

U.S. Department of Education
2013 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program
A Non-Public School - 13PV107

	Charter	Title 1	Magnet	Choice
School Type (Public Schools):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Principal: Dr. Luci Higgins

Official School Name: The First Academy Middle School

School Mailing Address: 2667 Bruton Boulevard
Orlando, FL 32805-5726

County: Orange State School Code Number*:

Telephone: (407) 206-8651 E-mail: carolgrosshans@thefirstacademy.org

Fax: (407) 206-8722 Web site/URL: www.thefirstacademy.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that all information is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*: Dr. Steve Whitaker PhD Superintendent e-mail:
stevewhitaker@thefirstacademy.org

District Name: District Phone:

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

_____ Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Scott Boyd

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

_____ Date _____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

**Non-Public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*
The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools (Aba.Kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or its equivalent each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's AYP requirement or its equivalent in the 2012-2013 school year. Meeting AYP or its equivalent must be certified by the state. Any AYP 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 and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2007 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for that period.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2012.
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

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT

Questions 1 and 2 are for Public Schools only.

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SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area

4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 12

5. Number of students as of October 1, 2012 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	39	41	80
8	37	52	89
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12	0	0	0
Total in Applying School:			169

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
5 % Asian
4 % Black or African American
8 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
79 % White
4 % Two or more races
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting 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.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2011-2012 school year: 1%

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

Step	Description	Value
(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	0
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	1
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	1
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2011	170
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.01
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	1

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 0%

Total number of ELL students in the school: 0

Number of non-English languages represented: 0

Specify non-English languages:

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0%
 Total number of students who qualify: 0

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 5%
 Total number of students served: 9

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>0</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u>
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Total number	<u>14</u>	<u>8</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1:

11:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Daily student attendance	93%	92%	94%	96%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools):**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2012.

Graduating class size:	_____	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	_____	0%
Enrolled in a community college	_____	0%
Enrolled in vocational training	_____	0%
Found employment	_____	0%
Military service	_____	0%
Other	_____	0%
Total	_____	0%

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award:

No

Yes

If yes, what was the year of the award?

PART III - SUMMARY

The First Academy's (TFA) mission is to prepare children for life as Christian leaders who put character before career, wisdom beyond scholarship, service before self, and participation as a way of life. TFA's vision is to forge an enduring partnership between church, home, and school that will produce powerful and effective student leaders who will impact their world for Christ through Biblical thought and action. Exceptional faculty strives to unlock the strengths of each student, with a passion to teach the mind and reach the heart. Our desire is to train the whole child – academically, emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually – so that he/she will become a Godly example in his/her community.

Independent educational professionals (Representatives of FCIS,SAIS,SACS 2012) describe the TFA's Middle School program as student-centered, hands-on oriented, and distinctively relational. Students report that their teachers know them personally and care deeply about them. Similarly, the faculty boast about the way in which the student body enforces the spirit de corps and culture of the school. Commitment to academic excellence, continuous professional growth, and use of best practices is apparent in all middle school classes. Enthusiastic faculty demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the teacher-student relationship in the learning process while using developmentally appropriate collaborative collegial teaching practices to engage the early adolescent learner. The Middle School program is designed to bridge elementary to high school while simultaneously preparing student for success in high school.

The MS strives to fulfill its mission through the recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers and administrators. Middle School can boast of 100% retention of faculty and administration, resulting in a strong cohesive team serving its families. These educators employ a team approach to provide quality classroom instruction based on research and best practices. The Faculty Culture Profile results indicate that 91% agree that "It is determined by teachers in my division/school that site-based, collegial, and career-long personal/professional growth and renewal is of the utmost importance."

Teachers are reflective practitioners who continually review and modify instruction methodologies to best serve the unique needs of learners. This is evidenced in the results of the student survey conducted in the Fall: 95% of students agree that the "Teacher cares about me as a person", 97% agree that the "Teacher has high expectations for me" , and 97% agree that the "Teacher enjoys teaching me."

Ninety-four percent of surveyed students agree with the statement "Teacher presents information in a way that it can be easily grasped. Teacher communicates ideas well and uses examples to further explain my understanding of a concept or task."

Instructional practices routinely used in the classroom include: Thinking Maps(C), Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures, and various methods supporting differentiated and brain-friendly instruction. Fruits of the rigorous curriculum are seen in achievement milestones, including 61% of seventh graders qualifying for the Duke Talent Identification program, placing students in the top 10% of the country, as well as exceeding the NCLB – Blue Ribbon Schools' criteria in reading and math for the past five years.

