

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Charvez Russell

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

Official School Name Friendship Academy of the Arts

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2600 East 38th Street

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

City Minneapolis State MN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 55406-3022

County Hennepin County

Telephone (612) 879-6703 Fax (612) 879-6707

Web site/URL http://www.friendshipacademy.org E-mail school@friendshipacademy.org

Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/friendshipacademyofthe

Twitter Handle arts/

Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____

Other Social Media Link _____

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. B. Charvez Russell E-mail brussell@friendshipacademy.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Friendship Academy of the Arts Tel. (612) 879-6703

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 Ms. Wendy Hines

(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 1 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	11	10	21
1	11	17	28
2	10	9	19
3	16	13	29
4	12	13	25
5	9	10	19
6	9	6	15
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	78	78	156

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 95 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 2 % White
 - 0 % 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: 28%

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	24
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	37
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	132
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.280
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	28

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 93 %
Total number students who qualify: 142

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
20 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.

- 2 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 2 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 3 Other Health Impaired
- 5 Specific Learning Disability
- 3 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 1 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	1
Classroom teachers	9
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals	4
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 19:1

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%	93%	94%	95%	94%
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.

To educate children to be confident, creative and competent citizens.

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

Friendship Academy of the Arts policy is open enrollment to all students in the appropriate grades of kindergarten through sixth grade. We do not limit admission to pupil on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, or athletic ability. Friendship Academy of the Arts enrolls an eligible pupil who submits a timely application, unless the number exceeds the capacity of the program, class, or grade level. In such cases, selection shall be by lot. A student continuing for the next year will be re-enrolled for the next year with out re-application. Sibling of an already enrolled student will be given priority in admission over students in the lottery pool.

PART III – SUMMARY

Friendship Academy of the Arts Charter School (FAA) is a K-6 program located in South Minneapolis. FAA opened its doors in August of 2001 as a K-4 school with 37 students and ended the year with 57 total students enrolled with the focus to expose children in an urban setting to the arts. The original location was Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis where that was home for the first four years. As the FAA grew to K-6 it had to be relocated to the Sabathani Community Center where that was the location for the next 3 1/2 years. The program continued to grow so FAA had to relocate to its current location in South Minneapolis. Currently, 151 students are enrolled in grades K-6 and the school is in the exploration phase of expansion to serve more students. Our student population is from North and South Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, and St. Paul. Our student body composition is 95% African American, 1% Native American, 1% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 2% White. Within this population, 93% qualified for free or reduced lunch and 13% qualified for Special Education services. The student teacher ratio is 19:1. FAA maintains high student enrollment and re-enrollment, interest, and demand. Continuous Enrollment throughout the year has increased each of our years of service. Enrollment over past (4) years has increased from 100 students to 151 students. 80% of FAA's students applied for re-admission during the 2014-2015 school year. As parents spread the news about their satisfaction with FAA's educational program, re-enrollment of students who previously left the school has increased.

Friendship Academy of the Arts is a positive, supportive and affirming environment committed to a philosophy of excellence. FAA provides a high quality academic experience through the infusion of arts into our culture, curriculum and culturally responsive teaching techniques and materials. Friendship Academy of the Arts consistently earns the highest honor for academic achievement by the Minnesota Department of Education. In 2012, 2014, and 2015, FAA was recognized as a REWARD School by the Minnesota Department of Education performing in the top 15% of all Title I schools in the State of Minnesota based on Multiple Measurement Rating. In 2013, FAA was recognized as a CELEBRATION School, and for four consecutive years, FAA was selected a Beating the Odds School by Star Tribune Newspaper and Charter School Partners.

Effective use of data to influence instructional decisions is a core strategy for positive change and student achievement. To maximize instructional effectiveness, the staff uses a variety of data to guide its instructional effectiveness, and instructional decision-making. The sources used to generate data include formative and/or summative assessments at the state, and local levels. The academic program continues to experience strong growth. We are data driven and with strategic use of Title Funds, provide targeted technical assistance to teachers and students. Use of NWEA Map has provided data-driven information for more rapid attention to student needs. The school wide curriculum is aligned with MN state standards to ensure our scholars meet the criteria set by the Minnesota Department of Education.

