

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

Official School Name Cambria Heights Senior High School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 426 Glendale Lake Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Patton State PA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 16668-0006

County Cambria County

Telephone (814) 674-3601 Fax (814) 674-5605

Web site/URL https://www.chsd1.org/site/Default.aspx E-mail kkerchenske@chsd1.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* Mr. Kenneth Kerchenske E-mail kkerchenske@chsd1.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Cambria Heights School District Tel. (814) 674-3626

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. Kenneth Vescovi
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	55	51	106
10	54	60	114
11	47	56	103
12 or higher	61	54	115
Total Students	217	221	438

*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 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 98 % 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: 4%

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

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

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	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	432
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 34 %

Total number students who qualify: 149

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %

51 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>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>27</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>6</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>6</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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: 8

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.	29
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 15:1

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	94%	95%	93%	94%	94%
High school graduation rate	99%	95%	98%	97%	99%

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	106
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	50%
Enrolled in a community college	14%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	8%
Found employment	23%
Joined the military or other public service	4%
Other	1%

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.

Cambria Heights High School will enable students to meet the challenges of life by becoming lifelong learners and responsible citizens.

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.

From September through mid-November, Cambria Heights High School (CHHS) operated on a hybrid model, with students in group A (last names A-K) reporting for in-person instruction on Mondays and Thursdays, students in group B (last names M-Z) reporting for in-person instruction on Tuesdays and Fridays, and all students learning remotely on Wednesdays. From mid-November 2020 through January 2021, Cambria County's Covid numbers rose significantly, and during the week of December 13, 2020, the county had the highest concentration of new cases in the nation. During this time, CHHS operated on a full remote (online) model. From February 2021 to the present, the school has returned to full in-person learning, while giving families the option of selecting remote learning for their children.

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

PART III - SUMMARY

With an average annual enrollment of about 430 students, Cambria Heights High School (CHHS) is the sole high school serving the students in grades 9-12 in the Cambria Heights School District, which is comprised of four small, rural boroughs and surrounding townships. The area is best known for farming and, formerly, for coal mining, and many of our children's parents work in the cities of Johnstown, Altoona, or Indiana, which are each within an hour of the school. The Cambria Heights School District is the largest single employer in the district itself.

School-community relations are extremely strong. Each year, organizations like the Rotary Club and VFW award scholarships to our graduates totaling approximately \$25,000! These groups raise their money through hard work and fundraising, and they see these scholarships as investments in our children's and the area's futures. Last year, when CHHS was unable to plan a traditional graduation ceremony for the class of 2020, the community came together in full force to make the event special for the students. The community spontaneously started an "Adopt a Senior" Facebook page, and within weeks, every senior was receiving gifts in the mail from multiple neighbors and friends who had "adopted" them. The owners of a drive-in theater in the district donated their facility for an evening, and thousands of residents lined the streets as the Class of 2020 paraded from the school to the drive-in, led by the county sheriff and local volunteer fire departments, for a pre-recorded ceremony on the big screen, followed by fireworks funded by donations. One CHHS alumna who went on to work in the media in New York even arranged for three celebrities to record congratulatory messages for the graduates. The entire event was a testament to the community's strong bonds with the school.

Faculty and administration at CHHS employ a number of strategies to develop students not only academically, but also socially, emotionally, and culturally, and while some of these techniques are traditional, some are unique to the school. While CHHS has recognized traditional Students of the Month, the district has also partnered with The Challenge Program, a nonprofit that links school districts with business sponsors to recognize students' growth and achievement. In fact, one CHHS junior is currently a finalist for the program's Student of the Year recognition! Eight years ago, the guidance department started a peer tutoring program to partner upperclassmen with younger students who needed academic or organizational support in their classes. Since then, the program has grown into our Collaborative and Supportive Tutoring (CAST) program, in which students needing any type of support are paired with a mentor teacher, peer tutor, or both. The program has been particularly valuable for students who struggled academically or emotionally while learning remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students who need more intensive supports are referred to our CHAPS program (Cambria Heights Assistance Program for Students), through which the school can help students and families access mental health resources through a county liaison. In general, all students are encouraged to join at least one of the school's twenty-two clubs/activities or interscholastic sports teams to match their interests.