Teachers are "the heroes". TFA encourages and provides opportunities for the faculty to grow professionally in their disciplines. Faculty Culture Profile results indicate that 91% of teachers agree that "It is determined by teachers in my division/school that site-based, collegial, and career-long personal/professional growth and renewal is of the utmost importance." Administration is committed to ongoing classroom visits and evaluations. Each week teachers receive a "Manage by Walking Around"(MBWA) quick note of principal observations. Exemplary strategies and methodologies are acknowledged and points of improvement documented. Additionally, students are given the opportunity to respond to surveys to share input of perspectives from "Behind The Student Desk". Along with the more formal three-tiered supervision procedure, the MBWA and the distinctive student-centered survey data combine into an effective opportunity for affirmation and professional growth.

MS focuses on walking with students and parents through the intense transitional years. Variety of events and workshops have been specifically designed to support parents and students. Some of these include:

Bullying Awareness, Date Night (encouraging parents and students to spend time one-on-one), various parent book studies and seminars (adolescent growth and development, brain research, social and technology issues/concerns), team building, leadership, Purity Seminar, weekly chapels(led by students), Bible studies led by Upper School students, awards ceremonies(recognizing academic, spiritual, character, fine art and athletic accomplishments), talent show and Student Government Association.

TFA's unique essence has been described by Central Florida families as, "definitively Christ-centered, and distinctly college-prep." The strong tuition assistance program, in which 33% of students receive scholarship assistance/reduction, opens admission to families from varying backgrounds. Working together: home, school, and church, we can make a difference in the lives of students and the future.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

The First Academy (TFA) Middle School has established a comprehensive system for evaluating individual and graded level academic progress. Along with the varied classroom formal and informal assessments, achievement testing is administered to all seventh and eighth grade students as a means of comparing student academic progress against national norms. Assessment results are analyzed both on an individual student and overall grade level group basis. This past year TFA made a decision to change the achievement test from the SAT10 to TerraNova, 3rd Edition. While we were excited about the accomplishments of our learners and teachers; we were not satisfied with our results. TFA Middle School repeatedly received qualifying test scores as defined by the National Blue Ribbon criteria, however, we were eager to improve on our success. TerraNova, 3rd Edition showcases the innovation and technical excellence that TFA embraces. It is aligned with national and state educational standards and is specifically designed to be more engaging for students. Please note scores posted to the National Norms-Referenced Test Charts for 2007/2008 thru 2010/2011 are the results of the SAT 10 while the scores for the 2011/2012 school year are our first TerraNova3 results.

From 2007 – 2011, TFA Middle School's SAT 10 reading and math scores have exceeded the standards set by NCLB-National Blue Ribbon Schools in all middle school grades seventh and eighth. Over the four year period seventh grade exceeded the criteria in both reading (70th percentile) and math (78th percentile) with an average of 81st percentile in reading and 89th percentile average in math. Additionally, eighth grade exceeded the criteria as well over the four year period in reading (67th percentile) and math (76th percentile) with average scores of 80th percentile in reading and 89th percentile in math.

The TerraNova, 3rd Edition scores for the 2011-2012 school year also exceeded the criteria set for National Blue Ribbon Schools. Great effort was put forth during the school year to prepare students for the rigor of the TerraNova3 testing, as the type of testing and norming of results is vastly different between the two tests. In our efforts we were pleasantly surprised by the results of our inaugural TerraNova testing year. Seventh grade exceeded the criteria in both reading (69th percentile) and math (70th percentile) with 80th percentile in reading and 85th percentile in math. Equally surpassing the criteria guidelines for TerraNova eighth grade results yielded 79th percentile in reading and 80th percentile in math compared to the criteria guidelines of 73rd percentile in reading and 72nd percentile in math. The ranking of the TFA Middle School scores in the top ten percent in the nation is particularly significant considering that TFA's admissions criteria is the 60th percentile and above in reading and math.

