

U.S. Department of Education
2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Myra V. Varmall

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

Official School Name Forest Heights Academy Of Excellence

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 7447 Sumrall Drive

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

City Baton Rouge State LA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 70812-1240

County East Baton Rouge Parish

Telephone (225) 355-5681 Fax (225) 357-0646

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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*Mr. Warren Drake E-mail WarrenDrake@ebschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name East Baton Rouge Parish School District Tel. (225) 922-5400

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Evelyn Ware-Jackson
(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. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. 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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
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 has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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 (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
 - 63 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 14 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

77 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

- 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
- Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	28	29	57
K	18	31	49
1	20	29	49
2	34	38	72
3	38	30	68
4	28	42	70
5	38	29	67
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	204	228	432

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 99 % Black or African American
 - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 0 % White
 - 1 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 3%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	430
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.035
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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):

N/A

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 72 %
Total number students who qualify: 347

8. Students receiving special education services: 0 %
25 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 11
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 including those teaching high school specialty subjects	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 23:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
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 2016.

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 X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2008

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

Our mission is to provide a challenging and enriching education partnered with an artistic program that encourages all students to become positive, productive leaders.

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

The student selection process for magnet schools strives to provide a balanced opportunity for all applicants to be selected. Forest Heights Academy of Excellence (FHAE) adheres to the East Baton Rouge Parish System's Office Magnet Program guidelines. One online application period is conducted annually from October to December. Once completed, all qualified applicants choosing FHAE as their first school of choice will be entered a lottery pool which is not a first come, first serve process. Because ethnicity is not used as a determining factor, the district will use the Lottery Diversity Factor (LDFs) or race neutral factors that will help promote a more diverse population for our school.

PART III – SUMMARY

Serving the North Baton Rouge community since its creation in 2004, Forest Heights Academy of Excellence provides predominately low income students with high quality, innovative instruction. Granting preferential admission to qualified students living within two miles of the campus, FHAE remains primarily a neighborhood school. A district-wide lottery determines remaining qualified applicant admissions, ensuring diversity and equal access to all interested families. Recognized as a High Performance – High Poverty school for four consecutive years, FHAE is succeeding its mission to provide opportunity, resources, and high level instruction to an underserved area of the community. The goal of our faculty and staff is to prepare students to perform at their highest potential in a complex and ever changing society. Our staff participates in professional development through weekly grade level meetings, on-site staff development, and attendance at state & national conferences. As a dedicated academic magnet school with the infusion of visual and performing arts serving pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, Forest Heights Academy of Excellence offers a student-centered curriculum in an atmosphere where each child develops academically, physically, socially and emotionally. The school emphasizes a strong core curriculum with the opportunity for development of individual needs and talents using various teaching styles and strategies. Our relevant and rigorous curriculum engages all students and inspires them to become problem solvers and critical thinkers, which translates into lifelong assets.

Our arts program is an integral part of the Forest Heights Academy of Excellence curriculum. This program includes art, dance, drama, and instrumental and vocal music. Implementing the programs with fidelity has facilitated FHAE in earning and maintaining the highest level of success as measured by the Louisiana State Department of Education. Arts integration, embedded into the core curriculum instruction, provides students with hands-on learning experiences using various learning styles to help meet differentiated instructional goals. With lessons developed and taught in collaboration by grade level and arts faculty, instruction is planned so concepts are echoed in subjects across both core and arts curricula. Administration facilitates weekly faculty collaboration, which allows coordination of daily instruction for each student using specific art forms to meet individual learning needs. Regular performances in the classroom, studio and on the main stage are designed for each grade level to provide interdisciplinary opportunities for students to apply and demonstrate skills as they are learned while involving families and the community.