CHHS attempted to keep as many of these supports in place as possible during the COVID-19 shutdown that started locally on March 16, 2020. Although students could not report to the building in person, district and outside counselors offered telehealth appointments to those in need. Administrators and secretaries personally delivered supplies to students, from paint and brushes for art classes to mobile hotspots to those who needed internet access. Events like our band and chorus concert and drama production were either live streamed or recorded, with students performing in an empty auditorium or recording their individual contributions at home. In April, the high school principal and a teacher, dressed as the Easter Bunny, visited the homes of teachers with small children to deliver candy to make up for the community events that were cancelled. Although school was not the same during periods of remote learning, the faculty and staff of CHHS went above and beyond to provide students with as many opportunities and experiences as possible.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

At Cambria Heights High School, the core curriculum is aligned with the Pennsylvania Academic or Core Standards as adopted by the State Board of Education, including those for reading and writing in the other content areas. Curriculum is tiered so that in all subjects, teachers meet students at appropriately challenging levels with necessary supports. Our core curriculum includes a number of engaging and diverse electives that provide students opportunities to explore new fields, engage their interests, or pursue their post-secondary goals.

The English Department strives to meet the needs of every student while simultaneously providing many experiences with classical, pop, and culturally diverse literature. Each year, students work with their teachers, counselors, and guardians to select courses that best suit their learning styles, strengths, and needs. The courses are designed to scaffold writing skills and develop a single topic into a multi-paragraph and/or multi-page essay; students produce research, argumentative, and narrative papers while focusing on content development, sentence formation, and extension, as well as grammar and mechanics. The English curriculum includes cross-curricular content to provide context and relevance in other subject areas. Students explore psychology, current events, science, and technology, as well as physical and mental health, through literature and gain a sense of being through the relations to literary themes throughout time. Over the course of four years, students study propaganda in Fahrenheit 451. After reading “The Yellow Wallpaper,” The Great Gatsby, and The Glass Castle, students refer to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) to analyze the characters’ mental health. “Harrison Burgeron,” 1984, and Lord of the Flies provide teachers opportunities to foster student debate about the influences of science and technology on society. Themes of destruction and desire for power are central to units on literature as diverse as MacBeth, Hamlet, and The Kite Runner. Across all units, students develop speaking and language skills through activities as informal as pair sharing and small or large group discussion, to more intensive speaking assignments such as the presentation of creative projects, formal speeches, and debates. College-bound students have the opportunity to take College Reading and Writing, a dual-enrollment course. Those students who come to us struggling with reading skills are assessed and offered our Reading Intensive English course if appropriate. In this course, a Reading Specialist and Learning Support teacher design for each student a program that focuses on word-attack, sound identification, pronunciation, and reading fluency. Word skills and decoding strategies are taught through direct instruction in a small group setting. The difficulty of material increases gradually but steadily based on frequent formative assessment. Overall, the rigor of our English curriculum is evident in our students’ Keystone Literature Exam results: in 2018 and 2019, our students earned the highest achievement rates in Cambria County.

