

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Sanford H Calhoun High School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1786 State Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Merrick State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 11566-9998

County Nassau County

Telephone (516) 992-1310 Fax (516) 867-7390

Web site/URL http://www.bellmore-merrick.k12.ny.us/schools/sanford_h_calhoun_high_school E-mail nhollings@bellmore-merrick.k12.ny.us

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Michael Harrington E-mail mharrington@bellmore-merrick.k12.ny.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District Tel. (516) 992-1000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Edward Corona
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

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

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

| Grade | # of Males | # of Females | Grade Total |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| PreK | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| K | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 142 | 166 | 308 |
| 10 | 159 | 148 | 307 |
| 11 | 141 | 147 | 288 |
| 12 or higher | 181 | 166 | 347 |
| Total Students | 623 | 627 | 1250 |

*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):
- 0.9 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 6.8 % Asian
 - 3.8 % Black or African American
 - 5.2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 82.1 % White
 - 1 % 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: 2%

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

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

| Steps For Determining Mobility Rate | Answer |
|--|---------------|
| (1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year | 11 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year | 9 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 20 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019 | 1264 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.02 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 2 |

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

Spanish, Turkish, Mandarin, Greek, Nepali, Ukrainian, Portuguese, Malayalam

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
27 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 14 %

Total number students who qualify: 170

8. Students receiving special education services: 18 %

222 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>54</u> Autism | <u>8</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>47</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>75</u> Developmental Delay | <u>69</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>8</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>30</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>4</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>2</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.

| | Number of Staff |
|--|------------------------|
| Administrators | 11 |
| Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 69 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc. | 49 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 31 |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 16 |

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.

| Required Information | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance | 96% | 94% | 95% | 95% | 97% |
| High school graduation rate | 99% | 97% | 98% | 98% | 97% |

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

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

| Post-Secondary Status | |
|---|-----|
| Graduating class size | 293 |
| Enrolled in a 4-year college or university | 74% |
| Enrolled in a community college | 24% |
| Enrolled in career/technical training program | 1% |
| Found employment | 1% |
| 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.

We strive to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of each learner. Students will leave equipped to think critically, read, write, and speak prepared for life beyond Calhoun.

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 year in a hybrid model with students attending in person 2 days a week. This quickly transitioned by the end of September to students being in person five days a week. Students still had a choice of being fully remote or hybrid. We were approximately 86% of our population in person through October and November. After Thanksgiving, the number of cases began to increase and the requests to be remote also increased. As of March 1, we are at about 60% in-person attendance. Students who are at home learning remotely log in to class where teachers are livestreaming their classes. Therefore, a teacher has a combination of in-person learners and students at home who are accessible on the screen in Google Meets or Zoom and these learners can participate in class just as in-person learners do.

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

While we are not designated as a magnet school, our school does house the district’s magnet drama program called, On Tour. Students from both middle schools that are interested apply and audition. On Tour is a district magnet program. The program has about 100 students. Additionally, students that are in 15:1 and 8:1 special education classes around the district attend Calhoun. The COORE program (8:1) and Prep for Life (15:1) prepare students for independent living, life skills, and vocational skills. Many of our Prep for Life students earn high school diplomas because we teach Regents curricula in their academic classes and we administer Regents exams to them as well.

PART III - SUMMARY

Calhoun High School is in the suburban town of Merrick, approximately 35 miles east of NYC on Long Island. It is one of 3 comprehensive high schools in the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District. Merrick is home to predominantly middle to upper middle class families. However, there are quite a few families who are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The district has a food pantry, The Community Cupboard, feeding approximately 75 families within the district every two weeks. This is a districtwide cause with all schools contributing to its functioning and providing students with community service opportunities. The generous spirit of the Calhoun community can be characterized with this anecdote from this past holiday season. A mother who was serving as a crossing guard for an elementary school was hit by a car. As a result, she was unable to work. The family was experiencing financial struggles already. I reached out to our parent community and our staff and within 4 days we had raised almost \$4,000 for this family. The teachers and staff at Calhoun care deeply about kids. We promote kindness and caring on every level and my students rise to the occasion to do the best they can with and for each other. We have used Challenge Day annually as a way for students to build empathy and realize that there are others in our midst who are going through difficult life situations. By helping students to see that they are not alone in their struggles, they are better able to connect to each other and engage with caring and supportive adults in the building.

