

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Girard Academic Music Program
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2136 W. Ritner Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Philadelphia State PA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 19145-4206

County Philadelphia County

Telephone (215) 400-8230 Fax (215) 400-8231

Web site/URL https://gamp.philasd.org/ E-mail jmoore2@philasd.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. William Hite E-mail Hite@philasd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Philadelphia City School District Tel. (215) 400-4000

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. Joyce Wilkerson
(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):
- 150 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 16 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 57 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 224 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	26	39	65
6	35	60	95
7	47	47	94
8	35	59	94
9	33	43	76
10	22	42	64
11	22	42	64
12 or higher	21	35	56
Total Students	241	367	608

*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):
- 0.3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 20 % Asian
 - 25.6 % Black or African American
 - 5.6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 39.8 % White
 - 8.7 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: ≤1%

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

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

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	0
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	626
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

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

Portuguese, Indonesian, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 100 %

Total number students who qualify: 608

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %

37 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>5</u> Autism | <u>9</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>16</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>6</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>2</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: 3

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	33
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	10

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	97%	95%	93%	93%	90%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	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	64
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	82%
Enrolled in a community college	14%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	4%

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.

Girard Academic Music Program prepares students for success by focusing on the development of the whole learner through a rigorous academic and musical curriculum.

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.

Currently, we are operating on a fully virtual model for all grades. We are in the process of transitioning students in grades 5 and 6-8 with complex needs into a hybrid school day which would provide two days of in-person learning and three virtual days

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

Students are selected on four criteria: (1) Grades; (2) Test Score; (3) Attendance; (4) Musical audition

PART III - SUMMARY

Girard Academic Music Program (GAMP) is a public magnet school in the School District of Philadelphia. GAMP students of various socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds travel from all over the city culminating in a richly diverse student body. The GAMP logo is a representative symbol of our school with a juxtaposition of treble and bass clefs. The joining of these two clefs symbolize the coming together of many races, creeds, and cultures to create a diverse academic community demonstrating the universal language of music. GAMP was founded in 1974 as an alternative program within the Stephen Girard School and designed to promote academic and musical excellence. Our continual growth required that GAMP move into its own building (formally the Edgar Allen Poe School) and the community came together to add a state of the art theater, gymnasium, and cafeteria.

While being one of the first Small Learning Communities, GAMP's proven excellence has allowed development to its present size, with a staff of 35 and over 600 students in grades 5 through 12. Our unique curriculum has ALL students as "music majors" providing the framework for the creation of a strong academic and musical program. The melding of a love for learning and passion for music drives the development of our students. With a 98 – 100% college acceptance rate among each senior class and scholarships valued at over 1 to 2 million dollars yearly, GAMP continues to grow in stature within the City of Philadelphia.

Graduates of GAMP have consistently experienced success in their professional and personal lives, but we are most enriched by the number of alumni that send their children here, voicing the positive impact the school has had on them. Additionally, alumnus frequently speak with the student body, establishing connections and offering mentorship to the next generation. Through this community, students have been inspired to create new traditions, including various student-led events held throughout the year that focus on diversity, community, and student voice. Combining this inspiration with a philosophy of "academics with humanity", course work and teacher support have led to the development of a school wide recycling program along with donations to organizations such as Gift of Life and various food banks.

While establishing themselves as members of the Philadelphia community, GAMP is known throughout the city for its Broadway caliber plays, stellar concerts and charitable musical performances. This dedication to others has manifested itself in an understanding of the value of hard work and is translated into their approach to their studies. Students are allowed self-selection in course work with one to one guidance from the counselor and roster chair. To increase the level of college acceptance, students proudly push themselves academically to gain acceptance into 1 of 7 AP courses. Their academic excellence has made itself known via GAMP's accolades. GAMP made Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and the Distinguished Schools list in Philadelphia for 7 years. Ranked 7th in Philadelphia School District, 55th in the Philadelphia Metro Area, 82nd in PA high schools, 263rd in magnet schools, and 2,171st in National Rankings.