Emotionally FAA utilizes Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) to positively impact school-wide and individualized behavior planning. These strategies are reinforced by school leadership to ensure consistency and support the collective use of best practices by individuals within the organization. We utilize these preventative strategies to help develop our scholars' social skills with small and whole group discussions on various topics. Culturally, we expose our scholars to various contributions of African Americans through arts integration and our annual Wax Museum where they portray local and national characters past and present that have made significant contributions to our community.

FAA has always managed its resources well. Historically, financials demonstrate strong fund balances and relatively small amounts of debt. FAA has reorganized its board in accordance with state guidelines. Its active and engaged seven member board comes from across educational and business disciplines and all have completed state mandated training.

Parents and community are also welcomed and involved at FAA providing volunteers and other resources. FAA has a very active parent involvement committee and encourages parents to be involved in its continuous improvement efforts. Online tools that communicate academic and social progress have been adopted in an effort to strengthen school, teacher, and parent relationships. FAA also continuously seeks

collaboration with partner organizations in various areas to improve the level of instruction and expose enrichment activities that further their educational experience.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

FAA students engage in four core subjects – English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—as well as in enrichment courses in technology, visual and performing arts, Spanish, and physical education.

Our instructional approach is based on the understanding that all students are individuals who come to us at different academic levels and with a variety of skills, talents and needs. We differentiate instruction and do “whatever it takes” to support student learning, for students across the educational spectrum, from those who are struggling to accelerated learners who are ready to go farther and dig deeper into subject matter and skill development. Using the workshop model in English language arts and math, teachers employ a structure that allows for small, flexible grouping and the targeting of instruction on the specific skills and concepts that need to be reinforced.

English Language Arts- Following the Common Core State Standards, we provide a balanced literacy program with high quality literature and informational text to instill a love of reading along with instruction in phonics, grammar, and effective writing. Using Lucy Calkins’ Units of Study, teachers are able to challenge and support students at every instructional level using a variety of evidence-based instructional strategies.

Reading Workshop- For reading workshop, teachers use assessment data to determine each student’s instructional level. Teachers then develop guided reading groups to teach students at their own level. Since those at the same reading level may still vary in their mastery of specific reading skills, teachers also organize “strategy groups” to target students needing extra instruction and practice with specific skills.

Teachers are able to carefully monitor the progress of every student and target identified individual students or groups for extra support. **Writing Workshop-** Writing instruction combines mini-lessons focused on standards-aligned goals (for example: using evidence to support an argument followed by guided practice and extended time for independent writing.) Teachers help students analyze and revise their writing, using a rubric that focuses on criteria fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards and FAA’s unpacked “benchmarks.” At each grade level, students develop deeper mastery of argument, informational, and narrative writing.

Mathematics- Math instruction is aimed at students demonstrating mastery of the Minnesota State Standards. It is taught in kindergarten to 5th grade with the University of Chicago's Everyday Mathematics program and in the middle school grades through the Connected Math Project developed at Michigan State University. Both programs are closely aligned to the Minnesota Standards and support students in developing fluency and automaticity with basic facts and computation, while deepening conceptual knowledge and problem solving skills. Math instruction, like literacy, includes explicit teaching, followed by both guided and independent practice designed to build student mastery. Following a workshop model similar to that used in language arts, FAA teachers build students' skill and knowledge by tailoring instruction to meet individual and small group needs. Our 90-minute math block is made up of three core components: whole-group lessons, leveled small groups/stations, and independent work.

Science- Our science curriculum has three major goals: for students to (1) participate in and understand the scientific process, which includes developing questions and hypotheses, collecting data, and reporting findings orally and in writing; (2) to acquire a base of knowledge in physical, biological, and earth sciences; and (3) to further develop literacy skills through close reading of primary source documents and informational text. Our existing curriculum meets Minnesota State Standards. For many years we have focused on in-depth scientific exploration through hands on-projects, complex problem-solving and the incorporation of literacy skills.

Social Studies- Our Social Studies curriculum builds the skills and general knowledge addressed in the

Minnesota grade-level benchmarks while also strengthening Common Core information text skills through the close reading of primary source documents and non-fiction. We integrate five major Social Studies themes—Politics/Government, Economics, History, Geography, Identity and Culture—into our three units of study:

Canon of Knowledge— common grade-level study topics ensuring that our students are equipped with general knowledge about our society and history, and are explicitly examining topics addressed in the state standards.