My motto as principal of this school that I love deeply is "Every Day, Every Student, Every Chance". We strive to meet the needs of every student, no matter where they are, and help them reach their potential on every level. They are my sole focus and the staff knows that we are here for them. We are a No Place for Hate School for four years in a row. We are listed nationally with a rank of 1235 in US News and World Report Best High Schools. This is a comprehensive high school offering a full range of AP courses, college level courses, Regents courses, with a vast fine arts program, extracurricular, and athletic offerings. Academically, we have National Merit Scholars, a science research program with winners in various competitions, robotics, and engineering courses. No matter what a student is interested in, Calhoun has something for everyone. Plus, if a club or activity does not exist for a particular interest, students form new clubs all the time.

Our School Counseling and Wellness Center is instrumental in supporting our students academically, socially and emotionally. Teachers work collaboratively with our counselors and mental health professionals to identify students in need. We also have a direct relationship with Northwell Health and South Oaks to access a psychiatrist to do mental health testing and evaluations for students in crisis. They also help to support our students with mental health issues through in-patient, outpatient, and partial day programs for students in varying levels of counseling needs. This partnership was established two years ago and has been extremely helpful in helping us support students mentally and emotionally. We are not immune to the rising incidence of anxiety and depression among adolescents and it is our duty to help reduce the stigma related to mental health and to get students connected to help. We have student leaders who visit 9th grade classes to talk about the transition to high school as well as talk to students about stress, time management, social stressors, social media, etc. Students talking to students about these issues is far more effective than an assembly. The conversations are more personal with more connections forged than a special speaker could ever create.

Historically, Calhoun is home to the district's vocational program. In the 1960s and 1970s we had automotive repair, carpentry, cosmetology, and other specialized programs. While the vocational programs have been re-directed to regional BOCES high schools, Calhoun still hosts a cosmetology program that serves students in the district. Calhoun has also been known as "The Arts School" of the district. This is because of our 40 year old, highly successful, award winning Drama Program On Tour, and also because of the wide array of music and fine arts offerings that are also highly acclaimed and award winning. Calhoun is a special place for students of all kinds and we embrace inclusivity and equity for all students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

As a comprehensive high school in New York State, the core curriculum follows the NYS Learning Standards in ELA, mathematics, science, social studies, world languages, and the arts. Students must take and pass five Regents exams (English Language Arts, Math, Science, Global History and US History) and World Language Checkpoint A to graduate. To graduate with an Advanced Regents Diploma, the higher standard for college readiness, students must also take and pass 2 Science Regents (Living Environment and one in Physical Sciences - Earth Science, Chemistry, or Physics), and all three Math Regents exams (Algebra, Geometry, Algebra 2). Eighty-two percent of our graduates earned this distinction last year and 77% in 2019.

Our school's core curriculum requires every student to take four years of English. The math program requires a minimum of three years that include Algebra, Geometry, and Algebra 2. The social studies program includes Global 1, Global 2, U.S. History, and Economics/Participation in Government. Science includes three years of required coursework in Living Environment, Earth Science, and Chemistry.