A review of the SAT 10 reading and math scores for the four years of 2007 – 2011 of TFA Middle School represents a stable and consistent culture of academic excellence. Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, the eighth grade class scored at the 76th percentile in reading. Over the course of the next four years, the eighth grade class of 2011 scored at the 82nd percentile. Along with the increase in the national percentile, the eighth grade class showed an increase of total student population from 78 to 105 in the same four year span. In math, 2007 eighth graders scored at the 88th percentile while 2011 eighth graders scored at the 89th percentile. Seventh grade saw the same consistent growth and stability. Reading national percentile in 2007-2008 was 81st percentile while 2010-2011 results remained at the 81st percentile despite the student population increase during the same time frame. Math scores were 89th percentile in 2007-2008 and 90th percentile in 2010-2011. Additionally, comparing that same group of students from seventh grade to eighth grade each year results in a one to two percentile point gain each year in math; the same yearly comparison in reading yields an average of one percentile point over the three year period.

Over the past five years, the students at The First Academy Middle School have consistently

demonstrated excellence. The quality of education and the consistency of testing results can be attributed to the stability of the staff and administration (experiencing zero teacher turn-over this past year), the academic giftedness of our students, research and implementation of new curriculum, teacher training, and continual data review.

In keeping with the school's mission, vision, and educational goals, specific standards are targeted to achieve successful results. As teachers and administrators continue to use the data obtained through the TerraNova to sharpen and enhance instructional strategies and content, TFA will strive to continue to seek gains in all curriculum areas.

2. Using Assessment Results:

The First Academy Middle School is data-driven. Thoughtful analysis of various assessment data is integral in determining the effectiveness of instruction and curriculum. The information gleaned helps teachers and administration identify worthwhile goals and celebrate achievement.

The school administers the Writing Assessment Program Test (WrAP) in March, additionally (until this past year) we administered the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT10) along with the Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) in April. Beginning with 2011-2012 school year, TerraNova, 3rd Edition was adopted and implemented. A critical component of a successful educational institution is assessment. Standardized assessment data is extremely important as it provides data regarding a student's long-term acquisition and application of academic objectives and concepts. TFA is not interested in teaching students to learn for the day, it is focused on developing and encouraging life long-learners who readily apply learned concepts to a variety of problem-solving tasks. The more specific measurement data that we as active researchers can glean from the assessments, the more information we have to make decisions on what is best for our learners. In order to improve we must have detailed educational information derived from quantitative and qualitative data that is both valid and reliable.

Individual test profiles and grade level profiles are given to the teachers for review and evaluation. Teachers and administration analyze test results to identify strengths and weaknesses in each curriculum area. The results are discussed as a team; culminating in curriculum and/or teaching methodology changes and goal setting for the coming year. Assessment results are also utilized to identify areas of deficiency that may be addressed through professional development. Analysis reports are reviewed periodically throughout the year. Progress is assessed and plans adjusted, as needed, in order to meet the goals of the instructional plan.

Teachers use a variety of formative and summative assessments throughout the year to evaluate student learning, design instruction and appropriately elevate rigor to more effectively serve students. Formative assessments include labs, classroom presentations and projects both individual and group. Summative assessments include quizzes, tests (pre and post), unit tests, projects, and end-of-the-course assessment. The results of these assessments along with the WrAP and TerraNova3 assist in completing a comparison of student ability and achievement scores. Assessments are also used in the determination of student placement in Honors, Grade Level, or remediation (if needed) coursework in the areas of Mathematics, English, and Science. Students scoring in the ninety-fifth percentile may qualify for Math Olympiads(C) as well as Duke Talent Identification Program. Students scoring below the fiftieth percentile in reading and/or math may be placed on academic review or probation, requiring tutoring or further testing for learning difficulties. Students are monitored throughout the school year to encourage and assist as needed for continued academic success.

TFA views the teacher-parent partnership as vital to the success of the students and subsequently the school. The First Academy uses various tools to communicate the academic progress to students, parents and to the community. Teacher communication regarding student progress is expected. Weekly updated grades and lesson plans are available to students and parents online. Parents and students have access to an online report card at the end of each quarter/semester.

Teachers notify parents when a student's grades drops below 70% so that the parent has the opportunity

to partner with the teacher in fostering success with the student. The grade level team of teachers will monitor and work with the student and parent to devise appropriate interventions to promote future academic success. In addition, our teachers communicate daily through e-mails and phone contacts. Parents or teachers may also initiate a parent/teacher team face-to-face conference as needed to discuss student concerns.