The CHHS mathematics department focuses on providing students with the mathematical foundational skills aligned with the PA Core Standards. The curriculum is diverse enough to challenge students by pushing them just outside their current mathematical comfort zone with material that is achievable through hard work and scaffolded assistance. For entry level math courses such as Algebra I and Geometry, students can choose either an applied or a theoretical option: some either learn better or will benefit from concrete examples in their post-secondary careers, while others may need more theoretical knowledge in the future. College Calculus and College Statistics are offered as dual-enrollment courses in which students can earn college credits while in high school. Seniors in Algebra 3/Financial Math spend part of the year learning about income, taxes, budgeting, and other skills they will need after graduation. Across all courses, teachers supplement their lessons with authentic assessments. Students in Algebra I use Get More Math, an online, incentive-based program. Activities in other courses include some that are traditional, such as students using shadows and proportions to measure the height of the school building, to very unique projects, such as Geometry students constructing shapes around fixed blue and red dots so that, if each shape were given a vote, the outcomes could range from one color being a minority to a supermajority, depending on how the shapes are drawn. This activity is truly cross-curricular, allowing students to connect their understanding of both math and civics (demonstrating gerrymandering).

The CHHS science curriculum is diverse: in addition to biology, chemistry, and physics courses, students can choose electives ranging from Anatomy and Physiology I and II to Environmental Science. Overall, the

science department offers four dual-enrollment courses. Assessments in these courses are as challenging as those taken by college students. In fact, in College Biology, students actually travel as a class to a local university to complete their midterm and final exams in the college lab. At the heart of the science curriculum is hands-on, experiential learning, fostered by a series of professional partnerships. For example, in Environmental Science, students travel to nearby Prince Gallitzin State Park to study water quality, macroinvertebrates, and stream health. This trip is made possible through a partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The students also travel sixty miles to the Elk Country Visitor Center in Benezette, Pennsylvania to not only study, but also view in their natural habitat, the region's wild elk population. The teacher collaborates with the Keystone Elk Country Alliance in planning this trip and the lessons that support it. In our Independent Research course, enrolled students must design, plan, and conduct their own scientific research, gather data, and draw conclusions. In this elective, students present their research at regional and state competitions, such as the Pittsburgh Regional Science & Engineering Fair through the Carnegie Science Center or the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science (PJAS) competitions. All ninth grade students take either Academic Biology or Applied Bio/Chem I. These courses prepare them for the Keystone Biology exam. The teachers' use of the Pennsylvania Standards-Aligned System, prescriptive assessments through EdMentum, and open-ended assessments that require students to answer and explain their reasoning, have helped teachers prepare Cambria Heights students to consistently earn the first- or second-highest Keystone Biology achievement scores in Cambria County.

In addition to the related Pennsylvania academic standards, the social studies department's teachers also address the Pennsylvania Core Standards for Reading and Writing in History and Social Studies 6-12. In all social studies courses, from 9th grade U.S. Cultures I through dual-enrollment College Psychology, teachers emphasize reading and writing across the curriculum using assessments and resources including NewsELA, which tiers high-interest, current events articles according to students' reading levels, and primary sources documents. Rather than emphasize rote memorization of names and dates, teachers design project-based or experiential activities that increase student voice, choice, and engagement. For example, when studying business growth in the 1800s, U.S. Cultures I students work in teams to develop their own vertically-integrated companies. Through grants, the department has organized various field trips, and students have journeyed as near as the local county courthouse to as far as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in our nation's capital. In Street Law, the district's School Police Officer (SPO) is a frequent guest speaker, providing context for students on a range of topics, from search and seizure to driving regulations. Finally, teachers always link social studies content to current events to provide context and perspective through which students can process what happens in their country and the world. For example, when students study the Chinese Exclusion Acts, they also discuss modern attitudes about immigration. By linking history to current events, teachers allow students to make connections in their minds, thus making the material more meaningful and relevant.

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

Regardless of their future goals, all students at Cambria Heights High School meet career readiness standards by completing three required courses: Career Readiness 10, Career Readiness 11, and Senior Seminar. These three courses address the PA Career Standards for high school students and include a variety of hands-on, experiential activities such as an annual college fair (fall) and career fair (spring) and a required service learning project for all graduating seniors. At the college fair, not just traditional four-year universities are represented. Many of the guest counselors include those representing trade schools, community colleges, and trade unions, which have recently had a high demand for young professionals in our area.

