

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 [] Magnet [] Choice

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

Official School Name Morningside Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1053 East Rock Springs Road NE
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Atlanta State GA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 30306-3047

County Fulton County

Telephone (404) 802-8950 Fax (404) 853-4043

Web site/URL http://www.morningsideschool.org E-mail Audrey.Sofianos@atlanta.k12.ga.us

Twitter Handle https://twitter.com/MorningsideEle Facebook Page http://www.facebook.com/MorningsideEle
eElem mentary Google+ _____

Other Social Media Link
http://twitter.com/audreysof
ianos

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Meria Carstarphen E-mail mjcarstarphen@atlanta.k12.ga.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Atlanta Public Schools Tel. (404) 802-3500

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. Courtney English
(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):
- 68 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 13 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 16 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 97 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	75	76	151
1	85	64	149
2	73	54	127
3	68	71	139
4	71	54	125
5	61	63	124
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	433	382	815

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 6 % Asian
 - 11 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 71 % White
 - 7 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 8%

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	35
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	34
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	69
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	827
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.083
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 5 %
43 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Chinese, Amharic, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, French, Korean, Filipino, Arabic, Lithuanian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10 %
Total number students who qualify: 79

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %
25 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
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	3
Classroom teachers	35
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	14
Paraprofessionals	8
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 23:1

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%	98%	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 X

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

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

We nurture intellectual, social, emotional, physical well-being, while holding each to highest academic standards. We recognize uniqueness, provide flexible instruction, address learning styles to maximize achievement.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

At Morningside we are growing one child at a time. In its 87 year existence, Morningside has had supportive neighbors and community, as many have strong connections as attendees and members of our school. Due to our history and prime location, we are a well-known school in metro-Atlanta. Our surrounding community is thriving, with increasing home prices and very active real estate development. We believe this is in part due to the success and reputation of our school. We are a neighborhood school of 815 children, with several hundred student walkers, several hundred carpool students and only five school buses. This builds a strong sense of community and belonging, as many of our families see each other during daily walks to and from school.

Two unique features of Morningside are our large courtyard garden and our culture of kindness. Through our garden space we are cultivating academic, wellness, and environmental awareness. It includes two outdoor classroom spaces, grade-level garden beds, an herb and pollinators' garden, a green house, composting areas, and fruit trees. We lead initiatives on recycling, mindfulness and health, even organizing food tastings with local chefs using ingredients from the garden. Garden lessons introduce, review, and reinforce lessons and standards taught in the classroom—valuable, real-life, hands-on activities. Lastly, an overarching theme of our program is to create a culture of kindness, shared at school-wide assemblies and reinforced throughout the year. Each of our playgrounds has a Buddy Bench to develop friendships. This culture of kindness creates positive student behavior, which in turn leads to a greater focus in student learning and achievement.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The school's core curriculum is based on the Georgia Standards of Excellence and the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. At each grade level our teachers write and create the curriculum based on the students' needs as evidenced through our local, state, and district assessments. We seek out supplemental programs, materials and student experiences based upon student needs identified, supported by our PTA and MES Foundation. Our curriculum is designed for students to achieve to the highest standards, through a hands-on, enriching, experience based approach, with frequent review and assessment. Our students participate in contests such as Spelling Bee, Geography Bee, Technology Fair, and Science Fair, placing at district, regional and state levels.

Reading and Language Arts are taught across the entire school, in every subject. We have created our own reading manual, which details our balanced literacy approach. We guide students very intentionally from phonemic awareness to phonics, decoding and fluency to reading comprehension, with a strong emphasis on vocabulary building through word study. We do shared reading, literacy centers, small group reading instruction, as well as writer's workshop with shared writing. Writing and citing textual evidence is expected in all subjects, across grades. We have frequent teacher read and/or write alouds, to model and teach a particular skill. Each classroom has an intentionally created student library, with a school book room full of leveled materials to supplement.