The school website, TFA blog and First Impressions provide information on overall student achievement. These communications include information on percentages of students that qualify for the Duke Talent Identification Program and statistics stating how our students scored compared to national norms. “Coffee” sessions are scheduled to allow time for parents to meet with administrators and other school leaders to ask questions, give input or address any concerns about academics. At the end of the first and second semester, parents are invited to attend an awards ceremony celebrating the success and growth of our students. Other opportunities to celebrate academic success include National Junior Honor Society Induction and the Duke Talent Identification Program Induction.

WrAP and TerraNova3 individual results are sent home with the final report card at the end of the year. Administrators are available during the summer months to discuss questions parents may have regarding their students’ scores.

In keeping with the college-prep mission, the PSAT(C) is administered to all eighth graders in the fall; results are used by the Upper School guidance as a foundation for charting a course for high school curriculum choices and placement. Results are reviewed with parents and students in an effort to also better prepare students for the subsequent PSAT and ultimately SAT testing.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

The faculty and administration of The First Academy feel strongly about seeking out the insights and expertise of our peer institutions, as well as a willingness to share our own journey.

Teachers and administration regularly attend workshops conducted by various agencies and associations. In addition, our faculty exercises the opportunity to visit other schools. We offer a number of professional development on-campus opportunities for teachers. Conversely, our learning community extends an open door to other schools to visit us. We have had members of other schools visit our campus, observing and asking questions. In addition, teachers work with students from area colleges to fulfill their classroom observation requirements. We also have members of our teaching team and administration share at various conferences. The principal has led seminars for teachers at the Association of Christian Schools Annual Conference on dealing with the middle school mind – discussing development and how it relates to educating the pre-adolescent brain, as well as a seminar on dealing with parents – the good, the bad and the not-so-nice. Various teachers have led seminars Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools in the areas of math, English, and science. Our teachers have opportunities during weekly Middle School meetings and monthly All-School Staff meetings to share successful strategies with their colleagues as well. Administrators have served on various accreditation teams throughout the state of Florida.

Receiving the Blue Ribbon Award would place us among other schools who lead in education. This recognition would provide us with a platform to share and model our education commitment. Our desire is to partner with others, learning together and creating a better educational atmosphere for student, teacher and parents.

4. Engaging Families and Communities:

A specific goal of The First Academy is “to forge an enduring partnership between church, home, and school that will produce powerful and effective student leaders who will impact their world for Jesus Christ through Biblical thought and action in obedience to the Great Commission.” TFA serves its purpose to the extent that it partners with parents in the education of their children. The school exists to complement, not compete with, the Christian family.

It is important that parents are fully aware of the academic happenings in their student's day. The school relies on an online program, RenWeb, through which parents have access to daily lesson plans, teaching materials and student's grade book. This allows parents to be active in assisting with organization and study, as well as affirmation or encouragement for grades received. Teachers are available to students and parents through email, phone or face-to-face conference to assist/answer concerns or questions parents may have. Our teachers understand in teaming we can accomplish much to the benefit of our students. Various communications are available to insure parents are aware of school activity. The school has an active website where parent/student handbooks, school calendar, athletic and fine arts information, etc. can be found. TFA MS utilizes a blog site where specific middle school information is published as well as student successes and accomplishments are celebrated.

MS years are times of change and challenge. Helping parents understand these critical years is an important part of our partnership. Various book studies and parent seminars have been offered sharing information to assist parents navigation of the middle years. Topics have dealt with brain development, physical, social, and emotional changes/development, peer pressure, use and dangers of technology, technology safeguards, and responsibility. One element stressed to parents is communication and relationship building. To encourage parents to create time with their student we celebrate Date Night. A parent is invited to take their student on a "date" for dinner and then to the school for dessert and a program. This has become a highlight for parents and students alike, with a number of parents taking the challenge to continue a "date night" once a month.

TFA is an environment in which we assist families by providing in-house guidance or connecting families with church and/or community resources as needed. "There is a strong sense of 'family' at the school among faculty, students, and parents." (FCIS-SAIS-SACS Accreditation Team).

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

The Middle School offers a comprehensive curriculum that is founded upon national and state educational standards designed to stimulate the young adolescent mind and develop critical thinking skills in preparation for Upper School and beyond. Grade Level and Honors Level courses are offered in academic curriculum areas. Students have access to high school courses including Algebra 1, Geometry, Spanish 1, French 1 and Latin 1.

