategies needed to be revised to meet the needs of remote learning. Practicing a reflective approach helped us adapt quickly, identify areas of improvement and collaboratively develop ways to rethink our methods of teaching for all of our students. As we entered a period when technology was at the forefront of how we were engaging with students, we realized our students must develop their digital literacy and citizenship, be prepared to make smart, safe decisions, and be encouraged to acquire thoughtful online habits as we jumped into daily Zoom meetings, Google Meet sessions and Google Classroom assignments.

A large part of this was ensuring students created a safe digital footprint. Common Sense Media and Google Be Internet Awesome provided the context and information around how to provide students with resources and information in a completely digital environment. The Be Internet Awesome curriculum is a collaboration between Google, The Net Safety Collaborative, and the Internet Keep Safe Coalition (iKeepSafe.org) and is recognized by the International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE). The Be Internet Awesome curriculum gave students the fundamentals for digital citizenship, understanding how to navigate the digital landscape both at home and in school. The themes of, share with care, don't fall for fake, secure your secrets, it's cool to be kind, and when in doubt talk about it, are the specific skills taught guiding students to become more self-aware as they spend a lot more time online.

Safety was a major component of this work and to make students have a greater understanding of the impact of a digital footprint, what is appropriate and that material cannot be erased. All of this has ramifications on, and will be relevant, moving forward as a community, incorporating more technology into the curriculum, a direct result of the past year. These programs encourage kids to think about how to communicate in a way that is respectful and trustworthy, mimicking some of the core values of MNS, such as supporting agency and student voice.

Students learned that communicating in a digital landscape comes with responsibilities to oneself and to others in your community. How you present yourself on ZOOM, for example, and the information you send cannot be erased once it's been put out into the digital universe.