Our goal is to ensure that the entire curriculum is accessible to all students through a strong command of literacy skills. We believe in the connection between reading level, writing skills, and all subjects, and attribute our overall academic achievement increases and strength to our focus on literacy. We have identified the language arts skills and reading level ranges to be mastered at each grade level. Teachers quickly provide support through implementing interventions and progress monitoring, if needed. Yearly author visits, weekly guest readers, pajama/read days, student shared and independent writing, an open and accessible media center, and encouraging students to always have a book promotes our school-wide literacy environment.

In Math we emphasize a curriculum with technology enhancements, manipulative activities, concrete experiences, mental math, and writing opportunities. We weave in frequent review of previously taught skills, so these skills continuously build upon one another. At the same time, we also add in more challenging activities, to address the wide skill range of our student population. Multiple ways of solving or investigating any math problem are explored each lesson, as our students are taught to be mathematical thinkers, solving real-life problems.

Our goal is for students to attain a deep understanding of each mathematical concept. Before we begin to teach a specific algorithm, we ensure there are numerous concrete, hands-on, and pictorial experiences related to the math topic. Students are asked to justify their thinking in multiple ways, to work in pairs or groups, and to perform as an individual. Students have specific goals, math targets, and foundational skills to achieve at each grade level. We ensure these skills built along the way are assessed, remediated, and strengthened, so that our students continuously deepen their conceptual understanding. In each grade, our students are given previews and opportunities to work on above grade level skills, which culminates in an advanced math course at the fifth grade level for those students who have demonstrated a high level of mastery.

Science is taught through hands-on experiences, experiments and investigations. Our units are inquiry based, with students using multiple texts to access the content and to reinforce comprehension strategies. There is intentional teaching of academic vocabulary, through a tiered approach of commonly used words to content specific essential language. Our students are guided to ask questions about the world around us, and answer that question through an investigation or experiment, following the scientific method. We have maximized the use of our large courtyard garden, with frequent outdoor lessons and activities led by teachers and supported by local agencies and expert visits.

In Social Studies we have a strong focus on nonfiction texts. Throughout the year on a monthly basis, our students receive at least one child appropriate newspaper/magazine in each classroom, as well as use of multiple texts from a variety of genres and eras. We begin with what students already know, what they want to learn, what they have questions about. Students research, present or create a culminating written product. As a part of our research continuum, our primary grades have social studies related parades where they study and then dress as a historical character, while our fifth graders present career choices to the younger grades. Our students create interactive notebooks of content, and literacy skills are reinforced through social studies content. In the upper grades our teachers specialize through departmentalization in both science and social studies. This ensures adequate teaching time through purposeful scheduling, as well as increased expertise from dedicated staff.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Morningside Elementary School provides a variety of non-core subjects that help with the acquisition of essential and expanded skills for our students. These subjects are Art, Physical Education, Band, Orchestra, General Music/Chorus and Spanish. The students who participate in our other curriculum areas develop many essential skills used in everyday life. They decode symbols while reading musical notes and instantaneously solve mathematical equations when playing rhythms. Children learn how to collaborate and communicate with other students, as self-discipline and responsibility are developed when they learn to organize practice time, share unique materials or equipment, and prepare for classes, performances, and shows. Creativity and emotional self-awareness are expanded when our children learn these skills outside of the traditional classroom setting through art, music, movement, and language.

Visual Arts at Morningside Elementary is Georgia Performance Standards driven, taught through a reflective ethic of care and responsibility, to promote student self-esteem, positive relationships and citizenship. The study of art at Morningside stimulates the imagination and encourages students to utilize their creative potential in learning about and producing original works of art. It promotes the development of personal and cultural identity for students. Our art instruction provides opportunities for students to work individually and collaboratively to foster social development and cooperative interaction. Morningside students in kindergarten, first, second and third grade have scheduled Visual Arts classes for forty-five minutes twice a week, with fourth and fifth scheduled once a week. Additionally Morningside offers a variety of six to eight week After School Art Clubs free to interested students.