“The Middle School program is designed to bridge elementary to high school and the degree by which the curriculum is aligned across divisions is commendable.” (FCIS, SAIS, SACS Accreditation Report, 2012)

Grade Level and Honors Level courses are offered in academic curriculum areas. Students have access to Algebra 1, Geometry, Spanish 1, French 1 and Latin 1 courses which result in attainment of high school credit.

A study skills program has been introduced that enables students to discover their learning style. Program lessons provide an understanding of effective study habits/skills including types of note taking, organizational skills, and study/test taking skills. Students are challenged to identify and apply the skills that best align with their learning style.

The Language Arts program reflects critical and creative thinking, balancing between reading, writing, speaking and listening components. Reading and writing skills are woven across all curriculum strands.

Mathematics is delivered with effective, engaging instructional methods and continual integration of technology. Consistent developmentally appropriate instruction challenges and supports students by providing opportunities to reason mathematically and incorporate abstract thinking.

Through the Science curriculum students are encouraged to become responsible, independent, questioning, creative, and organized learners who master scientific skills, concepts, and theories. Life and physical science form the integrated MS curriculum.

The Social Science program strives to infuse students with content, concepts, and skills they need to become knowledgeable and informed citizens in a diverse community. Students experience history, geography and cultures of the World, Ancient Greece, Rome, the Renaissance, Reformation and U.S. History. Technology integration helps to bring history and cultures to life. All students participate in the National Geography Bee.

Foreign Language is an elective that includes Rosetta Stone(TM) (any language of their choice), French, Latin or Spanish I. High school credit is awarded upon successful completion of level I affording students the ability to take higher levels, including Advanced Placement(TM), or multiple languages during Upper School. Classes meet daily for 235 minutes weekly. 20% of seventh and eighth graders participate in the MS foreign language offerings. TFA Middle School is in compliance with Blue Ribbon’s foreign language requirement. Spanish I students participated in the National Spanish Exam; averaging at the 71%tile. 88% of tested students received national recognition for their scores.

Fine Arts: Visual & Performing Arts are designed to provide a time of exploration. Students are able to discover areas of interest, increase their skill levels, and develop an understanding of creative expression. Performance opportunities include chapels, game performances, concerts, productions, and competitions.

Physical Education provides students the opportunity to develop strength, coordination, agility and flexibility promoting an active and healthy lifestyle. Various individual, dual, and team activities are

explored during this course. 80% of students participated in extracurricular athletics with 35% participating in multiple sports.

Technology is integrated throughout the curriculum. Authentic utilization of technology within the educational setting is embraced throughout the division. Students are encouraged to bring various electronic devices for educational utilization. Students are guided to recognize personal responsibility in the use/application of technology for purposes of communication, organizing material, learning, practice, assessment and presentation. Students/parents have 24/7 access to grades, lesson plans, teaching materials, and teacher/student/parent communication through an online program, RenWeb.

2. Reading/English:

The Language Arts program's goal is to equip students to become effective communicators in oral and written language; focusing on reading comprehension, vocabulary development, writing, speaking and listening. Grade Level and Honors courses are specifically designed to assist students in reaching their full potential. There is an intentional focus on enhancement of writing skills across the curriculum. Skills are taught and reinforced through direct instruction, class discussions, lectures, guided and independent practice, cooperative learning and the use of technology.

In depth novel studies, timed online reading comprehension, and the Renaissance Learning(TM) Accelerated Reader program enhance instruction and assessment and of reading skills while focusing on higher level critical thinking skills such as synthesizing and analyzing. Grammar skills are woven throughout the literature and writing lessons. Additional curriculum include: Vocabulary Cartoons which incorporates mnemonics designed for learning new words, and Grammar for Writing focusing on grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Thinking Maps ©: Write for the Future serves as the foundational comprehensive writing curriculum. Instructional design incorporates Best Practices and employs the utilization of ERB's WPP(C) online computerized essay evaluation tool that is aligned with ERB's Writing Assessment Program WrAP(C) through the Language Arts classes. This technological program provides tutorials meeting individual writing needs while tracking students' growth. At a time when Orlando area public schools standardized writing scores results were reported as "a disaster" by the Seminole County Superintendent Bill Vogel (Orlando Sentinel, May 14,2012), TFA's middle school division yielded strong writing scores. the seventh grade class average scores on the 2012 WrAP assessment were stronger than they had been since data was first taken in 2005.

