

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Emily Renfroe Little

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

Official School Name Forest Avenue Academic Magnet School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1700 West 5th Street

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Montgomery State AL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 36106-1514

County Montgomery County

Telephone (334) 269-3673 Fax (334) 269-3963

Web site/URL http://www.forestave.mps-al.org E-mail emily.little@mps.k12.al.us

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

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*Mrs. Margaret Allen E-mail margaret.allen@mps.k12.al.us

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Montgomery Public Schools Tel. (334) 223-6700

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 Mrs. Melissa Snowden

(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, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures 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. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
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 most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 32 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 10 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 9 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 51 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	39	42	81
1	60	53	113
2	45	65	110
3	51	64	115
4	57	80	137
5	56	60	116
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	308	364	672

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 30 % Asian
 - 29 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 36 % White
 - 3 % 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 2014 – 2015 school year: 3%

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, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	20
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	20
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	708
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.028
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 25 %
168 Total number ELL

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

Bengali, Gujarati, Chinese, Korean, Telugu, Arabic, Dutch, Mandarin, Tamil, Hindi, Vietnamese, Thai, Spanish, Tagalog, Laotian, Malayalam, Marathi, French, and Russian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 7 %
Total number students who qualify: 49
8. Students receiving special education services: 1 %
3 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. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 1 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 2 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers	34
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals	0
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 20:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2007

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

Teach, model, and encourage children to become independent learners by providing a challenging and stimulating curriculum taught by dedicated and innovative professionals.

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

All kindergarten and first grade applicants will complete an assessment. Eligible applicants will be randomly selected. All 2nd-5th applicants must have a 3.5 GPA or better in core academic subjects and a 3.0 or better GPA in conduct for the past three semesters. Eligible applicants will be randomly selected.

PART III – SUMMARY

Forest Avenue Academic Magnet Elementary is a public elementary school located in Montgomery, Alabama. There are approximately 675 students each year in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. Forest Avenue is comprised of students from throughout Montgomery County, and it is both culturally and racially diverse. The school provides an accelerated academic curriculum in mathematics, English, reading, and spelling/vocabulary. Students work a grade level ahead in these subjects. Science and social studies are taught on grade level with extensive enrichment activities. Students also participate in a variety of projects that reinforce classroom teaching; they attend many field trips based on units of study within the classroom; and, they learn from speakers who are brought in from the community. Key strategies are driven by our school mission which is to encourage productive and responsible students by providing a challenging and stimulating curriculum taught by dedicated, innovative, professional staff in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. The vision of Forest Avenue is to teach, model, and encourage students to become independent learners who are self-motivated, disciplined, and committed to life-long achievement.

To be accepted into Forest Avenue, potential kindergarten students and first graders go through an interview process in which a test is given to determine if the skills are present for the child to be successful in an academically accelerated program. Potential students for grades 2-5 must have a 3.5 cumulative GPA for the previous three semesters. Students' names are then placed into a lottery to determine who will be accepted into the program. Kindergarten students are placed in self-contained classrooms; students in grades 1-5 are departmentalized according to the language arts subjects and basic social subjects with either 2 or 3 teachers. The curriculum is reinforced and enhanced through specialists in the areas of PE, music, Spanish, technology, counseling, science, and the media center.

The criteria to remain in the program are as follows: (1) All students must maintain a 3.0 grade point average and a B average in conduct. (2) Good attendance is mandatory for all students. (3) All students must have a signed "Intent to Return" form in order to return the following year.

Forest Avenue is housed in a school located in a neighborhood that has changed from predominately residential to predominately business. The accelerated magnet program was started at Forest Avenue in 1989, with a Magnet Schools of America (MSA) grant. At that time there were both neighborhood students and magnet students attending the school and the grade configuration was K-6. There were approximately 30 portable classrooms located in the back of the school to house most of the magnet classes. In the fall of 2001, there were several major changes made to the school. Forest Avenue neighborhood students were re-zoned to allow Forest Avenue Academic Magnet Elementary to become a total magnet elementary school. The school became a K-5 school when an academic magnet middle school was created. A new addition to the school allowed all children to be housed within the school walls and all portable classrooms to be removed. Forest Avenue has not received MSA grant monies since the termination of the grant cycle in 1998, but it has maintained the strong academic curriculum and enrichment activities through the academic support of Montgomery Public Schools and financial support from the Forest Avenue Parent Teacher Association.