In Physical Education (PE) the curriculum emphasizes the need for children to know basic movement concepts as well as the ability to perform simple movement patterns. Physical Education classes provide children with a skill set that builds upon their movement repertoire, thus allowing them to engage in various forms of games, sports, and other physical activities later in life. Morningside PE is a content area of study that uses Georgia assessment tools paired with Atlanta Public Schools benchmarks. Physical Education is a planned sequential K-12 standards-based program of curricula and instruction designed to develop motor skills, knowledge and behaviors of healthy active living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence. Physical education at Morningside uses a comprehensive physically active approach involving social, cognitive, and physical skills acquired through movement. These classes are offered year-long to students in Kindergarten through fifth grade, twice a week for 45 minutes.

Band or Orchestra are both 45 minute elective classes offered to 4th and 5th grade students, twice a week. In band, students have the opportunity to learn how to play instruments from the woodwind, brass, and percussion families. Beginning students in the 4th grade learn the proper way to make a sound on their instrument, how to read music notation, and how to play in an ensemble. These skills are developed further in the 5th grade band, with students learning more notes on their instruments, harder rhythms, and how to blend and balance within an ensemble. Orchestra explores the world of the string instruments (violin, viola, cello and bass) with an exciting journey that begins with plucking simple tunes, shaping the left and right hands and then putting them together to bow the first songs. Playing a string instrument is a unique way of self-expression as it contributes to strong character and discipline. We believe the skills and coordination learned through band and orchestra boost the overall development of each child.

Students in grades K-5 experience a variety of activities during their time in General Music and Chorus. During this time, children focus on listening, rhythm, note recognition, tempo terms and concepts. Students enjoy traditional folk songs along with seasonally appropriate music that helps make class an inviting and enjoyable experience for all students. Children learn to recognize musical instruments by sight and sound and learn among other concepts, the basics of music notation. Third through fifth graders discover the challenges in trying to make an instrument speak. Students in Elementary Chorus activities learn to sing songs in unison and in two-parts.

Our 4th and 5th grade students take Spanish twice per week for 45 minutes. Our foreign language program is designed as a cultural and language exposure, to help prepare students for further studies when they enter middle school. Students learn beginning Spanish vocabulary, through activities designed to promote communication and cultural understanding through listening, writing, and speaking.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Our school has a long-established culture of differentiated instruction, as well as high-expectations for all students. Teachers proactively identify students in need of academic and/or behavioral intervention through the consistent use of data. Using a universal screener at the beginning of the school year allows teachers to utilize a multi-tiered instructional approach. Differentiation is provided not only to various levels of learners, but is also geared to various modalities of instruction. We teach not only content, but also problem-solving skills, organizational skills, and cognitive self-awareness. Our scaffolded instructional approach allows students to become strong independent learners.

The school's overall instructional approach is to construct lesson plans that build on prior knowledge as a starting point. A variety of daily formative assessments provide feedback to teachers about students' strengths, weakness, and mastery of content. Students who need a new approach to learning are readily identified, and a continual stream of opportunities is provided to further support those students. For students in need of extra support, tutorials or remediation are provided. Instructional time is maximized, and flexible grouping is used to meet the needs of all learners. With our emphasis on literacy, each student receives an individual reading goal, which is set based on student data. Individual reading conferences are held to discuss and modify goals throughout the school year. The bar is constantly raised for students achieving on or above grade level.

All students receive instruction through what we identify as Tier 1. Tier 1 is for all learners, yet has differentiated components to progress students through the grade level goals and concepts. Students at Tiers 2 and 3 have frequent progress monitoring and individualized targeted interventions. These students' needs are often addressed through the Early Intervention Program (EIP). At Tier 3, Student Support Team meetings occur quarterly to review the student's response to intervention, provide additional support as needed, and to inform parents of progress. Research-based interventions employed include more targeted use of leveled readers, Orton-Gillingham methodology, math manipulatives, and graphic organizers. Technology-based interventions include programs such as Study Island, First in Math, and Tumblebooks.