Students have numerous opportunities to showcase their writing and speaking skills through a myriad of activities including: Middle School Newspaper, TFA Say, written "by students, about students, and for students", Writers Coffee House - to which parents are invited to hear students share their writings, cross curriculum activities where students create and present short plays, reports, and group presentations, writing contests - "What is a Patriot?" contest winners lay a wreath at The Tomb of the Unknowns during the class Washington, DC trip, various Mother's Day and Christmas writing contests through a local newspaper.

Time is provided for intentional vertical team planning between Middle School and Upper School Language Arts team to continually ensure that instructional standards and assessments are effective and supportive of the student.

3. Mathematics:

The First Academy MS mathematics curriculum is based on course objectives from Florida Sunshine State Standards and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Curriculum resources included textbooks, online resources, and teacher generated materials focused on mastery and application of skills. At each grade level, math skills are taught through a cycle of pre-testing, instruction, guided and independent practice, cooperative learning structures and assessment.

Technology is an integral part of the math program. Online teaching videos are used for re-teaching and review. The integration of Smart Boards, Accelerated Math, IT Inspire Calculators, and iPads assist in training students to use technology to enhance their learning, understanding and application of math concepts.

During the Middle School experience students are offered three level of mathematics. In seventh grade, opportunities are Math 7(grade level), Pre-Algebra Honors, and Algebra I Honors (high school credit course). Eighth grade classes include Pre-Algebra (grade level), Algebra I Honors or Geometry Honors (both high school credits courses). Grade level classes are foundational in nature while honors courses are for high achieving math students that need and desire a high level of academic challenge. Students are selected for honors coursework based on achievement test scores, previous math course grades, and input from teachers and parents regarding work ethic.

Regardless of the math level students are involved in; there are a number of identified basic skills that are a must for present and future math success. Said skills have been incorporated into weekly assessments called Big 10's, 15's, 20's, 25's and 30's skills dependent upon the math level. These weekly assessments/reviews of basic skills insure continued mastery and success for all student at all levels of learning.

Math Enrichment is an additional class for students needing reinforcement of necessary foundational skills. High level Math students are part of the Math Olympiads program. Here, students discover a variety of ways to expand mathematical thinking and develop the ability to solve problems creatively. In addition, teachers are available before and after school to give help and individual tutoring ensuring that all learners' needs are met for success in mathematics.

Mathematics is an area in which the Middle School teachers collaborate with Lower and Upper School teachers to assure that Middle School curriculum is creating mathematicians with the skills needed to be successful in Upper School and beyond.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

The First Academy's mission is to prepare children for life as Christian leaders who choose character before career, wisdom beyond scholarship, service before self and participation as a way of life. While many aspects of our mission statement are woven into all areas of academics; it is through the content and nature of the Christian Studies Program that students begin to fully understand the tenets of our mission statement. Our desire is to help students see beyond themselves, to reach into their immediate community and around the world.

Community begins at home - in our classrooms and hallways. Developing character includes how we treat those around us. Using the No-Bullying-Preventing Bullying at School, teachers guide students in discovering practical information to understand bullying and respond to it safely and effectively. Student surveys also assist the school in discovering hot spots and issues which can be better addressed.

Students are required to serve twenty hours of community service each year. Since instituting this program, not only have students become more service orientated, but parents/families have as well. Students have collected coats and backpacks for needy children, sent letters of encouragement to service men and women, collected non-perishable food items and funds and served at a local food bank, cleaned used soap to be recycled for third world countries, collected change to replace a stolen bike for a custodian and volunteered in our Lower School. Individual students have taken service to heart by hosting birthday parties where donations for specific organizations were requested instead of personal gifts.

Service has branched out beyond the community. Annually, students are involved in preparing boxes for children of Haiti. Becoming more aware of the needs in Haiti, especially after some witnessing firsthand

the devastation of Haiti's earthquake, boxes are completed by both students themselves or by the collective work of the grade level classes. This past year Middle School collected 1,800 boxes. Our school also sponsored a family mission trip to the Dominican Republic where families worked with an orphanage and built a home for a needy family.

TFA's desire to develop students into informed, responsible citizens who have a passion of reaching beyond themselves in service to others has been documented by educational professionals and internal surveys. The Faculty Culture Profile results revealed 92% agreed with the statement: "It is demonstrated by teachers in my division/school that integrating a Biblical Worldview into the curriculum is essential for students and reflects the faculty's core beliefs."