Country Studies— each class chooses a country to study and examines it through the lens of two or three of the five Social Studies themes mentioned above.

African American and Hispanic American History and Diaspora—students examine the life of an individual in context of major social studies themes, which builds their understanding of the biography genre and experience with longer works of non-fiction.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Friendship Academy of the Arts (FAA) has a mission of educating students to be confident, creative and competent citizens. One important emphasis, which is essential to student learning, is the integration of visual and performing arts throughout the academics. Students have varied learning styles and instructional delivery systems must be adjusted to meet their individual and collective needs. We have evidenced that when we help our students to tap into their creative nature, we empower them to find meaning and understanding through the arts which include dance, music, theater, literature media and visual, as stated in our school vision statement.

This school year we have added an Arts Integration Coordinator to oversee the integration of the arts. Teachers are able to work with the coordinator to share curriculum and plan arts activities that will engage learners in creative expression while working in math, language arts, social studies and science. In addition, our school schedule is intentionally designed to include a one-hour period each afternoon for specific enrichment classes. Students are exposed to various art forms giving them the opportunity to discover their talents and interest as it relates to activities indirectly related to academic content. Although, these activities focus more on the students' artistic strengths, our enrichment teachers incorporate academic content to show students the relationship to fulfill our mission of arts integration into instruction.

Currently we offer the following activities: Theater, African Drumming, Drum & Drill, Scholars Working to Ascend a Generation (SWAG) (a positive social and self-awareness program with varied projects), STEAM, Spanish, Finance, Givens Foundation (language arts emphasis), McPhail Music, Choir and Dance, through Hollywood Dance of Minneapolis, with Ms. Diane Robinson as instructor. Some of these activities are student-choice, while some involve rotating classrooms to provide as much exposure to the entire school population as possible. To display the visual work of students, we presented a day called 'Reveal', where we invited families and the community to come and see the work students created. Many displays included a brief explanation of the connection with math, social studies, reading, science and/or language arts. We received a lot of positive feedback and many attendees expressed their pleasure with the high quality of student work. Our school was one of Minnesota's 1st participants in "Dancing Classrooms" for our 5th graders. This program is connected through "Heart of the Beast Theater," and is held throughout the United States. We held another special day where we presented a program that highlighted the Theater, Drum, Choir and Dance our students experienced in enrichment. Our thinking is to provide our students with enough exposure so they are enabled to make educated choices about involvement.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

In our experience, we have found that new students enter our network with a wide range of abilities, academic strengths, and challenges. On average, these students have ranked in the 37th percentile according to NWEA's MAP assessment. While a majority of our students fall into this category, a significant percent are at or above grade level. The key to meeting the needs of our students, regardless of their academic level,

has been our use of a variety of ongoing assessments to monitor their academic growth and to inform classroom instruction.

Through intense training, mentoring and coaching our teachers strive to meet the needs of our specific student population and address the individual academic and social-emotional needs of all students. We are a data driven school and all stakeholders are trained to use data to meet the academic needs of our students.

We recognize that the “whatever it takes” mindset we employ with our struggling students is an appropriate approach for all students. Our small group differentiated instruction for accelerated learners seeks to go farther and dig deeper in all subject matters. Furthermore, our academic intervention approach allows us to work with accelerated students in advanced math and reading groups both inside the classroom and in pull-out groups.

It is our belief that a child is better served in an inclusion program rather than a pullout program. For those students found to require an IEP, we first consider providing accommodations in the general classroom. Accordingly, special education intervention is provided one-on-one within the classroom so a student does not lose the benefit of the classroom experience or the instruction of their peers. When we do have some students for whom inclusion does not provide enough support, those students will receive additional time in our self-contained/resource room with the learning resources teacher, and every effort will be made to provide those additional services at a time when the student will not miss an academic lesson in the primary classroom. In some cases, curriculum may be modified insofar as volume of work or the method for demonstrating proficiency is concerned.

Through Child Find, the process through which all children (up to age 21) who may be in need of special education services are identified, located and evaluated, FAA provides screenings, assessments (in and out of the classroom), observations and the collection of data that help to supply the information necessary in providing support for students who are not making academic progress.