The continual development of the whole student requires a myriad of extracurricular programming ranging from sports such as baseball and basketball to clubs such as Chess Team and Dungeons and Dragons. GAMP has forged bonds with the surrounding area high schools to expand our sports program and offer a wider array of sports desired by students. Through student government and our newly formed Youth Court students are able to demonstrate leadership and self-governance. Our diversity is showcased in the sharing of cultures through student led clubs such as the Asian Club and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Students are also encouraged to join the Student Activities Committee (SAC) which allows for all stakeholders to come together to build a better GAMP through turning ideas into action.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

When schools were scheduled to open in person for the 2020-2021 school year, we planned for our regularly scheduled day, which consists of eight classes lasting forty-eight minutes including a forty-eight-minute lunch period. When it was announced that we would stay virtual, we kept this schedule in place, believing that this would provide as much normalcy as possible for our student population. We came to realize that many students, and staff were not finding success with this model and adapted to truncated period length allowing for office hours and reducing screen fatigue.

Examining the data, teachers noticed that there was a seven percent decrease in students scoring as proficient or advanced in fifth grade, a 4.6 percent decrease in eighth grade ELA, and a six percent decrease in math for grades five and six. Knowing this, our School Based Teacher Leader (STBL) created professional development surrounding analyzing data and grade groups collaborated to create more unified curricular sequencing and vertical alignment across the middle school and high school.

1. Reading/ELA

In English, to address the dip in test scores and while making the necessary adaptations to virtual learning, the two key areas of focus this year were differentiation and assessment. ELA teachers began pre-planning activities that were multidimensional, highly engaging activities that could be part of instruction meeting the learner where they were and motivating them to stretch. Utilizing ideas discussed in community meetings allowed for a personalization of the analysis applied to reading material, that could be expanded for high achievers and reduced for students who struggled. Keeping both engaged and held to a high standard. Assessment was another area where our ELA teachers wanted to move the boundaries. Multiple assessment formats along with new software allowed for a variety of pre - and post-assessment styles. Summative assessments were often divided across multiple sessions to allow students enough time to complete tests without feeling pressured. They could then also take multiple formats including: oratory, recorded responses and project based assessment.

2. Mathematics

GAMP strives to allow each student the opportunity to excel in math courses of their choosing by offering students the opportunity to select math courses including calculus and AP Statistics prior to if not during their senior year. Seeing that only 28.1% of students scored advanced on the Algebra I Keystone and 36.3% scored advanced on the PSSA Math assessment, the math teachers prioritized focus on conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and adaptive reasoning. Developing a focus on these strands of thinking gave students the ability to develop and show mastery of the content, demonstrate the ability to carry out procedures accurately, and show capacity for reflection and justification, which leads to the ability to have higher level discussions. Under the direction of the Math School Based Teacher Leader, teachers used professional development time to review resources and adapt to online learning.

Teachers took a renewed interest in Desmos, an interactive learning platform that allows students to engage in math activities that while planned the same can be differentiated based on student needs. All math teachers from grades 5-12 committed to using the program and were able to determine where students needed assistance and create small groups based on the students' needs.

3. Science

Our science department, much like our math department works to increase discussion as well conceptual understanding in order to transfer what they learn to different domains. When our science department observed that there was an increase in request for science classes, but that the number of students scoring advanced in on the PSSA and Biology Keystone remained stagnant, they intensely focused on differentiating assignments, varying the types of assessments, and using office hours to create more individualized instruction for students.

For students taking AP Biology and AP Environmental Science, the teachers allowed the students to focus more on project based assignments, that allowed students to focus on collaborating with the Community Design Collaborative to create eco-friendly school beautification projects that encourages students to gather research from area stakeholders and to use that research to work with architects to develop blueprints for the to be introduced and implemented to the school community.