5. Instructional Methods:

The Middle School faculty was formally commended for "using developmentally appropriate teaching practices to engage the early adolescent learner. As well as having enthusiastic teachers who employ a variety of methods"(FCIS, SAIS, SACS Accreditation Report 2012).

TFA recognizes that our MS students differ in learning style, interest and readiness. As a result, we endeavor to meet our students where they are and foster continual growth. Our teachers promote educational excellence and lifelong learning for our students with engaging instruction that emphasizes rigorous standards and technology use.

Each grade has grade level and advanced sections, receiving high school credit, in various curriculum areas. Recognizing that MS students mature and thus learn at various rates, we believe that these groups cannot remain static. Ongoing assessment of student readiness and growth are administered to collect data, monitor progress, and place students at appropriate learning levels throughout the year.

Hands-on and cooperative opportunities are an integral part of the learning experience. Document cameras, smart boards, desktops, laptops, iPads, iPods and LCD projectors are used to enhance lessons and appeal to as many of the multiple intelligences as possible. Auditory instruction includes directed teaching, demonstrations and student presentations. It is not unusual to find History students up to their elbows in mustard, marshmallows, toothpaste and spinach and see cooperative groups building a pyramid or The Great Wall of China through which the visual and kinesthetic needs of the MS learner are met. A student survey revealed that ninety-four percent of students felt that teachers presented information in a way that could be easily grasped and communicated ideas well, using examples to further explain an understanding of the concept or task most/some of the time. Eighty-three percent of students reported that teachers incorporated projects and group activities into class most/some of the time. Kagan concepts are an integral part of teaching at The First Academy. Teachers have received various Kagan training opportunities affording them an understanding of cooperative teaching and learning methods which are used in the classroom.

Though every teacher differentiates instruction to meet the varied needs of students, students with diagnostic reports are supported through TFA's Learning- Intentionally Enhanced program. Learning-ie staff, teachers, and parents meet to review areas of strengths and weaknesses, and to develop an individually-based student academic plan. Learning-ie facilitates the ongoing implementation and monitoring of the plan.

6. Professional Development:

The teachers at TFA are referred to as the Living Curriculum, implying that they are ever growing and maturing in their fields of expertise. TFA provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to expand their knowledge. Continuous professional development strengthens our ability to deliver effective instruction, providing students with an enhanced classroom experience while utilizing diverse instructional methods. FCIS-SAIS-SACS Accreditation Team Report states, "TFA is to be commended for the thorough Three-Year Professional Development Plan. The TFA Administration recognizes the value of professional

development in keeping the teacher current and invigorated. The formal Three-Year Professional Development Plan is a broad plan which faculty recognize as invaluable and supportive to their success as educators.” Ninety-one percent of teachers indicated that they agree it is “determined by teachers in my division/school that site-based, collegial, and career-long personal/professional growth and renewal is of the utmost importance.”

Faculty and administration work together to identify and target the areas for improvement and professional growth as this directly impacts the quality of classroom instruction. Time is allocated for weekly faculty meetings, monthly all-staff meetings, in-services, workshops and team planning.

Calendared teacher workdays include specific professional development opportunities to meet the identified needs. These activities have provided opportunities for Middle School staff to work with teachers in Lower and Upper School. This collaboration has enabled our school to develop a coordinated K4–12 curriculum and a network of learning communities. Strong curriculum coordination between the Middle and Upper School staff is vital as Middle School faculty lays the groundwork for success in Upper School and beyond.

Teachers are expected to stay current with accreditation requirements; they are provided both on-site and off-campus opportunities for professional conferences and workshops to earn credit towards recertification. Additionally, TFA offers a program by which teachers may receive funding towards the completion of graduate degrees. TFA has provided formal educational professional development opportunities including: Advanced Placement(TM) Summer Institute; Independent School Management (ISM) workshops and conferences; Kagan Cooperative Learning Summer Institutes, Winter Institute, School-based training; National Association of Mathematics; National Art Association; Thinking Maps(c): A Language for Learning, Write for the Future, Write from the Beginning; Love & Logic(c); Rosetta Stone(TM); and Renaissance Learning ©. Additional areas targeted include: Biblical Worldview Integration (BWI), technology integration, customer service, brain research, and the social and emotional needs of adolescents. Learning from others is highlighted through TFA’s facilitation of peer observations and school visits. New Teacher Roundtables have been established during which new teachers to TFA have opportunity to meet with others providing additional and enhanced support.