Named a National School of Distinction in Arts Education for 2011 by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Forest Heights Academy began the school year by celebrating continued excellence in innovative instructional programming. In our second year of the Imagination, Creativity and Innovation (ICI) initiative, our faculty and administration developed arts integrated instructional strategies to serve as a model for teachers across the parish while receiving advanced training from the Louisiana Division of the Arts to further expand our own programming. The History Channel, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, featured Forest Heights Academy of Excellence in a video clip entitled “An Education Masterpiece in Baton Rouge.” This honor was bestowed upon FHAE for serving as a model for arts integration in schools everywhere as well as bringing educators to visit us as they develop similar programming in their areas. As a High Performance-High Poverty School, we are proud of the high standard of core concept and arts instruction provided to each student, developing creative problem solving skills and personal aesthetic that will help everyone successfully navigate into the future. Recognized by both the Baton Rouge Metro Council and the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board for Achievement in Arts Education in 2011, Forest Heights Academy of Excellence is receiving local attention from the media as well, positively impacting the diversification of student applicants from across the parish for the 2012-2013 school year. Also, selected as a 2011 recipient of the George Rodrigue Foundation's Art in Education Award, Forest Heights Academy of Excellence received art supplies for integrated instruction and onsite art instruction with the artist. Our school was honored with visits from former Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco, Former Baton Rouge Mayor Kip Holden, Former Police Chief Jeff LeDuff, and famed NBA basketball star Shaquille O’Neal.

Parents have been an integral part of our success. Volunteers average about 900 hours per year. Parents assist students and teachers in daily instruction, production rehearsals, school activities, fundraising, clerical duties, and other activities.

Since Forest Heights Academy has been recognized by the Louisiana Board of Realtors as a Blue-Ribbon

School, it has achieved a school of Exemplary Academic growth status. With this recognition, the community has been made more aware of the quality of education the school has to offer and interest for enrollment opened up collaboration with community partners.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Forest Heights Academy of Excellence prides itself on implementing a high-quality curriculum that is designed to be engaging and rigorous, while aligning with the Louisiana standards and best practices of teaching. Classroom instruction is anchored on the principle that student-centered learning is a process that promotes the needs of the students. It is here when the impact of effective teaching is most evident, as students are at the center of their learning, they will continue the journey with positive lifelong skills.

The reading/ELA curriculum at FHAE provides students with a balanced literacy approach. A strong foundation of phonics and phonemic awareness is provided at the lower grades. Teachers support student comprehension using a variety of strategies while modeling comprehension through teacher think aloud techniques. Graphic organizers are utilized to help students organize their thoughts and text supports and students are taught how to transfer these details into well-thought out written responses. Teachers in all grade levels utilize literacy centers and workstations, providing students with skill reinforcement and enabling teachers to work more rigorously with small group instruction and guided reading. During guided reading, teachers can support students at the instructional level while strengthening student fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary of a text.

The mathematics curriculum of Forest Heights teaches the Louisiana state standards while implementing the Eureka Math program. Our math instruction follows a logical progression across grade levels. This coherent approach allows teachers to know what incoming students have learned and ensures that students are prepared for what comes next. School-wide implementation of this program with fidelity has dramatically reduced gaps in student learning, instilled persistence in problem solving, and strengthened students' number sense. Teachers tier student mathematical learning by instructing students using a Concrete, Pictorial, and Abstract model. Students begin learning concepts using hands-on manipulative and concrete representations. Once mastered, instruction shifts to visual representations. Finally, students advance to the abstract level using only numbers and symbols. This gradual multi-sensory approach provides students with a structured method of learning math concepts. Teachers train students to develop a mathematical mindset by focusing on the Standards for Mathematical Practice, as described in the Common Core State Standards. These practices rest on important “processes and proficiencies.”

The science classroom at FHAE is rooted deep in scientific inquiry and hands-on experiments. Students explore the “Big Ideas” of science through student-led activities. Children observe, manipulate and measure objects, gather and graph data about events, and discuss and draw conclusions. Teachers strive to debunk misconceptions and encourage scientific exploration in the real world. Expert knowledge is given during field trips to the Louisiana Arts and Science Museum, the Baton Rouge Zoo, and much more. The yearly school science fair is an amazing way for students in grades 3-5 to showcase their scientific thinking.