Since 2014-2015, 61% of our graduates earned the Advanced Regents Diploma. There has been an increase in the last 6 years due to utilizing data, especially in Math, to inform instruction. Math teachers who taught Algebra 2 were given collaborative planning time to develop lessons and assessments that more effectively prepared students for the Regents exam. They shared best practices and each year more and more students were successful in passing that exam which had been a roadblock for students earning the advanced diploma previously. At the end of the 2019-20 school year there were no Regents exams given due to the pandemic and students were given credit for them. While we were fully on-line last spring, teachers continued to teach and assess. The fourth quarter of the school year was pass/fail. Bellmore-Merrick has also made a decision to not hurt student's overall average if their performance on a Regents exam is lower than what they earned in the class. This is a commitment to the philosophy that a one-shot test does not necessarily characterize one's learning and that what students do every day with their teachers in classrooms is a better measure of student achievement. As such, teachers utilize a wide range of pedagogical and teaching tools including project and problem-based learning, differentiated instruction to meet the needs of each learner, cooperative learning, student choice, and performance based assessment in addition to traditional formative assessments. Our teachers and students use Google Classroom as the primary teaching and learning platform. Teachers assess in multiple ways and rely on students demonstrating what they know in many more ways than just traditional tests. The Regents exams are currently undergoing changes in standards and formats and as they change, our teachers work together to unpack the standards and plan lessons and assessments that focus on the skills necessary to not only do well on a test but also prepare students to read, write, analyze, and problem solve on a level needed for college and life beyond Calhoun.

The biggest change in instruction has been teachers being able to teach remotely. This has changed how teachers approach instruction, how they assess, and the methods for checking for understanding. They have had to learn how to use the technology and find ways to keep students engaged, especially how to keep remote learners engaged. As we have had to quarantine students and as families have requested to go remote as the numbers of cases has increased this school year, teachers have had to navigate the day-to-day changes in who is in-person and who is at home. Who would have thought "break out rooms" or "JamBoard" or "Zoom" would become part of our teaching daily life, but they have. They are useful tools to have students work together, meet, share ideas, and demonstrate understanding.

The district has also chosen to have occasional "Remote Wednesdays" where all students are remote. This allows the teacher and all learners to be together on screen, without masks, for 30 minute periods as opposed to the usual 40 minutes. Teachers and students have reported how great they are to see each others' faces, engage in discussions with all students in the class, and take part in unique learning experiences that might not be accomplished in the same way in person. These days also prepare the staff to be able to pivot seamlessly to remote instruction should we need to. We know that the relationships built among teachers and students are the most important part of school. Being behind masks and barriers has made that relationship building harder but, as a staff, we are committed to finding as many ways as possible to connect

to students and to engage them in significant learning no matter what the state decides for end of year testing.

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

In addition to the Regents curriculum, we offer 36 courses across all subject areas that offer dual enrollment in a local college or university. Students earn credits at a discounted rate and get a taste of college level work. We also offer 28 Advanced Placement courses through the College Board giving students the most rigorous coursework in preparation for college. We encourage all students to take at least one AP course before they graduate especially if they plan to go to college. As such, 76% of our seniors last year had taken at least one AP before graduating. We also offer a unique course, Senior Experience, in which seniors take English and Social Studies as a humanities-based, co-curricular experience and they carry out an internship in a career field of their choice. This is a very popular choice for seniors and about 100 choose this option every year. Students are in class 3 days a week and the other 2 days they are at their internships finding out if that is a path they want to pursue in their lives. The district also offers cosmetology as mentioned earlier and an electrical training program certifying students through the Electrical Training Institute Center opening the door to employment upon completion. Students may also have the opportunity to take other CTE courses at our regional Barry Tech Center and Technical Education High School as part of Nassau BOCES.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Calhoun has vast visual and performing arts courses and programs. The anchor program is our drama program, On Tour, that is a magnet program for the district. The program has about 100 students in grades 9-12 and it teaches every aspect of the dramatic and performing arts to its members. In a typical year, On Tour produces 4 shows including a Shakespeare play and a musical. Seniors produce their own one act shows as a culminating assessment. While socially distanced this year with clear masks, students did perform Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors and Our Town to small audiences. They are currently rehearsing and preparing for the musical Something Rotten!. We also have an award-winning choir for students in grades 10 -12 for which one must audition. Chorale is an option for students in any grade who desire to sing but did not get into Concert Choir. We have a series of band courses including Repertory Band for less experienced musicians, Symphonic Band, and Wind Ensemble. We also have an Orchestra. We offer Guitar and Digital Music Production. Additionally, we offer music to our 8:1 self contained students every other day. There are extracurricular groups our students can audition and be a part of including a Rock Band, Jazz Band, String Ensemble, and Pulse! which is a contemporary vocal ensemble. Our visual arts course offerings are robust and popular including introductory Studio in Art, a requirement for future arts courses, photography, sculpture, drawing and painting, architectural design, College 2-D animation, and the culminating course, AP Art and Design. Additionally, we offer Art 1 and 2 to our 15:1 students.