Cambria Heights is part of the Admiral Peary Area Vocational Technical School consortium, and as such, our students have the opportunity to attend Admiral Peary daily for up to three years to study one of 14 industry-based programs. These students return to Cambria Heights each afternoon to complete their core course requirements. The principal and counselors at both schools collaborate regularly to ensure both are meeting the students' needs, including flexible scheduling that allows seniors to complete cooperative work experiences at local industries while still completing their credit requirements with their Cambria Heights classmates. Prior to graduation, these students each complete an industry-based skills assessment, most commonly the NOCTI. In six of the past seven years, over 90% of students passed their industry-based

exams, with over 80% earning an “advanced” score in those same years.

Finally, Cambria Heights has striven to prepare those students who are college-bound for their post-secondary transitions, particularly as many in our district will be first generation college students. During the junior year, we offer an SAT/ACT prep course and administer the PSAT/NMSQT exam on site. Teachers then use students’ results to individualize instruction through the Khan Academy, which has been invaluable. Finally, Cambria Heights has entered partnerships with three local universities to offer a total of 11 dual-enrollment courses in six different subject areas: English, science, mathematics, social studies, computers, and music, and we seek to offer additional dual-enrollment courses in STEAM in the future.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Cambria Heights High School, elective curricular areas are as important to student growth and development as the core subjects. While some exploratory courses for freshmen and sophomores last a quarter or semester, most are year long to allow students and teachers to more fully engage the content.

The curriculum includes both traditional and contemporary performing arts electives, including Concert Band, Choir, Vocal Extension (advanced choir), Synergy (modern rock band), and Audio Media Technology.

Started over 15 years ago, Synergy was one of the first school sponsored modern rock ensembles of its kind, and it was featured in a 2019 presentation given at the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) Eastern Division Conference. Through Synergy, our music department has developed partnerships with local restaurants (as performing venues) and with a local recording studio to produce sessions that are subsequently mixed by students enrolled in our Audio Media Technology course.

In addition to our curricular program, Cambria Heights students may also choose to participate in Marching Band, Musical Theater, Drama, and Pennsylvania Music Educators Association/NAfME sponsored music festivals. Students routinely represent Cambria Heights at state level competitions, and have more recently been selected as participants at the Eastern Division and National levels.

Through our visual arts curriculum, we strive to challenge students to become creative artists, critical thinkers, collaborators, and problem solvers. Ninth and 10th grade students can schedule exploratory art courses, followed by two year-long, advanced art classes. These courses provide opportunities for students to work in ceramics, sculpture, drawing, painting and printmaking, allowing students to foster their creativity. Annually, we host an artist-in-residence from the nearby Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art.

Given the importance of health and physical education to students’ lifelong wellness, all students must complete an annual, half-credit course in these areas. While students engage in a number of individual and group activities, all with an emphasis on healthy decision making and lifelong activity, we stress in our health curriculum topics of both current and local importance, such as vaping and the opioid epidemic, which has been particularly devastating to our region.

We employ two foreign language teachers, offering five consecutive courses in Spanish. However, from various online options, students can also study myriad other foreign languages of interest, and recently have taken courses in French, German, and Latin. Through our Travel and Art Clubs, students gain cultural experiences while travelling both locally and outside our area.

Family and Consumer Sciences provide essential life skills for all students, regardless of their selected pathways after graduation. Therefore, in addition to electives in nutrition/foods and child development, all seniors must pass a capstone course (Senior Seminar) to graduate. This half-credit course covers topics including banking, renting, taxes, loans, and CPR/first aid, ensuring all students are introduced to these

topics before they enter the “real world.”