4. Social studies/history/civic learning

At GAMP, history and civics classes challenge students to use current day and past events, discussion, and critical thinking to investigate the world they live in. Partnering with English teachers, the history department capitalized on current events, by using culturally responsive classroom techniques, to allow students to have a voice in the classroom. In our middle school classes, students engaged in mock debates on policies such as immigration and civil rights, while in African-American History, students used the novel Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi, in order to gain a deeper understanding of Ghanaian and American history in order to create a project based on the characters in the text and compare them to modern-day society and current events.

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

College and career success is the driving force behind the decisions made for our school community. While 98-100% of our seniors are accepted to college we strive to ensure that our students are prepared for the complexities found in college and career choices such as: choice, exposure, options, and rigor. We ensure that these aspects are integral in our systems for course selection, counseling, community partnerships, and student leadership.

Our teachers and counselors partner to implement Naviance college and career curriculum for all grades 5-12. We provide high school students with the opportunity to take up to 6 AP classes starting in tenth grade. Additionally, our eleventh and twelfth grade students have the opportunity to participate in dual enrollment programs at local two and four year schools. Seniors are offered the option of enrolling in the Senior Year Only Program (SYOP) during which time they spend their senior year earning up to twenty-seven college credits at a neighboring two or four year college.

Additionally, we require all high school students to accumulate forty hours of community service before graduation, coupled with a school supported optional internship for our 11th grade students.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

We consider Music, Physical Education, and Spanish classes as vital elements of our school program. As stated in the description of our community, all of GAMP's students are music majors. Students may focus on vocal or instrumental music, while everyone participates in the school choir. Our music program includes classes in music theory and choirs in grades 5-12, Concert Choir, Wind Ensemble, Strings, Jazz and Swing bands, an Orchestra and the production of the school musical. Students are placed in those classes based on ability and selected major. These classes are a part of the student's daily schedule. An area of need arose around conducting these classes, as most of the work must be done in person. Music teachers adapted by having students submit recordings of performances to evaluate mastery of the content. This also proved helpful in preparing for the annual musical.

Our foreign language class is offered for high school students only. The instructor uses a mixture of project-based learning, requiring that students utilize items from their present-day experiences to hold conversations to enhance learning. Our physical education teacher supported students by using information in the news

regarding the pandemic to lead discussions surrounding health and wellness and adjusted his physical education lessons by providing health challenges to encourage students to stay active and physically healthy.

3. Academic Supports:

GAMP prides itself on its ability to respond to the needs of our diverse student population. We have worked to develop a range of supports that can be differentiated based on our students' needs. Our teachers consistently monitor data to ensure the academic success of all students. The leadership team members led grade group meetings to discuss struggling students and develop interventions. While we find that all subgroups at our school are achieving at higher levels than our district goals, we strive to ensure that all students are accessing the curriculum and finding increased success to meet our school standards.

While our Special Education population is lower than our comprehensive school counterparts, we work to offer a variety of supports based on the needs of our students. The program runs a push-in model that allows for Special Education teachers to participate in class with students. Both the general education and special education teacher work together to support the student while not allowing the student to feel stigmatized. Most often students report they feel better prepared to succeed and feel that having the teacher in class helps them stay on track with their peers.

Additionally, our renewed focus on data fostered the development of counselor led Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) meetings. For students that are performing below grade level, we use MTSS meetings to review grades, discuss strategies, track student progress, and if necessary, employ Tier II interventions. For those students above grade level we determine if they will qualify for gifted instruction or enrichment class; if the student is in high school, we determine if they qualify for honors and AP classes. Having our counselors coordinate this effort allows us to broaden our supports, and create more opportunities to address students with complex needs, as well as coordinate academic advising for high school students.