FAA strives to place students requiring IEPs in the least restrictive environment. Their individual growth is continually monitored to ensure that they are on-track to meet their individual yearly goals. Weekly IEP team meetings at each campus review the plans for students who are not making adequate progress. Internal audits allow us to verify that all students are receiving appropriate services for the duration specified in their IEPs. District special education audits hold us accountable as well.

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

Innovative practices, quarterly evaluations for all teachers on the usage of the SIOP model, Thinking Maps, and special education push-in and pull-out models are utilized. We analyze data to drive instructional decisions, and all teachers have professional growth plans which include SMART goals. Rigorous course work provided over a longer school day allows for our students to have the necessary time to master grade level benchmarks. Also, FAA utilizes Dibels and NWEA testing to measure benchmark scores and to predict the trajectory of performance that we expect from our students on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments.

Assessing and evaluating each student's progress toward meeting state and local academic goals includes FAA staff evaluating student progress toward college and career readiness standards by adhering to state and national standards and assessments for individual students including those in sub-group categories. Data from student assessments is reviewed every six weeks by staff members to monitor student progress, and to measure instructional effectiveness.

A process for identifying strengths and weaknesses of instruction that supports student progress toward career and college readiness includes ongoing data digs through PLCs are conducted weekly with formal analysis every four weeks. This information is used to measure instructional strategy effectiveness, guide instructional efforts, orient professional development initiatives, and evaluate programs. Also, data from weekly child find and Response to Intervention (RtI) help to determine student program placement. Annually, FAA prepares a report to the community at large. This report identifies the academic performance

of the school, outlines the financial performance of the school and the school's performance on non-academic goals.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

One of the central focuses of the leadership team at FAA is to create a climate and culture that is conducive to nurturing genius. To accomplish this FAA seeks to create space for genius, focus on individual passion, difference, and competence, and see possibility to build confidence. To create this type of culture FAA's leadership works to keep a sustained positive environment where teachers and support staff understands the function and importance of their roles along with providing the resources, tools, and support needed to maximize their performance. An example of the tools is the Innocent Child training, helping staff not only see the innocence in our scholars, but the innocence each other. This improved perception coupled with utilizing the strategies of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) has helped remove barriers that prevent teachers from teaching and students from learning. Intervention strategies such as these not only help remove barriers but address social and emotional needs which are essential to our scholars overall growth and development.

To show appreciation, FAA has events and recognition focused on specific groups where students, employees, and families feel valued and appreciated. FAA keeps students motivated by integrating the arts in instruction with art experiences. FAA provides an environment permeated with the arts by which children learn about: their arts heritage, the importance of the arts in the structure of all cultures, and the skills and attitudes to build lifelong meaning through music, dance, theater and visual art. Teachers and the Arts Enrichment Coordinator plan ways to employ the arts in core subjects: reading, math, science, social studies, physical education and health. An exciting interactive way to meet those who have shaped our past and those currently shaping our future are present at FAA's Annual Wax Museum. This is the biggest event of the year where students research historical figures, write an essay on their assigned individual, convert it into a presentation, dress according to their character, and present it to parents and other community members. This event, which has been reported by local newspapers, is a wonderful way to experience history coming to life and an excellent way for the school and community to come together. Every student and family of FAA is engaged in this fun educational experience. Our scholars engage in various enrichment activities that expose them to art forms that increase their cultural competence. At the end of each trimester there are performances where they showcase what they have learned to family and community members. FAA has many performances in their repertoire and they are always finding new ways to create and wow the audience.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

One of FAA's core beliefs is "Family involvement is critical to learning." One of the challenges we face with this goal is parent availability, accessibility where often times parents' work schedules and additional responsibilities inhibits them from being more involved. FAA continuously works to overcome these barriers because we have seen the success of students when parents and community are more involved. At FAA we are focused on educating parents on various topics and improving our home to school communication using technology. To improve our family engagement we ensure our Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) meetings are consistently held each month with an established agenda and purpose. Each meeting involves an educational theme including healthy eating, Zumba, financial literacy, homework help using technology, and other topics that enhance the lives of our families along with planning special events. To improve parent communication we updated our database to include e-mails to establish school communication, implemented an online grade book platform where parents can check their student's grade real time, as well as a behavioral management app where parents can see how their child is performing behaviorally from any device throughout the day. All of these platforms give parents an opportunity to communicate with the school or the teacher at any given time. As a result we have seen an improvement in the number of parents that have participated in parent involvement meetings by 20%, a 40% increase in parent teacher conference attendance from the Fall to Winter of 2015-2016, and an increase from 2 parents to 20 who were involved in the 2015 African American parent Involvement Day.