Finally, our school community has just invested heavily in our STEAM curriculum as part of a recent building renovation. Our new STEAM lab includes three distinct areas for design (CAD), prototyping, and production. Much of the equipment in this area was purchased through grants involving schools in the workplace, through which our teachers train to provide students with the skills local employers seek. Introductory courses in these areas include Computers, Exploratory Technical Education, and Digital Design. Advanced electives include Architectural Design, Parametric Modeling, and rotating courses in microcomputer application, programming, and computer sciences, including courses funded through Amazon’s Future Engineer program. In 2020-2021, we issued all students individual Chromebooks, allowing teachers across the curriculum to teach using the most contemporary methods and resources.

3. Academic Supports:

The curriculum at CHHS is tiered so that students who are performing below or above grade level can take courses that are appropriately aligned with their strengths and needs, with the goal of each student being challenged but capable of success. Courses are not open or closed to students based solely on factors such as grade level: this approach gives the students, parents, and school counselors more options when collaborating to develop schedules. Students’ needs for academic interventions or enrichment are based not only on teacher and school data, but on a variety of assessments, including the Edmentum Assessment program, Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDTs), and Keystone Exams. On the Keystone Exams, CHHS recognized a 10 point achievement gap for economically disadvantaged students on the Literature exam and a 14 point gap on the Biology exam. To address closing this gap, the administration and faculty continually adapt the supports used to teach and remediate students in these subject areas, which has led to greater academic growth, as evidenced on the Future Ready PA Index and our PVAAS reports, among economically disadvantaged students compared to the overall population (+2 points in Literature and +18 points in Biology). In 2019-2020, teachers in these subject areas were piloting new strategies in our Keystone preparation and remediation courses, but as the exams were not administered in May 2020 due to COVID, our data teams have not been able to empirically assess these changes’ effectiveness yet.

At CHHS, students with disabilities are supported academically by four learning support teachers and three para-educators. Primarily, these professionals are co-teachers in content-area classrooms. CHHS has embraced a true co-teaching model, in which content and support teachers share the responsibilities for teaching all students and collaborate when planning, instructing, and assessing students. Learning support teachers also work with students individually and with small groups in Secondary Supportive Transition Studies (SSTS). In SSTS, students and teachers work not only on academic support, but on progress monitoring of students’ individual IEP goals and transition planning for post-graduation. CHHS has many partnerships related to transition planning. One valuable partner is Pennsylvania Highlands Community College (PHCC). Senior CHHS students with disabilities can attend a college preparation program on the PHCC campus one day per week, making the post-secondary transition much more familiar to these students. Also, through a partnership with the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), CHHS is assigned a vocational counselor to help students prepare for and maintain post-secondary employment.

CHHS also offers support for English Language Learners (ELLs) and homeless students. The Special Programs Director serves as the district’s homeless liaison. As such, he supports students who are experiencing homelessness with immediate and long-term needs, like automatic enrollment in the free lunch program and transportation so students who are living outside the district while homeless can still attend CHHS with their peers. During COVID-19, the Director’s role grew to include helping homeless, economically disadvantaged, or rural students access online learning through free or reduced cost internet access or by providing high-powered mobile hotspots

for these students' homes. While there are currently no ELLs enrolled at CHHS, the district does employ an ESL teacher. When English Language Learners have been enrolled at CHHS, she has been able to work with these students one-on-one and with their teachers to remove barriers in the classroom.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At CHHS, teachers create engaging lessons by considering two essential components in their planning: the rationale for the lesson and the real-world connections that students can make between the lesson objectives and their own lives. The principal evaluates teachers' effectiveness in these areas on evaluations, which fit into the Danielson Framework under Domain 2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning. When teachers help students make these connections, the learning becomes meaningful and student engagement increases. Additionally, learning should be hands-on and integrated, with students as the "doers," not the passive receivers of knowledge. One example of integration at CHHS recently involved the Carnegie Science Center's Chain Reaction Contraption Contest, at which our students won a prize. These students worked with both their physics teacher on the theory behind their project's design and the technology education teacher, in whose classroom they applied the theory to build their actual machine. Such application of learning from one classroom to the next greatly enhances engagement and retention.