Physical Education is a required course to graduate. All students take it every other day. Students participate in a wide range of physical activity and games. This year we follow the CDC guidelines for physical education in schools while still getting our students active. Health is a one semester course required to graduate. Health is offered to students in grades 10-12. The curriculum covers mental health, nutrition, addiction, mindfulness, healthy choices, etc.

World Languages are offered to all students and the vast majority of students take a language throughout high school. Languages offered include Spanish, French, Italian, and Mandarin. All languages have college level dual enrollment options for seniors as well as AP courses in all.

We offer an engineering strand of courses including Design and Drawing for Production, Principles of Engineering, Foundations of Engineering, and the culminating course, Digital Electronics, that has college dual enrollment.

In business, we offer students in grades 10-12, Accounting, Career and Financial Management, Sports and Entertainment Marketing, College Marketing, and the culminating course, Virtual Enterprise. DECA, Distributive Education Clubs of America, is a wildly popular club here that has won numerous state and national awards for students presenting business plans at regional, state, and national competitions.

We do have a full-time library media specialist who assists students with research and database access.

3. Academic Supports:

Teachers are contractually mandated to offer extra help for all students. This is the first level of help offered to students who are struggling. Students who have not passed the required assessments to graduate work with teachers during their professional periods and at after school tutoring sessions. Our counseling and wellness center counselors, social workers, and psychologists meet bi-weekly to talk about students that are in need of intervention and plan the supports needed including regular counseling. Students that are above grade level can take more challenging courses through our local community college and through on-line universities.

Our special education program is renowned in Nassau County. We have had many schools come and visit to see how we meet the needs of all our learners. Other school districts send students to our program. Our COORE Program services our most developmentally and intellectually disabled students. This 8:1 program teaches students life skills and pre-vocational supports. As they progress some students can also take 15:1 Prep for Life courses. Our Prep for Life program is for students who are in school until they are 21. It offers academic classes with the potential to earn a Regents/Local Diploma and/or a CDOS (Career Development and Occupational Studies) credential. Prep students have half the day of work based learning beginning in their third year of attendance at Calhoun. As a result of our connection to the Career and Educational Counseling Center of Long Island South Oaks, we offer job coaches and work sites within the building and in the community. We have a fully functioning cafe and school store that act as job sites in the building. We also have partnerships with local businesses for students to work and gain life skills, even getting jobs after graduation. We have an extensive Collaborative program in which students with IEPs take Regents courses that are dually taught by a special education teacher and a subject area specialist. Collaborative classes are for students in grades 9-11 with senior year acting as a transition to attending college without the additional special education teacher in the room. Collaborative classes are offered in the English, Math, Social Studies and Science academic areas. Students in the collab program graduate with a Regents diploma. English/Social Studies and Math/Science Skills classes are taught in conjunction with Collab courses to pre-teach and re-teach material. We also have resource room taught by special educators in a 5:1 setting to support students with IEPs and 504s. The least restrictive level of support we offer is an alternate day support for students with the least need for intervention.