Our community presence has also increased based on increased support we have received in the 2015-16

school year by local non-profits, businesses, and other educational institutions. FAA has increased its focus on brand awareness along with building and fostering relationships with key stakeholders. The board of directors set the direction to staff to increase presence in the community to create opportunity to tell our story and share best practices with other organizations seeking to improve. As a result, FAA has become more visible in the community and is recognized as one of the highest quality educational institutions in the state of Minnesota. The partnerships created have led to exposing a variety of resources available to our scholars helping them to discover more about themselves. This type of community presence helps in changing the narrative to show that children of color in urban settings can learn on high levels regardless of their socioeconomic status.

3. Professional Development:

FAA maintains high expectations of our scholars and we recognize the value of differentiation in instruction to ensure each student the opportunity to achieve excellence. We employ several instructional strategies gained from the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA), in addition to SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), and the Thinking Maps designed by educator David Hyerle. We are focused on cognitive development, and recognize the importance of making instruction more meaningful by using brain-based research to help us teach the way the brain likes to learn.

Many factors affect language learning for ALL students, and we talk about these factors and how they may be addressed for optimum student success. SIOP is good teaching with the purpose teaching of the language necessary for ALL students to understand content. The components of the model are: preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice, lesson delivery, and assessment. This model which was developed for English Language Learners is helpful for all students as a majority of them struggle with Academic English. Our Academic Director has prepared handouts and leads this particular staff development focus throughout the school year.

The Thinking Maps are used throughout the building to promote the development of critical thinking on the part of each learner. These maps are used by classroom teachers and educational assistants to help students as a visual tool for learning and retention of information. The Arts Enrichment Coordinator, who has worked as a Mentor for the NUA (National Urban Alliance for Effective Education), along with the Academic Director, are certified Thinking Maps Trainers providing the type of ongoing Professional Development needed to maximize our students' potential. While training the cognitive strategies incorporated in the Thinking Maps, connections are made to SIOP strategies as well as State Standards and curriculum content. Reading and math strategies developed by the NUA are also used to help teachers have options for differentiating learning for students.

Job-embedded staff development is provided throughout the school year to support classrooms in implementation of SIOP and the Thinking Maps. Teacher leaders present SIOP lessons to each other and are able to discuss implementation and support each other with the instruction. Educational Assistants have a weekly training where they share in presenting the maps they are using and have discussion around how to incorporate them with students. There is also additional training provided with other NUA learning strategies and how they may be incorporated with Thinking Maps. More intensive training is provided by the Academic Director during our summer workshop weeks. All training is aligned with State Standards and employs strategies which may be used across all curriculum content areas.

In addition to the curriculum, we have brought in Mental Health Professionals during the summer workshop weeks to present information to staff. They assist teachers in identifying the differences between students who have difficulty with behavior, and also explore indicators that may be signs of deeper mental health concerns. Staff has opportunity to have Q & A so they are able to understand and support their students in a holistic manner.

This year we also received Innocent Classroom Training, which was held from October through February. This was an excellent training which helped staff consider the innocence the children bring to the classroom. We debunked the negative stereotypes and seek to see the 'good' in each adult and child in the

building. This brings us closer together as a school family and helps us build healthy relationships which have long range benefits.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy of the FAA leadership is to create the environment to nurture genius in everyone that is associated with the organization. Board members, administration, teachers, and support staff engage in continuous developmental activities where learning is happening on every level. This philosophy is in line with the transformational leadership style, creating a vision to guide ongoing improvements through inspiration, helping stakeholders in the organization understand their genius by enhancing motivation, morale, and job performance. A leadership style such as this encourages students, staff, administration and board members strive to do more than they believe they are capable. To accomplish this FAA's leadership seeks to create space for genius, focus on individual passion, difference, and competence, and see possibility to build confidence.