Social and emotional engagement, as well as college and career readiness, are not only addressed in core and elective courses, but also at developmentally-appropriate times in courses like Freshman and Senior Seminars and Career Readiness 10 and 11. More importantly, students are encouraged to be engaged in a variety of in-school clubs that promote positive growth, including Spirit Club, Students Against Destructive Decisions, and Student Council. Many of these clubs' activities take place during the school day, so students who may otherwise be unable to attend after-school activities can still participate and have a role in positive school functions. For those students who need additional support, CHHS has a student assistance program. Faculty team members must complete student assistance training to serve on the team, which works closely with a county liaison to identify the best supports for students in need. Our school psychologist participates in the Trauma-Skilled School Safety Rural Network.

Finally, over the past year, CHHS has at times operated on both a fully remote and a hybrid schedule due to state mandates and local COVID-19 outbreaks. During these periods, we have striven to continually engage students. Under the hybrid model, teachers do not simply livestream lectures for students at home. Instead, those students who are attending in person complete hands-on activities, making the most of their time in the classroom, while those at home complete assignments related to the activities they completed the day before. During school closures, our office has been a supply depot, at which students have retrieved all types of materials, from Chromebooks to acoustic guitars. We have held socially-distanced tutoring sessions to provide students extra support during the pandemic. In fact, shortly after the initial school closure in March 2020, our principal was a guest on the Pennsylvania Principals Association webinar as a result of Cambria Heights' successful transition to remote learning.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

While engaging families is always a priority at CHHS, the need for such engagement has been heightened during this pandemic. When students or staff tested positive for the virus, both the administration and teachers needed frequent and effective communication with families to convey messages about quarantining, periodic school closures, or other pertinent information. Most often, we deliver information through the school's text messaging service. Free to all community members, the service allows the principal to send succinct messages to all district families, and when necessary, provide links to longer letters about specifics related to COVID-19.

During the pandemic, school/community partnerships have grown to include a community meal distribution program, through which teachers and administrators have distributed free breakfasts and lunches to school families at various community locales. Also during school closures, CHHS has offered an in-person after-school tutoring program. Finally, the principal and school police officer have made countless home visits during the past year, delivering resources such as Internet "jetpacks" to families with connectivity issues and checking in on students with attendance issues during periods of online learning.

CHHS has too many community and business partnerships to list, but our biggest is with the Highlander Foundation, the school's alumni association. While this organization provides grants to teachers and scholarships to students, it also links alumni to current students, promoting school pride and connecting students to graduates who can provide advice and experiences, such as job shadowing and networking opportunities. Many of the presenters at our annual career fair are graduates who can share how CHHS prepared them for their future careers. A similar partnership is with The Challenge Program, through which two sponsoring businesses provide awards to students for achievement in STEM, academic improvement, attendance, academic achievement, and community service. These awards are presented annually at a schoolwide assembly. CHHS is currently involved in a Teacher in the Workplace partnership. This grant was secured by the school's Special Programs Coordinator and involves our STEAM teachers training with a local manufacturer called McLanahan. While training in the workplace, our teachers learn about the skills that employers seek, allowing them to incorporate these skills into their lessons. Our music program has formed partnerships with multiple restaurants in our school district by performing in the community for the mutual benefit of the students, who gain experience performing in an authentic setting, and the businesses. Our gifted support teacher has even forged a partnership with Allegheny General Hospital, through which our Anatomy and Physiology students get to observe a live open-heart surgery each year.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