While the majority of our students are accepted to college, we have seen an increasing number of first generation college students as well as first generation immigrant families. To assist these students in finding success, our school counselor holds meetings for parents to learn of the application process, college fairs, and meets individually with each senior to set college and career goals. The counselor then follows up with meetings to check on progress and whatever support is needed to complete the college application. Our lead counselor also uses MTSS to track the needs of these students in collaboration with each content area teacher. During the MTSS meeting, teachers share best practices, schedule home visits, and schedule and meet with students to create small achievable goals that allow students to see success. In cases where language is a barrier, we have consulted with our Bilingual Counseling Assistant (BCA) to help us navigate challenges, schedule meetings and make accommodations for students. We have seen a great increase in student success and participation of families since the implementation of the BCA and MTSS system to meet the needs of students beyond just their academic goals.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

As the health crisis set in, our staff immediately began reaching out to families to provide support. We prioritized our incoming students with digital meet and greet opportunities, personalized messages and interactions with teacher teams, including grade level orientations. As a school, we adapted our advisories to create period long community meetings for classes and grades. Instructors used these daily meeting times to focus on SEL, allowing students to directly communicate their feelings and experiences, while guiding them through structured discussions of events occurring in our neighborhoods, city, state and nation. Whenever a major crisis happened our counselors and Director of Diversity and Inclusion responded with town halls to give students a chance to engage and discuss their feelings and points of view. Additionally, our counselors created town halls for grade bands as a platform for students to discuss the realities of virtual school and other student concerns. GAMP's Home and School Association and School Advisory Commission have always been powerful tools utilized to communicate with all our stakeholders. However during the pandemic, they have become the backbone of communication with parents and families. To provide some normalcy and an outlet for students, GAMP has continued to run our clubs online including our Literary Magazine, GSA, chess, running/fitness, and Dungeons and Dragons. Our student leaders, including NHS and Student Council, have designed spirit weeks, movie nights and online gaming events for students throughout the school year. Educationally, an important point of pride for our school, is that during this virtual school period we have maintained daily attendance of 90 percent and have kept most of the students who began with us enrolled. We adapted our schedule multiple times to adjust for the experience of digital learning, structuring class time while differentiating lessons for students who had additional homebound responsibilities due to Covid-19. Teachers integrated synchronous and asynchronous work to allay screen fatigue while maintaining our rigorous standards. Lessons were created and delivered in various digital mediums including: Pear Deck, Desmos, Gizmos, Kahoot and Flip-grid. GAMP's instructors leaned on their creativity to create games, mysteries, virtual escape rooms; anything to keep their students "tuned in." In the event of a student experiencing technical difficulty a clear process was established to inform teachers and get the student back to learning as quickly as possible. We are constantly adapting as we learn what works best for our students and families in this current landscape.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

GAMP has built numerous relationships with businesses and community organizations throughout the area to promote student success. The Jewish Family and Children's Services of Greater Philadelphia, Travis Manion Foundation, and Women of Tomorrow Mentor & Scholarship Program teach staff to assist children with emotional issues that hinder learning and promote character and leadership skills in young adults. GAMP has enlisted programs such as Step Into College, Philly Goes to College, Steppingstone Scholars, and Philadelphia Futures providing students access to the tools necessary to plan, apply, and pay for college. Relationships with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Philly Pops, Mann Music Center, Kimmel Center, Walnut St. Theatre, University of the Arts, Metropolitan Opera, and the Annenberg Center at University of Pennsylvania expose all our students to music that drives their passion and is so carefully integrated into their learning experience.

As GAMP continues to expand its reach, finances are essential. Fundraising efforts from Home and School Association (HSA) along with students working together on various sales and musical performances have brought in needed funds for the school. GAMP is able to provide new technologies such as laptop carts and a new state of the art science lab to enhance student achievement. The SAC has used some of this money, while seeking additional grants, to help bring visions of a better GAMP. These designs establish safer play areas and pick-up and drop off locations for students. During COVID the SAC gave monthly "State of the School" addresses, and created a COVID response team facilitating communication between the school and community. Parents conducted socially distanced gatherings for newer students in middle school grades. Parents, students, and teachers were invited to join in the Race, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, which was newly formed in the wake of COVID, to address issues surrounding race and equity ensuring our community is heard, healed, and can help future generations.