7. School Leadership:

Governance at The First Academy is directed by the Head of School in collaboration with the School Board funding the mission and securing the legacy of TFA. The Head of School oversees the school’s function and future plan while serving as an associate pastor at First Baptist Church, Orlando. The Head of School is lead administrator for the Leadership Team which consists of the Academic and Management Team which leads each division. The collaborative teams actively build relationships, encourage effective communication, provide wisdom to other administrators, focus on mission implementation, provide inspiration in goal setting and maintain focus on the vision/strategic plan. This is evidenced through the development of the strategic plan and the subsequent action plans targeting annual goals and objectives designed to enhance instructional effectiveness and academic success.

The Lower, Middle, and Upper School divisions are led by the divisional principal, who guides, models, and encourages the faculty and students to further develop their Biblical Worldview, spiritual walk, intellectual skills and outward Christ-centered service. Accountability and quality-control is an integral responsibility of the principal. Monthly planners are used to ensure the timely completion of the outlined details and provide appropriate accountability in attaining the desired outcomes.

The Middle School embraces a collaborative model which facilitates and distributes leadership opportunities and responsibilities throughout the divisional faculty and staff, utilizing the Administrative Team which consists of grade level team leaders and curriculum department chairs, resulting in both vertical and horizontal team collaboration. Faculty Culture Profile results reflect 89% of faculty/staff agree, “In my division/school administration give active support to, and establishes an active engagement with, all division/school faculty.” The team implements school policies and ensures academic excellence and spiritual formation are taking place in classrooms and decision making. The team reviews programs

and policies, addresses student and parent issues/concerns, and works to strengthen student academics and school/home relationships. Grade level team meetings facilitate and maintain a targeted effort directed at student academic progress through curriculum standards and benchmarks evaluation, student interventions, parent communication, and lesson design evaluation and planning.

Effective instructional supervision is key to improving student achievement and promoting student success. A combination of weekly classroom observations, Management By Walking Around (MBWA), and more formal observations: self-evaluation, peer-observations, and principal observations, provide a more authentic evaluation of instructional design and effectiveness. The MBWA is documented with the implementation of iPads and provides each faculty member with immediate feedback on key instructional quality indicators on a weekly basis.

PART VI - PRIVATE SCHOOL ADDENDUM

1. Private school association: Other Christian

2. Does the school have nonprofit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3) status? Yes

3. What are the 2012-2013 tuition rates, by grade? (Do not include room, board, or fees.)

K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>
6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$11640</u>	<u>\$11640</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$</u>
12th	Other				
<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>				

4. What is the educational cost per student? (School budget divided by enrollment) \$11440

5. What is the average financial aid per student? \$5660

6. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction?
18%

7. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction? 33%

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

NATIONAL NORMS-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 7

Test: TerraNova*(See Notes)

Edition/Publication Year: 3rd Edition Publisher: CTB/McGraw Hill Scores reported as: Percentiles

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Average Score	85	90	88	87	89
Number of students tested	81	92	97	101	83
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					
* NOTE - Scores listed for Year 1 are result of TerraNova Testing Scores listed for Years 2 - 5 are results of SAT10 Testing					

13PV107

NATIONAL NORMS-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 7

Test: TerraNova*(See Notes)

Edition/Publication Year: 3rd Edition Publisher: CTB/McGraw Hill Scores reported as: Percentiles

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Average Score	80	81	81	80	81
Number of students tested	79	93	98	102	84
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					
* NOTE - Scores listed for Year 1 are result of TerraNova Testing Scores listed for Years 2 - 5 are results of SAT10 Testing					

13PV107

NATIONAL NORMS-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 8

Test: TerraNova*(See Notes)

Edition/Publication Year: 3rd Edition Publisher: CTB/McGraw Hill Scores reported as: Percentiles

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Average Score	80	89	89	90	88
Number of students tested	91	105	103	84	72
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					
* NOTE - Scores listed for Year 1 are result of TerraNova Testing Scores listed for Years 2 - 5 are results of SAT10 Testing					

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NATIONAL NORMS-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 8

Test: TerraNova*(See Notes)

Edition/Publication Year: 3rd Edition Publisher: CTB/McGraw Hill Scores reported as: Percentiles

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Average Score	79	82	82	81	76
Number of students tested	93	105	106	84	78
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					
* NOTE - Scores listed for Year 1 are result of TerraNova Testing Scores listed for Years 2 - 5 are results of SAT10 Testing					

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