Forest Avenue was previously awarded the National Blue Ribbon School award during the 2006-2007 school year. This recognition made a huge impact on the school and the Montgomery Public School system. MPS struggles with many issues that impact the overall impression of the district's schools by the city and the state. In recent years, many families have left the system to attend one of the many private schools in the city. When Forest Avenue received this award, it had a positive impact on how Forest Avenue was viewed by current citizens of Montgomery and by newcomers who were interested in exploring the educational opportunities for their children. The faculty identification badges, school letterhead, and t-shirts announced proudly that Forest Avenue was a Blue Ribbon school. An assembly was held at which the mayor and the governor were present. Every child and faculty member wore matching blue t-shirts in a show of united pride in this achievement. This publicity allowed the system to reach new families and provided an opportunity to talk about the wonderful things that happen inside the walls of Forest Avenue and other MPS schools that otherwise might go unnoticed. In summary, this award brought much needed positive publicity to the entire school system.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Forest Avenue follows the Alabama Course of Study which incorporates College and Career Readiness Standards. Students work at an accelerated pace completing work that is a grade-level ahead in math, reading, English, and spelling. Science and social studies are taught on grade-level. Teachers are familiar with the required skills for their grade-level, as well as those on the grade-level above so that no important concepts are missed. Since students need a firm grasp of academic language in all subject areas, vocabulary is an essential and integral part of all subjects. Teachers incorporate technology to expand, enrich, and drive student interest. All curricula are developed with rigor which challenges our exceptionally motivated population. Although our population is one of highly motivated students who thrive on an accelerated curriculum, we are conscious of students who may struggle from time to time with skills and concepts. In all subject areas, teachers evaluate student work, oral responses, and team projects to assess understanding. Review, one-on-one coaching, and pairing with strong peers are strategies used to aide students when they need extra encouragement and help.

Reading/English:

Forest Avenue's reading program is a balanced literacy approach incorporating phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Research-based strategies are used to teach comprehension skills using a wide spectrum of high-interest texts with an emphasis on non-fiction. Through the use of Scholastic's Storyworks, paired texts, Read Works, novel units, our literacy enriched environments, and technology, our students explore and build knowledge about the real world through these authentic resources. Teachers use higher order questioning techniques to help our students become metacognitive learners. Our students are taught not only to analyze and synthesize but also to use text-based evidence from sources to support their conclusions. Collaborative groupings are a vital part of our daily classroom routines as students learn from each other, building on prior knowledge and strengths. Students are avid participants of the Accelerated Reader program which challenges them to read a variety of genres. Conventions of writing are taught through grammar units and writing workshops to provide students opportunities to utilize and apply written literacy skills. Recitation and poetry units help our students become citizens who can listen well and communicate orally in the modern world.

Math:

The goal of Forest Avenue's math instruction is to develop students that possess mathematical knowledge and skills, both conceptual and procedural, and are capable of applying this knowledge in a variety of realistic situations. A curriculum that is based on problem solving with the inclusion of a writing component is used. Student learning tasks take on an interactive approach that is hands-on, differentiated, and integrates the standards for mathematical practice to prepare students for success. Explicit, direct instruction leads to student understanding, while a computer component is used to aid students in understanding the problem solving process. Key skills are reinforced by utilizing interactive digital manipulatives and a variety of practice websites. Students routinely engage in basic math facts drills. In addition, videos are incorporated to teach the value of math skills in real-world settings and to help students develop an appreciation of the value of math for their future lives. Students are given online access to the textbook where additional practice games and instruction are available for their use at home.

Science:

Implementation of science standards is based on multifarious strategies and resources. These strategies strive to bridge classroom knowledge into authentic experiences. Students are provided the opportunity to experience scientific discovery through science experiments which employ critical thinking skills. Following experiments, journal writing fosters organization, reflection, and comprehension. Standards are broadened and creativity is encouraged through in-class and home-based projects. In-school projects promote the students' ability to incorporate various strategies in solving problems. Nonfiction books and field trips are utilized to extend the curriculum outside the walls of the textbook and the classroom.