GAMP has a strong online presence with Facebook and Instagram accounts engaging alumni and the community. To stay connected during this unprecedented time, GAMP clubs also remain active online. Communication is facilitated through our HSA, which produces a weekly newsletter to all stakeholders via email. This publication includes columns such as: Message from the Principal, Counselor Connection, Music News, Notes from the Nurse, Student Council Corner, Athletics, Race, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, SAC, links for teacher wish lists for items to purchase for the classroom, clubs, and miscellaneous to keep everyone informed of the latest events at the school.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

We are fortunate at GAMP to have a seasoned staff that does not experience much turnover. GAMP has the challenge of having one administrator for a school with grades 5-12. Fortunately, that administrator uses a distributive model of leadership, assigning departmental and other responsibilities to teachers and forming a leadership committee.

Our staff is accustomed to rotating in and out of leadership roles so that the burden of having an extra role is well understood by all staff. The stability of the staff and the rotation of leadership roles have allowed professional relationships to develop and thrive. This includes how we conduct professional development; we use a peer/mentoring approach. Teachers meet several times a week in AMA's (Academic Music Academies, which are groups of teachers whose students overlap), departmentally, and as a full staff. GAMP has several teacher leaders who present important information from various district-level turnaround trainings. Administration and the leadership team discuss needs presented by the staff in bi-monthly meetings and professional development is focused on these school level needs. When transitioning to virtual teaching and learning, some teachers who were less experienced incorporating digital resources were concerned about using these new tools. Administration and the leadership committee created opportunities for teachers to opt into learning sessions for this tech during common planning time. These sessions were led by other teachers. Common planning time has been monumentally important to teachers feeling connected to each other and the school community. Our administrator encourages open discussion and sharing during full staff meetings. Teachers are encouraged to join in spirit week activities, school musical performances and send shout-outs to each other in the weekly newsletter. All of this serves to increase the feeling of being valued and acknowledged. Our Administrator does a heroic job of supporting and encouraging staff while continuing to team build. From staff sweatshirts giveaways, zoom get-togethers, her open-door policy and the ease with which you can openly communicate with the administration, teachers are made to feel confident and empowered within this new learning environment.

4. School Leadership:

GAMP's administration strives to create an atmosphere of cooperation and contribution from all stakeholders. Through their distributive leadership style, teachers, a counselor, dean and union representative participate in a leadership team. They provide input on the policies and programs that benefit GAMP. Additionally, the administration has an open door policy allowing students, parents, and teachers to bring in their ideas or concerns, thus fostering strong relationships that promote meaningful and sustainable programming. This approach, along with working with the HSA and SAC, allows our administration to generate new opportunities with internal and external stakeholders.

Always data driven, in 2019 the administration identified that GAMP's greatest educational deficit was found with the students who perform at the lowest levels on standardized tests, specifically students of color and those receiving special education services. The leadership team was immediately set the task to procure the resources necessary for the success of these students. Upon consulting English and math teacher leaders, the administration purchased Edgenuity, Achieve 3000 and Imagine Math programs. School leadership will again analyze the data to determine the effectiveness of the programs, making adjustments and further working to increase the educational equity within the school.

In response to COVID-19, the administration worked with school leadership to provide opportunities for families to collect personal effects following the 2020 school year. They also facilitated the pick-up of

laptops, textbooks, and any needed supplies for the 2020-21 school year. At times, this included personally driving items to homes and facilitating food pickup for those in need.

