

**Contact:**

Communications Office

South Orange & Maplewood School District

Office: (973)762-5600, ext. 1834 | Cell: (862) 272-1609

Email: [communications@somsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:communications@somsd.k12.nj.us)

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

---

**Columbia High School Ranks #59 as Best New Jersey High School in US News & World Report**

*CHS Listed in Top 13% of Best New Jersey High Schools according to Newly Released US News & World Ranking*

**April 27, 2022** – The South Orange and Maplewood School District is pleased to announce that Columbia High School was ranked #59 as one of the best high schools in New Jersey in the US News & World Report which was announced on April 26.

This publication shared that 406 New Jersey schools out of a total of 445 were ranked on six factors based on their performance on state assessments and how well they prepare students for college. The U.S. News rankings include data on nearly 24,000 public high schools in 50 states and the District of Columbia. In addition to traditional high schools, the rankings encompass charter; magnet; and science, technology, engineering and math-focused schools. In addition, institutions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia are included in the Best High Schools rankings. Schools are ranked nationally and within each state.

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Ronald G. Taylor shared, "in the midst of what we hope is a post-pandemic world, we understand that the recovery of our students, staff and communities from the Social Emotional trauma of isolation is our #1 priority." Dr. Taylor went on to share, "we are pleased that Columbia is recognized in the top 13% of high schools in NJ and also note that CHS is among only two other public schools of its size to be ranked in the top 60 of this report. This is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our students, staff and families."

Working with RTI International, a nonprofit research firm, U.S. News assessed schools on the following six factors:

1. College readiness, based on the proportion of 12th grade students who took and earned a qualifying score on at least one Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exam (30% of ranking).
2. State assessment proficiency, based on aggregated scores on state assessments that students may be required to pass for graduation (20%).
3. State assessment performance, based on whether performance on state assessments exceeded expectations given the school's proportion of underserved students (20%).
4. Underserved student performance, based on how Black, Hispanic and low-income students performed on state assessments compared with those who are not underserved in the state (10%).
5. College curriculum breadth, based on proportions of 12th grade students who took and earned a qualifying score on AP and/or IB exams in multiple content areas (10%).
6. Graduation rate, based on the proportion of students who entered ninth grade in 2016-2017 and graduated four years later (10%).

Columbia High School Principal, Frank Sanchez, congratulated his staff and students for their tireless efforts. "We are very proud of our students who are rebounding quite well from COVID," Mr. Sanchez commented, "and we know they will continue to excel in the years to come."

This year, U.S. News adjusted its calculations to account for the cancellation of state testing in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because assessment data from the 2019-2020 year was not available, U.S. News incorporated mathematics and reading assessment results from the three previous years' rankings instead. And for the first time, assessment data includes most states' science assessments. Per federal law, students take a state science assessment once between ninth and 12th grade. U.S. News used science assessment data from the 2018-2019 test year.



###

### **About the South Orange & Maplewood School District**

The School District of South Orange and Maplewood serves more than 7,200 students in ten schools, including one early-childhood center, six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The community and its schools are racially and economically diverse with more than 90 percent of Columbia High School graduates planning to attend college each year. The mission of the South Orange Maplewood School District is to empower and inspire each student to explore and imagine, to pursue personal passions, and to collectively create a better future by creating a learner-centered environment through multiple pathways; re-imagined structures, systems and supports; innovative teaching; partnering with families; and maximizing community expertise and resources.