Finally, Calhoun is home to the ENL program in the district. We have 2 ENL teachers who support all levels of English Language Learners both in stand alone classes and by collaborative teaching in English, Math, Social Studies and Science classes. Our program is highly individualized based on the proficiency level of each learner and the needs each has to graduate with a Regents diploma.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Perhaps the single most important thing that our district, Bellmore-Merrick, decided was to begin the year hybrid and transition to full in-person instruction by the end of September. This was highly unusual in our county at the time. Our Superintendent and Board of Education made a bold decision at a time when most other districts were hybrid or fully remote. Calhoun has a population of about 1250 students. We require masks to be worn at all times and there are barriers on desks. We reduced class sizes and spread out desks. We also offered families the option to be fully remote and offered the option to be hybrid attending 2 days per week. At Calhoun that reduced our in school population by 15%. Our Nassau County Department of Health approved of our district plan to have a full population and the science has supported our protocols. We do contact tracing of positive cases and we quarantine students who have been within 6 feet of a positive student or staff member for more than 10 minutes. While this has led to many students and some staff being quarantined since October, instruction has not been interrupted for any learner because classrooms are livestreamed every day to our remote learners. Therefore, all our students are getting direct instruction every day whether they are here or at home. We have also utilized occasional remote days for everyone in order to have classes on screen with all learners and their teachers without masks. Teachers have said that they love these days as it affords our learners a day where everyone is in the same learning model and seeing faces without masks connects learners to each other and their teachers more effectively.

Our counseling and wellness center counselors, psychologists, and social workers continue to meet with students and families on Zoom and in person to support academic, social, and emotional needs. Home visits are made when necessary to check on fully remote learners. It is clear from our data so far that our fully remote learners are having more academic, social and emotional issues. We are in the process of having conversations with students and families to promote students attending in person for the fourth quarter of this year in order to transition back to full, in-person for next year. There is still significant anxiety that students and families have. Our flexibility in meeting the needs of all families has garnered incredible trust and gratefulness from the community. We also have extracurricular activities and sports. In the fall we had intramural sports as sports were banned. In January we began low risk winter sports. In February we added back a shortened-month long season of winter sports. On March 1, we began a six week fall sport season which will be followed by a six week spring season. Seeing students do what they love has been wonderful. The joy on their faces as they practice and play is amazing. Relationships built between teachers and students are the single most important key to students success here at Calhoun. The staff loves our kids and our kids respond to the love and care we have for them by wanting to do their best.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Calhoun, we have a strong PTA who works collaboratively with us to support student programs like Challenge Day, senior breakfasts, purchases of bottle filling water fountains, and who serve as liaisons to the community communicating important information. Those are just a few functions of their work at Calhoun. We have a vibrant Sports Booster Association composed of student athlete parents who have raised well over \$250,000 over the years of its existence and they have donated equipment and scholarships to our students in that amount. They also support school programs such as Challenge Day, Class Night, Homecoming and the Pep Rally. These events bring all students together and they also support our Community Cupboard with the donations required for entry. We have On Tour Boosters supporting the Drama program. They are integral in helping to support the student productions and they provide the students with dinners during Tech week and on production nights so that students have one less thing to think about during the busy schedule of show week. We also have a Music Booster Association who provide music students with scholarships while supporting and promoting our very strong music program. We also have a Special Education PTA (SEPTA) who provide information, special speakers, advocacy help, and meetings for parents of students with disabilities. This very important parent group helps parents navigate the world of IEPs, 504s, and transitioning to life beyond Calhoun in very important ways. We have an annual Transition Fair sponsored by SEPTA that hosts colleges, job opportunities, vocational opportunities, and has a wide array of experts in helping people with disabilities live as independently as possible using a

wide array of community-based services. Alumni from our special education program also come back to talk to current parents about what they are doing and how they are using the skills learned here at Calhoun to support their lives beyond their time here. COVID has not stopped these vital groups from doing what they do. While meetings may be on Zoom, their work continues just as effectively. We also continue to partner with Northwell Health who offered parent seminars for disseminating COVID information, vaccination information, and mental health outreach for our students. Their support has been incredible with providing psychiatric evaluations quickly for our students in crisis.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