Various academic enrichment opportunities also allow students to explore their interests and learn beyond the curriculum. Chess Club, Student Council, Jr. S.W.A.G. (Sustainability, Wellness, and Garden), Gardening, and Art Club, are all offered for free to interested students. To motivate students further, our school collaborated with our PTA and Foundation to install a Promethean interactive whiteboard in each classroom, as well as additional student materials, teacher materials, software, and technology. This allows teachers to expand their creativity and inspire student learning through the use of video, interactive activities, live feeds, small groups, whole group, games, and real-life applications.

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

Assessment and data analysis has been at the core of the instructional program at Morningside Elementary. We utilize several researched based assessments to assist us in understanding each individual child. We administer a universal screener assessment to all students at the beginning of the year using a web-based diagnostic program. We further our knowledge about each child by administering the Star Reading and

Math assessment, which we use to establish our baseline of grade-level equivalent data in both reading and math. It also identifies the instructional reading level, zone of proximal development, and the targeted skills that are needed to meet the individual learner's needs.

The teachers utilize this information to inform their overall small group instruction within reading and math, identifying the targeted areas so we can implement the most effective strategies when teaching new skills. The teachers have infused several formative and one summative assessment within each unit of study, which provides them an opportunity to reflect on their instructional approach to the unit in its entirety. Using the data from a summative assessment allows teachers to create subsequent lessons for the group of students that need additional remediation for that unit. Teachers use the formative assessments to further inform their differentiated instructional groups to ensure all student learners' needs are met.

At Morningside, we are fortunate to have a staff member that serves as our Student Support Team chair (SST). This position works with our most at risk subgroup of students that have not achieved ongoing success in our instructional program. The team is comprised of teachers, parents, the counselor, and a representative from administration. The goal of the team is to identify areas of weakness and employ interventions to address the areas. We have additional programs and assessments that teachers use to provide interventions and progress monitoring, specific to students needing additional assistance through SST. We also conduct weekly data meetings with the teachers that target the indicated subgroups so we as a team can monitor the progress of the interventions for the individual students.

We utilize several ways to inform our parents of their child's achievement. We have provided training for parents to use our district provided online resource which provides access to the students' grades. We utilize parent conferences both in person and over the phone or via internet. We strive to build a strong home/school connection with all of our parents as we believe that has a great impact on our students' overall achievement.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The positive, student and family centered culture at Morningside Elementary is one of the factors that makes the school a desirable place for all stakeholders. The school—faculty and staff, students, community, and business partners are committed to instilling and maintaining a culture of welcoming, acceptance and success through various initiatives.

Morningside builds our culture around the concept of kindness, to encourage compassion for others and to promote inclusion among the student body. For example, Morningside has a “Buddy Bench,” which allows students to demonstrate discomfort or nervousness with making friends or wanting to be a part of a group by sitting on the designated bench. Teachers and students consistently monitor the bench to ensure that all students feel welcome to join any activity. Students each sign a commitment to our culture of kindness, which is displayed in our cafeteria. Additionally Morningside is designated a No Place for Hate School, an initiative designed to rally the entire school around the goal of creating a welcoming community focused on eliminating all forms of bias and bullying. No Place for Hate fosters a culture of respect and creates a safe, bully-free learning environment for students at all grade levels.

In addition, our school counselor offers a unique program, “Peer Mediation/ Peer Leaders” that fosters leadership within the student body. A group of fifth grade students, selected through strict criteria for peer leaders, participates in intense three-month training. The result of the training is our own students being trained to assist their peers with peaceful conflict resolution. Our student council is very active, with suggestion boxes placed around the school for community input. Our safety patrol of students welcome our students each day, stationed throughout the entire campus. We also promote strong student attendance, through recognition and parent education. A Student Attendance Committee (SAC) awards students and provides incentives for perfect attendance and/or limited absences throughout the school year.

Our teachers have a strong voice at Morningside, and help inform decisions for our school and children. Decisions regarding curriculum and additional student programs are made by the teachers, and then supported by our administration, Foundation and PTA. Each year, staff are supported in receiving additional classroom materials through grants from our PTA and from the community through Donors Choose. Teachers are recognized and celebrated for any achievements, extra efforts or volunteerism through our weekly newsletter and at staff meetings. They are also supported within our culture of kindness through teacher appreciation activities, alongside the recurrent implementation of a robust professional development program and district-sponsored events.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Our school views our students, families, teachers and community as interdependent in creating maximum teaching and learning, unleashing a power that often goes untapped. Our school is a welcome place, with a high level of daily visits from parents and community. Morningside promotes the partnership of the school, family, child and community team in preparing our students with the academics, skills, and aptitudes to be college and career ready.