The board of directors is comprised of seven members focused on the governance and structure of FAA. The Executive Director leads the day-to-day operations and reports directly to the board chair. The Academic Director is responsible for the ongoing, job embedded professional development and guiding instructional decisions based on data. The Special Education Coordinator is responsible for providing the service to FAA's special education scholars including the associated administrative duties. This position works with the district Special Education Director to ensure all administrative tasks are complete and FAA is compliant with all the rules and regulations associated with special education. The Arts Enrichment Coordinator is responsible for supporting teachers in integrating the arts into their instruction and coordinating FAA's enrichment activities that expose scholars to various culturally competent art forms. Among teachers there is a Mentor teacher, the most senior, who supports the implementation of classroom behavioral and academic strategies along with other areas of their professional development. The Lead teacher logistically supports the team by taking notes from staff meetings, leading weekly strategy discussions, providing feedback and guidance, and assigning responsibilities to various events and initiatives. There are nine support staff who are assigned to a teacher for additional in classroom support giving FAA the ability to facilitate individualized instruction through the facilitation of small groups. All of the positions within the building report to the Executive Director who reports to the board chair. Weekly meetings are held with each work group to reinforce policies, gather feedback from staff, and provide continuous development in academic and behavioral strategies. This structure builds internal leadership and empowers staff at different levels to make decisions that are in the best interest of scholars and in line with organizational policies.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

FAA’s educational program is guided by five core values, listed below, that define and shape the culture of all our schools.

One: Culture of Respect

FAA’s culture of respect is expected between and among staff, parents, students and the communities that FAA serves. Respect is reflected in FAA’s open door policy, a guiding principle in effect at FAA. Administration and instructors are always available to talk to parents and guardians. We believe it is the right, privilege and responsibility of each individual to contribute to and work in an environment of trust and cooperation.

Two: High Expectations

FAA believes that the use of data helps instructors and school leaders develop targeted instructional strategies for excellence. FAA uses school-wide instructional monitoring to ensure that academic expectations are being met consistently throughout the year. Since FAA provides numerous resources to instructors, instructors are held accountable for student performance.

Three: Safe and Nurturing Environment

FAA is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for our scholars to learn. As soon as a child walks through the door, FAA promotes a sense of well-being and warmth. A goal at FAA is to provide a safe haven for children. We aim to provide a place where learning takes place and students gain a sense of acceptance and pride.

Four: Focus on the Whole Child

In order to prepare students to be successful, we believe that we must also expose children to art, culture, physical fitness and a broader education that encompasses more than core academic subjects. FAA has partnered and collaborated with many organizations both formally and informally to offer the students that we serve a broad range of activities.

Additionally, under the leadership of our Director of Student Support Services, FAA employs a team of highly-qualified individuals that specifically support the social and emotional needs of our students.

FAA aims to provide an optimal learning environment for all students and remains committed to focusing on the positive development of our scholars.

Five: Family Involvement

FAA fundamentally understands the importance of partnering with families to fully develop the potential of each scholar. We believe it takes a community – family members, educators, role models and other children – to create and sustain a supportive, productive and engaging learning environment.

These core values, along with adherence to evidence-based practices, including small classroom size, low student-to-teacher ratio and differentiated instruction, are foundational frameworks that are established at an organizational level and promoted throughout the school.

Scholars experience FAA’s core values through their day-to-day experience in the school, as well as through explicit teaching. When they enter school each day, they are greeted warmly by staff members and proceed to classrooms where they are welcomed further by teachers and peers as they participate in “morning meeting.” They wear uniforms to support our safe, orderly environment and to highlight their professional responsibility as scholars. They enter homerooms named after college campuses and engage in discussion about college from their first day of kindergarten through sixth grade graduation and beyond. This takes the form of teachers and other staff engaging students in an ongoing dialogue about college and how our rigorous curriculum will prepare them for middle school and college success.

As part of our focus on the whole child, in addition to our extensive focus on social-emotional support based

on individual student needs, all FAA students participate in a social curriculum that focuses on teaching our scholars to be cooperative, assertive and responsible, to show empathy and to demonstrate self-discipline. This takes place, for example, during “morning meeting,” and is reinforced throughout the school day. In addition, our school hosts Community Meetings each Friday in order to bring the entire school community together and reinforce our school values. This is also an opportunity to celebrate those scholars who meet and exceed our high expectations.