When COVID closed down schools here on March 13, 2020, we immediately pivoted to distance learning. Staff had to instantly figure out how to do this. At first, teachers were required to meet with their classes following a subject by day schedule. "Live" instruction was not required but as time went on and schools remained closed we supported teachers in using Google Classroom as the main platform and using Zoom as a streaming tool. We increased the time in "class" and added office hours for extra help. As a school, we stressed flexibility and support for our students and our staff as they navigated this new way of teaching. Over the summer, many hours were spent planning for the new school year with our greatest attention being given to the safety protocols required to open safely. We offered many opportunities for professional development in the district to support remote learning including workshops on Google Meets which became the requirement for teachers to use with Zoom as a secondary option, Google suite, Castle Learning, EdPuzzle, and FlipGrid to support teachers in teaching through video and interactive platforms. These tools also allow students to create and produce exemplars of their own learning in novel ways. We have teachers who serve as technology mentors. They work with staff members to use technology skillfully and thoughtfully in their practice. They provide workshops regularly. We started the year in hybrid and cameras installed in every classroom allowed instruction to be streamed to the learners at home synchronously. By the end of September, Calhoun and the other schools in Bellmore-Merrick opened up for the full student population. At that time about 15% of our population chose to stay remote or hybrid. Teachers had mostly in-person learners and a handful of students "on the screen" learning from home in their classes. As the year progressed and we had more and more students quarantined or who chose to go remote as cases spiked, teachers had more and more students "on the screen", Google break-out rooms became the most popular tool to have remote learners work collaboratively.

The work of teachers here to provide in-person and remote learning was far beyond what any surrounding district was asking of its teachers. The level of buy-in and professionalism to teach in a year that required so much learning, planning, and novelty is truly amazing. The support they receive from administration and the parents has been at the highest level ever experienced in my 27 years as an educator. Parents know how fortunate we are to be back in full in-person and they have expressed the deepest gratitude throughout the year to our staff.

4. School Leadership:

At Calhoun we embrace a servant leadership model. The principal works collaboratively with 3 assistant principals to encourage problem solving as a team, creating trust with teachers through building relationships and focusing on best practices, being unselfish and always willing to do anything to help and support others, and fostering a professional environment where teachers become leaders. Every academic department has a chairperson who works as a curricular expert supporting teachers in their practice. Through observation, mentorship and regular meetings, teachers have direct help from the chairperson in addition to the assistant principals and principals in carrying out the most successful teaching and learning constructs for their students. In constructing the master schedule we look to provide common periods for teachers to plan. We also require our collaborative teachers to plan together daily to best support the needs of students with IEPs in their classes focusing on differentiation of instruction for all learners. Everything the leadership team does is to help students succeed academically, socially and emotionally. The Calhoun Counseling and Wellness Center works hand in hand with administrators and teachers in meeting the needs of all of our students and helping them thrive on every level. The daily conversations with and about kids and families among all the adults who work with them create a collaborative, problem solving atmosphere where everyone knows and practices that we will do everything in our power to help our kids succeed. During the