At CHHS, teachers are an integral part of the building's leadership, as mentors, peer coaches, and collaborators. Whenever possible, professional development is led or supported by the faculty. After teachers attend professional conferences, either in person or - more recently - remotely, those teachers are encouraged to share their professional learning with their peers, either through departmental meetings, building-wide sessions, or larger engagements. As an example, in the fall of 2019, Cambria Heights participated in a countywide in-service collaboration with multiple other school districts in Cambria County. Many of the workshop facilitators were CHHS teachers, who shared their expertise on topics ranging from STEAM instruction to adaptive physical education. Similarly, in 2017 Cambria Heights hosted a high school biology collaboration, in which teachers from schools across the county met and shared resources and ideas they use to prepare students for the Pennsylvania Keystone Biology exam. Again, this workshop was led by the two biology teachers from CHHS, whose student achievement consistently ranks first or second in the county. Further, teachers support one another within the building on a daily basis. Veterans are assigned to mentor new hires, and as part of the CHHS differentiated supervision model, teachers can even elect to formally observe a colleague as part of their own professional growth plan, in which they work with that colleague to implement a new practice in their own classroom or improve upon one they already employ.

When Pennsylvania schools transitioned to remote learning in March 2020, the administration at CHHS held virtual faculty and staff meetings at least weekly to support teachers, sometimes by sharing tools or procedures for remote instruction, but other times just to listen to and allay their fears of the uncertainty that surrounded teaching and learning during COVID-19. Many teachers shared stories of holding a Zoom meeting with a student at 10:00 PM to review a math problem or edit a paper. Similarly, the principal would Zoom individually with teachers to address specific challenges they were having with technology, resources, or barriers to reaching students. While the remote model at CHHS was not flawless, the school was one of the first in the area to begin fully instructing all students following the COVID-19 shutdown.

4. School Leadership:

CHHS does not have a large leadership team, but each member does serve in multiple roles for the benefit of the students, staff, and community. There is no assistant principal or dean of students at CHHS, so the principal oversees instructional leadership, curriculum development, professional growth, and the daily operations of the building, including discipline. As a 12-month employee, he receives the annual Keystone exam data each summer and uses it to schedule remediation according to each student's individual needs. The principal fosters school-community relations by being a visible presence at all school events and serving on committees like the Highlander Foundation, the district's alumni association.

student populations. Their recent leadership in the areas of inclusionary practices and effective co-teaching have led to full inclusion at CHHS, as well as emphases on post-secondary transition planning and social-emotional learning for all students.

While a district-wide employee, the Special Programs Director plays a unique role in the high school's curriculum development. He has obtained multiple grants for the building that have either augmented or completely enhanced various curricular areas. As two examples, he recently authored a Teacher in the Workplace grant that has allowed CHHS to purchase STEAM equipment that prepares students for technology jobs in our region, as expressed by local industry leaders with whom he collaborated while authoring the grant proposal. The director has also gotten the school a Keystone Communities Grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These funds have helped the school build a new multipurpose room that has doubled the space and offerings available for our Physical Education program and provided opportunities for community members, both young and old, to use the space for various sports and exercise programs.

The school leadership team took an "all hands on deck" approach during COVID-19. Aside from constantly communicating with students, parents, and faculty, the team did everything from delivering supplies or Chromebooks to students in need to distributing meals twice per week at different locations in the district. CHHS was one of the first schools in the area to fully implement remote instruction following the initial COVID-19 shutdown on March 16, 2020, and the principal was a one of four guests on a Pennsylvania Principals Association webinar in early April discussing the practices CHHS was employing. The team, including the two school counselors, organized a one-of-a-kind graduation ceremony that included a parade to a local drive-in theater, followed by videos of celebrity congratulations, a recognition of each graduate, and a fireworks display.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

While Cambria Heights is a socioeconomically diverse district, CHHS does lack some of the cultural diversity that is found in other parts of the state and country. Therefore, the faculty must introduce students to the diversity they will encounter as they graduate and move about the country and world. Teachers achieve this end in two ways: by introducing students to resources, themes, and ideas that highlight cultural diversity and by being aware and ensuring that no unintended hidden curriculum exists that might reinforce cultural stereotypes.