Social Studies:

The goal of our Social Studies program is to create well-informed, patriotic citizens. Common Core Standards are brought to life as the students engage in a variety of educational experiences covering historical events and present day issues. Living in such a historically rich state allows our students to observe and experience events from long ago through local field trips. Virtual field trips afford our students the opportunities to learn about communities and cultures from far away. We encourage our students to learn through research, both in school and out of the classroom as they prepare reports, plays, posters, and portfolios, as well as practice the creative process inherent in making something new and innovative. Geographic awareness is highlighted as students study and construct maps and globes. The use of historical fiction novel units, supplemental magazines, and newspapers in both the social studies classroom and the reading classroom create cross-curricular avenues of learning.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

FAAM believes one of the best ways to teach and model different disciplines is by bringing in members of the community to help enrich the curriculum. We provide enrichment of the arts with a program called Abrakadoodle. This is offered three times a week. Students are taught art processes that help them ignite their inner creativity and spark their imagination to develop their own unique talents and abilities. A local dance studio comes in once a week to provide opportunities for students of all grade levels to develop a deep love and appreciation for dance and create a strong sense of self-esteem along the way.

All grade levels at FAAM perform once a year for the entire school and for the community on a topic that is of interest to them. Topics align with the Common Core Curriculum and are studied in depth by the grade level. Students read, write, and create content related to their topic prior to their performance. Each performance involves singing, choreography, speaking, and assembling sets including visually appealing props.

FAAM students engage daily in physical education classes. In the lower grades, students develop fine motor and locomotive skills. As students advance, they participate in activities that promote abdominal strength, cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance, and flexibility. Students in grades 2-5 participate in the Alabama Physical Fitness testing each spring. A feedback report is provided to students and parents that identifies strengths and weaknesses of the test, as well as suggestions on how to maintain healthy living.

Forest Avenue supports the Girls on the Run, a nonprofit organization, that meets two days per week and uses running to help inspire and motivate girls to commit to lifelong health and fitness. At the end of the 24 week program, which combines running training and lessons on self-esteem, girls participate in a 5k running event giving them a tangible sense of achievement. This program is offered throughout the school year to third through fifth grade girls.

An additional component that allows teachers at FAAM to create life-long learners is technology. Students attend computer lab classes once a week where they write, create, and apply what they are learning through the use of desktop computers and iPads. The technology teacher works with the faculty to coordinate her lessons with the standards being implemented in the classroom. Through technology such as coding and research, students are able to share their knowledge virtually among peers, teachers, administration, and the community. FAAM also houses three iPad carts that teachers use to engage each student. Teachers use the iPads for research activities, virtual field trips, and application based quizzes, such as Kahoot and Compass Learning. All classrooms at FAAM utilize their smart boards to capture student engagement through interactive programs such as Prezi, YouTube videos, SmartNotebook activities, Waltke's Web, Pearson Success, Think Central, and Storyworks. Both high achieving and reluctant learners at FAAM find the use of this technology motivating.

Spanish is offered daily at Forest Avenue for all grade levels. The Spanish curriculum immerses the students in the Spanish language. At FAAM, Spanish class not only meets the linguistic standards, but it also offers glimpses into the Spanish culture. Throughout the year, students participate in hands-on activities that correspond to the Spanish culture such as cooking activities where they make guacamole following traditional Spanish recipes and role-play in which students participate in conversational Spanish with peers.

Upper grade students have the opportunity to display the mastery of their acquired Spanish vocabulary during a Cinco De Mayo celebration. Reinforcement of the Spanish vocabulary is provided through a progressive online curriculum called QTalk. QTalk helps correlate specific images with conversational Spanish words. Students at FAAM have individual access to this website and practice building Spanish sentences through interactive games and quizzes. This software provides students with immediate feedback and room for growth amongst all skill levels.

For several years Forest Avenue has offered Mandarin Chinese classes after school two days per week, with three different levels of complexity. This opportunity is made possible through a grant received from the Troy University Confucius Institute. Beginning August 2016, Mandarin Chinese classes will be taught during the school day at Forest Avenue for students in grades 3-5. Forest Avenue will be the only elementary school in the state of Alabama that offers tiered learning for linguistics with Mandarin Chinese. Students at Forest Avenue will begin learning Mandarin Chinese, and will continue to deepen their understanding of the language through the twelfth grade.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Forest Avenue Academic Magnet encourages students to actively engage in the learning process. Teachers use pedagogical knowledge to apply strategies that meet the needs of high achieving learners. Instruction is based on goals that address improving academic achievement or improving any aspect that has a negative impact on achievement. Teachers plan lessons based on core standards, state aligned courses of study, data from multiple sources, and learning objectives. Lessons provide explicit teaching and instructional strategies that give opportunities for students to talk, write, investigate, read, reflect and listen (TWIRL). Other strategies include the use of technology such as Prezi's in core subjects, coding as a means to raise awareness of computer language, reader's theater, and testing hypotheses through discovery activities in science.