COVID shutdown last spring, we surveyed our teachers regularly to find out which students were not engaging in learning. This led to check-ins with guidance counselors, home visits, phone calls, and team meetings to make sure our kids were emotionally healthy. This carried over in the summer and during this year. Our attendance dean tracks period by period and daily attendance and has been integral in connecting to families and students. We are currently finding that some students who are learning remotely are not as engaged as they should be and their grades are suffering. Again, this has led to meetings with families to encourage returning to school in-person. This has been a very successful strategy for getting students back in school as we enter the last quarter of this year. The administrative role of the principal and assistant principals during COVID has required our leadership in helping students follow safety protocols here in the building which has been enormously successful. We also act as contact tracers when there are positive cases and we quarantine students who have been exposed to a person who tested positive. We have not experienced transmission of the virus here in the building as a result of the safety protocols and the contact tracing that we have had to do. Of course, this also requires the principal to be available 24/7. Many weekends and late nights required contact tracing in order to quarantine close contacts minimizing the chance of spread.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Our school population has been changing. We have more students of color and our school is home to the district ENL program. The International Buddy Club began six years ago as a small afternoon club to serve as a "home" for our ENL students. This small club has now grown so large that they meet on Fridays in our auditorium lobby. Members come from all walks of Calhoun life and they sponsor various events annually including an international luncheon where students make foods from their cultural backgrounds and serve our staff and "Colture Day" where students and staff put on an all day festival with activities, cultural studies, games, dancing, and sharing of personal stories with the entire student body. It should be noted that "Calhoun Colts" represents our school's mascot and so "Colture Day" is a play on words for "Culture Day".

In the last two years and especially this year, our students of color have been speaking out about their experiences with race and racism. We have had students speak at our faculty meetings and this year, they have organized a series of student forums to talk about race and racism here and nationally. They have shared experiences, asked questions, questioned curriculum. They have taught elementary school classes and middle school classes in order to help the youngest of our students recognize the damage of racism and the need to be inclusive of all. Through the work of the Racial Equity Club, two students along with the advisor wrote a Black Studies curriculum that will be integrated into existing classes and act as a stand-alone course next year. We have a Gender Sexualities Alliance Club who raise awareness among our student body by going into health classes and teaching their peers about the LGBTQ+ experience. Just recently, they hosted a very well attended meeting with a local professor who shared her experience as an LGBTQ+ Arab/Muslim American published author. On Yom HaShoah, we will host a Holocaust survivor to speak to our entire student body. Our entire faculty is currently going through Diversity Training in order to help teachers address issues of equity and inclusion with students. As a building we have a thriving group of teachers who meet monthly to talk and plan for how to bring awareness to our staff and improve our practices in the area of culturally responsive teaching. Finally, we are actively looking to recruit and hire more teachers and administrators of color so that students have more role models in the building. We know from research that it makes a difference for students to have someone who looks like them be here in the building for connection and empathy.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

We realized very quickly that remote learning is a very difficult way for most kids to learn, especially students with disabilities. Students and teachers are most successful when students are in-person, in the classroom, learning with their peers and from dynamic educators. We also are acutely aware that we are in the middle of a pandemic. However, the district made a very bold decision to do everything we could to bring students back to the building as quickly and as safely as possible. This required planning throughout the summer in preparation for the 2020-21 school year. The planning included multiple committees that included teachers, parents, and administrators from all over the district to figure out how to get students back in school. After opening with a hybrid model, we were able to accomplish this single most important task for student success by the end of September. It required everyone to wear masks at all times, barriers to be put on all desks, and to be as distanced as much as possible. It also requires that when there is a positive case that we contact trace and quarantine students and staff who were within 6 feet of a positive case. Kids were back in the classroom. Is it different with masks and barriers? There is no doubt that there are still challenges. But, students can interact in person with their teachers and peers which is, by far, the most effective way to learn. We offered intramural sports in the fall and we just finished a winter season in the month of March. Currently we are having a seven week fall season which will be followed by a spring season through the end of the year. We have a full range of clubs and extracurricular activities ensuring that school is as usual as it could be during a pandemic. Students that have been in-person have thrived and participation in school activities and sports is equal to and in some cases greater than previous years. We are so proud of our Superintendent and Board of Education who made the bold decision to be in person despite the vast majority of surrounding districts being hybrid or remote. We have accomplished the impossible and we are looking forward to the end of this pandemic and getting even closer to what school should be in the coming weeks and months.