We want our families to be involved at Morningside, and we encourage at home, in school, out of school, individual and family opportunities connected to our school. We know that student success and school improvement begins with an active, strong, and engaged PTA. This dynamic organization supports the day-to-day needs of the school’s students and staff, fundraising approximately \$100,000 annually to support teachers and student enrichment. PTA promotes a positive school climate, as well as student achievement through continuous commitment from families and sponsorship by business partners to provide special programs and performances, school supplies, and technology. Engagement with the greater community is evident through activities such as our annual Family Science Night, Student Variety Show and the Fall Festival, with collective attendance of over 2,000 people. The PTA supports student wellness, teacher encouragement and morale, as well as a grants committee that fosters innovative enhancements for

classroom instruction. The PTA has sponsored over \$10,000 in teacher grants this school year alone.

The Morningside Foundation and Local School Council bring additional levels of legal, financial, and business expertise to our school through tapping into our parent and community knowledge base. The Foundation provides the school with the ability to expand curriculum materials, technology and any needed professional development as identified by the staff based on our student data. Over the past year, our Foundation has sponsored over \$20,000 in professional development, so that our teachers continue to grow in expertise, as well as approximately \$100,000 in technology and additional curriculum materials. Morningside has a strong elected Local School Council that provides additional parent and staff partnership, working collaboratively with the principal and district level personnel to certify that the school's needs are heard and addressed.

Morningside continues to partner with surrounding universities to help maintain and expand our strong foundation of high level and excellent teaching. Our school is most often chosen to host Georgia State University practicum students to work with our faculty and perfect their teaching skills. Other examples of our community partners include an Emory University athletic program that sponsors free entry to all events for our staff to help with staff wellness and Trees Atlanta who assists with our academic program through tree education and school garden lessons.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development has played a key role in ensuring the success of the students at Morningside. Our entire staff has a demonstrated commitment to lifelong learning, and is continuously engaged in professional growth and collaboration.

Over the last 5 years, a large portion of our staff has been trained in the Complete Reading Series (CRS). The CRS is a research-based training composed of 6 courses (70 hours total) provided by the Georgia Educational Training Agency. Currently, there are thirty-four certified staff members who have completed the entire series, with ten more staff members presently completing additional coursework in the CRS. This professional development focuses on early literacy, phonics, vocabulary, reading comprehension, learning disabilities, and dyslexia. Training in these areas has equipped teachers with a more complete toolbox for helping students with reading difficulties. In addition, seventeen certified staff members have expanded upon CRS training with the completion of Orton-Gillingham (OG) training. Orton-Gillingham uses a multi-sensory approach to teach literacy. OG has allowed our teachers to utilize a more differentiated approach to reading and writing instruction, meeting the needs of our various types of learners. Each summer, a cadre of teachers commit to this two week training, with ten additional staff members attending this summer. Targeted professional development for our staff in the areas of reading and writing has led to an increase in student achievement overall. Since beginning this training, there has been a marked growth in student writing, comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and critical thinking across all content areas.

Morningside is not just committed to individual professional growth, but also to the growth of education as a whole. Through a partnership with Georgia State University, our teachers have collaborated with student teachers and interns. This opportunity has allowed our staff members to reflect on their own teaching practices, as well as to model best practices for aspiring teachers. Professional learning is engrained in the culture of Morningside. Administrators and teachers are constantly seeking out new opportunities for growth and development. Forty-seven of our certified staff members have degrees beyond a bachelor's degree, twenty of those have a specialist degree or doctorate. This speaks to our continual drive to improve beyond the status quo. Our approach to teacher development is similar to the way we teach our students - both holistic and individualized. Our staff is modeling a continuous commitment to learning that is reflected throughout our practice. At Morningside, we truly are a community of learners.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership team at Morningside bases all decisions on children, with an emphasis on their social, emotional and academic growth. Our school is very child centered, and that begins with all staff members

and is a strong part of our culture. The philosophy of leadership is collaborative and shared, with the core belief that teachers are highly educated and qualified experts in their content and grade levels. Each classroom is at the center of the school, and all efforts by administrators are to support the teachers so they can provide the high level of instruction our students deserve. The administrative team is here to serve the teachers, so that they can work directly with the children, maximizing their growth and achievement.