Writing is an integral part of Forest Avenue Academic Magnet. Kindergarten students begin writing early in the school year and leave as skilled writers after fifth grade. Much focus is placed on all modes with horizontal and vertical alignment across the school for cohesive and seamless transition. Writing is displayed in all parts of the building in the forms of fantastical invented superpowers, bottle book biographies, and reflection pieces. Excellence in writing is fostered by allowing students to share over the intercom during morning announcements.

The framework of Response to Instruction (RI) is used to address students' diverse needs and foster school improvement. The framework incorporates graduated levels or tiers to support students. All students receive Tier I (core) and Tier II targeted instruction daily. These include small group and re-teaching as warranted by formative assessments. Students identified through data and observations as "at risk", either in academics or behavior, receive a Student Improvement Plan generated by teachers and discussed with parents before being implemented for a set period of time. The plan may contain additional strategies such as peer mediation, extended learning opportunities, student goal setting, various software programs targeted for intervention, and additional time with instructional coach or counselor.

For students with "high risk" or Tier III factors, a referral is made to the school-based Problem-Solving Team (PST) comprised of faculty and administration. The team collaborates to provide additional resources along with core instruction for a set period of time. Resources may include a behavior analyst, functional behavior assessment, home visitation program, co-teaching, and/or special education referral. The team meets regularly to ensure interventions are addressing the needs of students.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Forest Avenue Academic Magnet is a high performing school that incorporates a variety of assessment data to analyze and improve student and school performance. Formative and summative assessments are utilized for students and faculty to guide their efforts in achieving successful learning outcomes.

Students entering kindergarten take the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to assess their progress towards acquisition of early literacy skills such as reading and phonemic awareness. First through fifth grade students take performance-based skills tests both in reading and math three times a year. Each spring, the ACT Aspire test is administered to all third through fifth grade students.

Teacher assessments aligned with state standards and learning objectives are an integral part of the instructional process. Teachers use quizzes, daily grades, observations, and projects to provide students with important feedback on their individual learning goals and to adjust instruction. For example, after studying DIBELS results, teachers along with the instructional coach identified students struggling with two subsets of phonemic awareness by noting data that fell below the benchmark and those students whose data clustered slightly above the benchmark score. Teachers collaborated and incorporated strategies that addressed those skills. Formative assessment such as immediate corrective feedback during small group time was used along with bi-monthly progress monitoring. Mid-year DIBELS assessment data showed that 100% of identified students benchmarked in all subtests. Results were shared with all stakeholders in an effort to celebrate student achievement.

Teachers use performance based tests similarly to drive instruction in their classroom. For instance, during a data meeting, teachers analyzed test items on mid-year assessment and compared the data to classroom performance. It was determined that many students knew the skill being tested, but were unfamiliar with much of the verbiage posed in the questions. Lessons were planned incorporating specific strategies addressing multiple ways to communicate ideas such as Think, Pair, Share and Investigate, Connect & Explain (ICE). The teacher and instructional coach circulated the class listening and clarifying any misconceptions. Students' comments on exit slips indicated that they were helped by open discussion and immediate corrective feedback to them.

Data from summative assessments is examined closely by faculty members to identify patterns of student learning-negative or positive. Parents are apprised of the assessments and meetings called "Pow-Wows" are held to equip parents with knowledge of the different assessments and literature that outlines how to best help their child.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Forest Avenue Academic Magnet believes that every student has a right to learn in a positive environment that motivates students academically, emotionally, and socially. Teachers support students in this endeavor by integrating technology, virtual field trips, student-led learning, and rewards for goals met throughout each school year. Students participate in fundraisers, such as coupon book sales, cookie dough sales, popcorn, and Italian ice sales, where awards are given to top-earning grade-levels and classrooms. Document cameras, SMART boards, and new iPads for the classrooms are just a few awards that teachers have chosen as motivators for their students to get involved in the fundraising and better their education and the school in its entirety. As a culminating event each year, fifth grade students use monies earned in their micro economy to participate in a community-produced auction with a real auctioneer.

Students are continually supported emotionally through the recognition they receive from teachers and administration on their achievements in school, and also successes they obtain in personal goals as well as team accomplishments. This recognition establishes a sense of camaraderie and confidence throughout the student body and motivates every child to never stop striving to meet their goals. FAAM students are recognized each semester at an honor's assembly for meeting both academic and conduct expectations.