To address community concerns, and in conjunction with teacher and student input our administrator implemented many programs to improve performance during virtual instruction. The school day was reconfigured to accommodate student wellness and provide office hours, allowing students one-on-one access to teachers. Differentiated asynchronous learning was introduced to reduce screen time. Monthly town halls addressed student wellness and safety. Student lunch meetings were offered by counselors. Needs surveys were created to gauge parental readiness for virtual learning, and parent workshops on tips for virtual learning, attendance, and teen wellness were begun. The administration arranged professional development sessions on personal wellness and virtual learning to better address the observed needs of the staff. It was also determined that office hours and professional development would allow teachers to better assist students, off-setting some of their stress. Staff AMAs continued with more time allotted throughout the virtual environment, providing teachers communication in specific pedagogical areas for the advancement of the academic and musical vision of GAMP.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At GAMP we saw the need to take a proactive approach to culturally responsive teaching and learning. One of our strengths is our heterogeneous student body. The school hosts students of different races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds as well as a range of political identities that mirror our nation at large. We are cognizant of the way a one size fits all mentality can hurt student outcomes and ignore the achievement gap. To that end, our plan for teacher professional development features bi-monthly meetings focused on culturally responsive teaching. Teachers are encouraged to discuss and reflect on their practice and the ways in which the choices they make in their classroom can affect student outcomes. Our Director of Diversity and Inclusion facilitates discussions with teachers on the ways in which our unexamined biases can interfere with being an effective teacher.

Since music is the common thread in our curriculum, we use this platform to provide access and exposure to different cultures. We also use this as a way for students to “see themselves” in the music. Students suggest music for concerts and are a part of the selection process. This year alone, we have performed music by male and female composers of African-American descent, a Puerto Rican female composer, a female Korean composer, an Indonesian piece, and an Indian piece in Hindi. Instrumental and vocal music of Arabic heritage are also a part of the school’s repertoire. Students who speak these languages help guide us through the process of learning the language and what it means, creating “student voice.”

Equity in music education is so very important. Since most of our population is unable to afford private lessons, we provide free small group lessons to all of our instrumental students. We also provide scholarship opportunities for various summer programs and lesson programs that are offered through our connections in the music and university community of Philadelphia.

Music is a perfect way to address social issues and change. Within the classroom, various teachers do projects throughout the year that have students look at music and compose music as a way to express their experiences. An example is our “Protest Music” project. GAMP works with music to provide a space for students to express how they feel and a safe environment in which to do just that.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

During this year of change, the GAMP community dedicated itself to increasing the socio-emotional health of our students. Communication and fostering stronger relationships brought our community closer and is allowing us to build a solid network in which we support and learn together, in order to shape our mutual, virtual experiences.

We found our focus after teachers began reporting that many students faced uncertainties regarding COVID-19, and expressed anxiety regarding recent societal events. Initially, teachers called their homeroom students and reported back to school leadership any issues students were experiencing such as food insecurity, trouble with technology, or personal safety concerns. Those issues were brought to our school counselors and district personnel as needed. This created a bond between teachers, students and families, however we realized that this would be unsustainable in the long run. Our teachers are vested in their student learning and the need to prepare for virtual teaching required more time than expected. While teachers continued to call home to check on student learning and progress, to supplement our family contact we began using the student climate staff, as a new way to reach out to families. Now they make daily calls home regarding attendance issues, but also to inquire about needs that the family may have. Those needs are then communicated to our school counselors to then determine what resources can be provided by the school or district. Using this strategy, we have seen an increase in student attendance across all grades and have maintained above 90% attendance school wide.

As the year proceeded, the needs of students became more pressing and they reported increased feelings of isolation and anxiety, so we increased school programming. Teachers used advisory meetings to build community, create safe spaces for student communication regarding various topics affecting them and our society at large, and to simply check-in. Teachers and school counselors held “lunch bunches” for students to meet as they would in person, and brought in speakers for our monthly town hall meetings to address the health and wellness of our students. We held a virtual talent show, winter concerts and hosted a cabaret. Finally, we have celebrated our community with spirit weeks, movie nights, themed days, and contests to boost school spirit. Thus, our success is found in our communication with one another and working as a team to recognize and then adapt to the needs of our school community.