Some of these examples are found in the English and Social Studies curricula. For example, senior English students complete a unit on the novel *The Kite Runner*, which includes lessons on world geography, Islam, and immigration to the United States. When students read *Of Mice and Men*, the unit includes a lesson on racial slurs in literature and the effects of such language on modern society. All of the American and world history teachers incorporate current events in their courses, augmented by resources such as CNN 10 and New York Times Upfront magazine, both produced for high school audiences. Teachers must ground these lessons in factual content and informed discussion, not in their own or others' preconceived attitudes or opinions of current events or social movements. CHHS has also been able to partner with community organizations to support these lessons: in recent years the school has hosted a school/community forum with Holocaust survivor Eva Olsson and has been awarded a Community Foundation for the Alleghenies grant to take students to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Students also explore diverse cultures in their elective courses. In art classes, students have recently created Notan pieces (Japan) and made Tibetan Buddhist thangkas. Our band and chorus concerts mostly feature music from other cultures so students are exposed to different musical styles and their characteristics. Recent concerts have included a Venezuelan song where the singers mimic traditional instruments with their voices, an anti-Apartheid South African song sung

in a language called IsiXhosa, some Haitian Voodoo, and a song from Java sung in the Osing dialect. In our Spanish classes, students learn the customs and traditions of various holidays throughout the year. Finally, CHHS has hosted foreign exchange students: our most recent guests have been from the Netherlands and Spain.

Faculty and students support each other through a program called Project Need, which is organized by our Student Council. Through this program, the students organize fundraisers to help their classmates in need, offering support to families dealing with long-term illness, personal tragedies such as house fires, or the death of a parent or sibling.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At Cambria Heights High School, the practice of differentiation has been most instrumental in the teachers' ability to successfully support students since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, both in the spring of 2020, when instruction was delivered entirely remotely, and in the 2020-2021 academic year, when instruction has at various times been full remote, hybrid, or full in-person, changing based upon the levels of COVID transmission in our region.

While all excellent schools differentiate instruction, the practice takes on entirely new meanings when teachers are working from home or in empty classrooms and students have varied supports, resources, and internet accessibility. While what teachers differentiated did not change - content, process, and products - how and why teachers differentiated learning changed as a result of the students' learning environments, which created completely different needs.

Initially, every student was given a school-issued Chromebook on which to work. CHHS used this approach for multiple reasons: the district had the Chromebooks available, every student and teacher had a school-issued Google account, and students had been taught how to use Google's apps in their computer courses. While Google Classroom was the main platform in which instruction was delivered, teachers were extremely adaptable and flexible in what programs they used, how they administered assessments, and how they communicated with parents and guardians. Many teachers took advantage of free access that vendors were providing for online learning, and learned how to use these programs within a week. CHHS did not use a "one size fits all" approach, even within individual classes. Those families that needed supplies for a STEAM lab or an art project could pick them up at the school, or the principal or a staff member would deliver them to individual homes each Monday. Because many of our high school students were helping younger siblings during traditional school hours, teachers would set up Google Meets with students in the evenings or respond to emails at all hours. If students struggled to submit assignments on time, teachers accepted them after their due dates, realizing the skills students mastered were more important than when the learning occurred.

In September 2020, students returned to school for the first time since March, but in two different groups to maximize social distancing. Additionally, the Cambria Heights School District gave all parents the option to keep their children at home for remote learning, particularly as Cambria County at one point had the highest concentration of new COVID-19 cases in the country. Teachers then had three groups of students to teach daily: the hybrid group that was in-person, the hybrid group that was working remotely, and the group of students that was working remotely every day. Teachers live streamed their lessons, recorded and posted them afterward, or held Google Meets during their prep periods to meet the needs of each student. They created virtual labs or adapted in-person activities for those students who were not in the classroom. In sum, in a relatively short period of time, teachers at CHHS became experts at differentiating instruction to a degree never seen in our careers. To the greatest extent possible, the teachers ensured that no child would be left behind his or her peers due to a situation beyond his or her control as a result of this pandemic.