Students continue to cultivate this positive environment through morning announcements where they share encouraging words and personal shout outs to the student body. During announcements, students discuss a "character focus for the week" and provide examples each day of how students can actively display these behaviors. The character focus and examples are provided by the Character at Heart program, which aims to foster good character through encouraging words and random acts of kindness.

In order to support the students at FAAM socially, teachers form cooperative groups that offer students the opportunity to learn from one another and develop a sense of teamwork. As iron sharpens iron, students benefit from demonstrating and learning from the determination and spirit of their peers. Areas where our students shine and grow include academics, contests, state and national percentile scores, and local and national recognitions, such as the PTA Reflections program, the Roxie Lancaster Children's Holiday Writing Competition and Olympiads.

Forest Avenue Parent Teacher Association (PTA) supports teachers throughout the year through special breakfasts, duty free lunches for birthdays, and start-up money at the beginning of each school year. The meals provided by the PTA are decorated elaborately to make ordinary school rooms feel like an extraordinary setting. This display of love allows our teachers to feel valued. These feelings of appreciation radiate throughout the building, allowing FAAM faculty and student body, to be enormously successful academically, socially, and emotionally.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Family and community involvement are vital components of Forest Avenue's success. Our Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is extremely active and an invaluable support for our program. Each year we exceed 100% participation in our membership drive. Providing volunteers for various school activities such as field trips, theme days, dances, after school activities, copy room crews, school book fairs, school picture days, Valentine's Day sales, fundraisers, and more, our PTA volunteers spend a great deal of time helping our teachers and students. Our PTA organizes and runs a Back to School Bash, using the money raised to fund different programs through the year and to provide financial resources to the teachers which are used for instructional supplies in the classroom. In addition, the funds raised by our PTA have been used to buy SMART Boards, computers, iPad carts, and copy machines. All of these supplies and resources help expand our curriculum efforts which broaden our students' knowledge and excite them about learning. At our Open House, the PTA welcomes families, answers questions, sells spirit clothing, and invites all parents to engage in their children's learning through becoming active members of the PTA. On any given

day, you can see a number of parents in the building, helping in a multitude of ways from assisting teachers to working with individual students to complete curriculum-based activities.

Teachers also engage families and the community through two-way communication. Forest Avenue uses a variety of ways to accomplish this. Weekly class calendars, school newsletters, INOW, robo-calls, emails (both individual and class), our school handbook, a school website, a marquee, and a PTA Facebook page help facilitate communication and keep parents and the community informed about our school and its activities. When parents know what is happening they can become more involved, thus giving the school a stronger support network and improving school success.

Additional community involvement comes in the form of Partners in Education (PIE). PIE takes on many roles in helping our school. Their help typically comes from different business donations, sometimes financial and sometimes in the form of supplies, as well as volunteerism such as a local gardening club maintaining Lily's Garden (a garden used as an outside classroom) and conducting science-related classes for our students. PIE also provides guest speakers from various positions throughout the community which sparks the interests of the students in certain fields of study, leading to possible future achievements. These speakers and activities also provide students with experiences they might not have otherwise. Providing a multitude of opportunities helps students become well rounded, and a well rounded education indicates a well-developed, healthy school.

3. Professional Development:

Forest Avenue is dedicated to providing a challenging and stimulating curriculum for our students that is taught by a passionate, innovative and professional staff. One way Forest Avenue upholds its mission is through a variety of professional development activities offered at the district level, school level, and grade levels.

The Montgomery Public Schools district requires ten professional development days per year that coincide with district mandates and curriculum requirements. Topics that have been covered in district professional development meetings include, but are not limited to dyslexia awareness, anti-bullying, and Webb's Depth of Knowledge. Many professional development days have been dedicated to ensuring that teachers have a firm understanding of the college and career readiness standards and effective strategies in order to implement and embed them into our curriculum.

Site-based professional development takes place several times throughout the year on Monday afternoons with all teachers and administration present. Teachers and administrators are dedicated and committed to this time to better their teaching and the implementation of certain content and requirements. In these school-wide meetings, teachers work together to consider policies and strategies that help make for a seamless transition from grade-to-grade. Vertical grade-level meetings are also a part of this school-wide implemented professional development. These meetings help teachers better understand where their students have come from, and where they are going with regards to the previous grade level, or the grade-level above. Forest Avenue teachers have found these meetings to be extremely beneficial when it comes to content standards, expectations, and behavior management. Vertical teaming allows for relationships to be built and maintained throughout the school and provides opportunities for the free flow of communication among school employees, as well as establishes a sense of camaraderie. These school-wide collaborative meetings ensure that the administration establishes a supportive relationship with its teachers. The professional development that takes place frequently at FAAM guarantees that the administration remains connected and involved with the current classroom practices.