The administrative team of the principal and two assistant principals prides itself on being accessible to all, very visible in hallways and classrooms the entire school day, communicative to all constituents, and supportive with a clear focus on student success. All three of us work closely with our PTA leadership, Local School Council, and Morningside Foundation.

We have a school leadership team that helps to drive decisions and continuous improvement to maximize our success. Our team consists of representatives from each grade level and department within the school, plus those who are a part of our Morningside Leadership Development Program. Each year, we invite any staff who aspire to become an assistant principal, principal or other education leader to join our leadership development program. During the 2015-16 school year there are four classroom teachers participating in our Morningside Leadership Development program. All four are on the school leadership team, plus they fulfill other roles within our building, including leading our mentor program for new staff, co-leading Mastermind groups, supporting school climate initiatives, or leading data collection on curriculum initiatives. We believe offering this opportunity to our teachers while developing tomorrow's leaders supports our strong climate and builds staff capacity for the future.

In lieu of committees, our school has created Morningside Masterminds, based upon student needs identified by staff. Our masterminds consist of a team of expert staff who come together voluntarily to research district, state and nationwide trends and information surrounding a particular topic. These mastermind team members research, collaborate and problem solve, while sharing their own experience and expertise related to the topic. Teachers can volunteer for multiple mastermind groups, and some groups continue on from year to year. Teachers share the leadership of these groups, and present their findings to the entire staff for feedback. During the 2015-16 school year, seven mastermind teams formed based upon needs of students and their achievement, including math, homework, and technology skills.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

We believe our strongest indicator of student success is our intense focus on reading and literacy. Over the past three years, there has been a deliberate and purposeful recruitment, retention, and training plan for our staff in regards to reading and literacy. The staff is committed to continuous development and learning. From this, there has been an investment in curriculum evaluation and development of units in reading and language arts. This has culminated in our own reading manual for our school, which details each component of our Balanced Literacy program. The students are receiving high quality, well-thought out multi-faceted instruction from expert teachers, who have the skills and ability to diagnose educational needs and quickly provide interventions and extensions to their learning.

Starting in 2011, Morningside began the six course, seventy hour Complete Reading Series through Georgia Educational Training Agency. Our teachers have developed expertise in early literacy, phonics, vocabulary, reading comprehension, learning disabilities and dyslexia. Our teachers from kindergarten through fifth grade have a common language and adult learning experience, which provides seamless instruction for our students. Our focus on literacy has made our entire curriculum accessible for every child. Reading extends across all subject areas in all grade levels, and if a student struggles with reading, they will be impacted in all subject areas. With highly trained teachers in grades K through 5, students are identified early and receive the assistance they need more quickly and efficiently. Teachers provide interventions regularly and are able to make instructional decisions for students based on this level of expertise. In addition, the majority of our staff have gone on to receive an even more intensive level of training with Orton-Gillingham. We believe this cadre of teachers has the skills and tools needed to teach anyone to read no matter the challenge, and that is a powerful resource and component of our culture. We believe that higher teacher training and expertise results in higher student success.

Reading is essential to all school learning. As you walk through the halls of Morningside, greet students off of buses, visit lunch, and participate in recess you will see students from all grades reading books. In addition to homework in the four core subjects, our students are expected to read nightly. We encourage reading for pleasure, for information, for practice, for extension, for review and for fun. Our Balanced Literacy approach has a systemic effect as students move through the grades, and we believe our academic success is rooted in our literacy emphasis and expertise.