Forest Avenue employs an instructional interventionist who is available to all teachers and administration to collaborate for curriculum development, evaluate best practices, offer encouragement, and share strategies. The interventionist also evaluates test scores and data, meeting with the teachers as needed to provide suggestions for methods that will help these low achieving students succeed.

To provide opportunities for teachers and administration to discuss ways to meet the needs of an advanced and accelerated population much of the professional development at FAAM happens during the horizontal

articulation meetings among grade-levels and grade-level departments. It is at these meetings that teachers are addressing cross-curricular opportunities, sharing ideas, ensuring consistent parent-teacher communication, and discussing grade-level enrichment activities.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy at Forest Avenue Academic Magnet is a partnership among the students, teachers, parents, and community. The open door approach is team oriented with high expectations driven by goal setting stakeholders. Open communication and shared decision making help to encourage all involved to express opinions, give suggestions, and share in the responsibility of creating a trusting school climate.

The leadership structure of the school includes one principal, one assistant principal, one instructional coach, teachers, specialists, and support staff. Everyone is expected to have a voice in decisions which affect the success of our students. Our teachers have firsthand knowledge of what our students need to be able to reach their goals. This knowledge drives grade level meetings. Each meeting has an emphasis on improving instruction in all curricular areas by nurturing collaborative professional learning communities that fearlessly discuss professional practice and student achievement. Each staff member's strengths are developed, trusting working relationships are nurtured, and sights are always set on meeting students' individual needs and those of the school. As the instructional leader of FAAM, the principal joins the assistant principal and instructional staff in meetings to collaborate and provide necessary guidance. Shared leadership is enjoyed by all, and it is evident that every teacher is comfortable discussing any issue that will improve student achievement. Teacher empowerment continues to yield remarkable results as everyone has placed children at the forefront of their priorities.

Building relationships with parents and the community is especially important to the principal. Parents and community are actively engaged in our everyday culture. There are numerous parent volunteers who contribute on a daily basis. PTA sponsored events support our students and families through activities, assemblies and events designed to enhance educational experiences. They set goals which support the mission of the school. These goals are presented at the first Open House and revisited each PTA meeting with updates on progress. Community members are invited to participate in various PTA and school sponsored activities. We feel that our students need to see that their parents and the community are an integral part of their academic success at Forest Avenue Academic Magnet.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one practice that makes Forest Avenue successful is recognition of the cultural diversity that is prevalent in our school. It is the primary feature that many parents and guests recognize when visiting. Their positive comments reflect the scope to which we value the uniqueness of our students. It is of paramount importance to us that all students feel valued and safe in a school climate of respect, dignity, and caring with support for every child. Our Forest Avenue Beliefs include the statement: “There is strength in diversity; working together we can address any challenges.” We celebrate the similarities and differences among our student body population while using their diverse cultures as a foundation for learning activities within the curriculum. This vast diversity enriches lessons and discussions while validating the school belief that all students are capable of performing at high academic levels. Our 2015-2016 school population is comprised of students who speak 20 different languages.

Our culturally responsive learning environment provides students with multiple perspectives and experiences that enrich and promote a deeper understanding and awareness for others. We provide a wide range of classroom activities that help students recognize and value our differences. We invite students to share stories of their home life or family holiday practices affording peers a window into their culture, while fostering appreciation for their own culture and heritage. We welcome guest speakers from differing backgrounds, teach students about multicultural role models, and provide regular opportunities for student collaboration that promote trusting relationships.

Additional activities that honor our population’s diversity are: (1) First grade’s PTA program highlighting African American cultural songs and dances and their influence on modern music and dance. (2) Chinese language lessons are provided after school, free of charge through the Troy University Confucius Institute. (3) Fifth graders celebrate Cinco de Mayo with a Mexican feast, music, and decorations.

Forest Avenue is a dynamic diverse learning environment where children and adults are committed to the success of all learners. Our students are engaged daily in high quality instruction that reflects their diversity while developing knowledge, attitudes, and the skills necessary to be successful in a global society with an emphasis placed on respect and responsibility.