In social studies, we tap the natural curiosity of children and provide them with in-depth, interactive learning experiences. The students ask questions, make inferences, and connect social studies to their lives. Units explore the themes of history, culture, economics, civics, and geography. Students gather information from a mixture of sources and use that information to learn, reflect, and connect times past with the present. Students in the 3rd grade social studies class hold mock elections using actual district voting machines during a unit about government, the 4th grade class presents a theatrical performance of the Preamble of the Constitution, and the 5th grade class hosts an annual school shopping day while exploring their unit of economics. These engaging practices make the learning of social studies concepts relevant and engaging to the students.

FHAE's high-quality preschool program provides the foundation of our children's success in school. Our curriculum is based on an early learning program designed to ensure success in learners through interactive learning philosophies. This program is aligned to the Louisiana Birth through Five Early Learning Standards and the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment tool. The nine areas of development and content-area of learning are Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Literacy, Cognitive, Mathematics, Science and Technology, and the Arts. Our program is also inclusive of children with special needs and is tailored to

challenge each child to the fullest of his or her own competence with extensive differentiated strategies and hands-on and child-centered activities. Based on records, the majority of our preschool students pass the magnet screening test to qualify entrance into Kindergarten.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Forest Heights Academy of Excellence also provides non-core subjects that greatly enhance our students' learning experience. From our outstanding arts program to our engaging physical education instruction, as well as our interactive library and technology lessons, the students are continuously provided with opportunities to practice and master the skills and concepts related to the core subjects.

Physical education instruction is a key factor that leads students to better academic performance. At FHAE classroom teachers coordinate with the physical education teacher to integrate instruction with the core curriculum of science, math, social studies, and English language arts. Physical education activities allow learners to kinesthetically practice academic concepts learned in class through bodily movements. The PE class also works at providing learners with concentration strategies strengthening their focus during classroom instruction.

Determined to provide students with state-of-the-art learning experiences, our library is equipped with proven educational technology. All students' learning is reinforced with comprehension embedded lessons that target content-driven skills. In grades 3-5, key concepts in science and social studies are reinforced in 45 minute weekly lessons. The librarian collaborates weekly with classroom teachers to develop multimedia lessons with videos and images that increase students' knowledge base.

Integrating technology into the curriculum is a priority in increasing student engagement. Computer lab classes from pre-k to fifth grade offer an extension of venue where students hone in on the concepts learned in the content areas. Utilization of the computer lab provides the teachers with a nontraditional avenue of instruction. Differentiated instruction and assessment implementing educational programs such as Achieve 3000, Accelerated Reader (AR), and Louisiana EAGLE are utilized by teachers daily. In addition to classroom computers, Each K-4 classroom is equipped with 2-5 iPads to assist in daily instruction, classroom workstations, and student interventions. Every student in our 5th grade has a personal Chromebook. These small laptops are used daily in all subject areas providing students with the ability to produce and submit work online, research a variety of topics, and complete classroom, district, and state assessments. This school wide implementation of technology ensures 100% engagement and success among the students through differentiated tasks.

Recognizing that every child is a multifaceted individual with social and emotional needs, FHAE offers guidance classes to grades K-5. The guidance counselor works with the students, faculty, and parents integrating social-emotional learning lessons and assisting to create a school climate conducive for student learning.

Because FHAE is a dedicated visual and performing art magnet, art is integrated into every aspect of instruction. With a certified arts faculty comprised of professional teaching artists leading bi-weekly arts instruction in a state-of-the art studio setting for all students, FHAE focuses on using the arts to complement, supplement, and stimulate classroom instruction. Daily art blocks consist of 2 half hour art lessons, with classes rotating evenly between dance, drama, visual art, and vocal music.

Dance is taught in a fully-equipped dance studio offering intensive instruction in ballet, jazz, tap, lyrical, hip hop and musical theater technique in a spacious new studio as well as modern and creative dance forming the foundation of the choreography set for the performances.

Drama, taught in our Black Box theatre, provides students hands-on training in each of the following: theatre history, play reading, playwriting, elements of play production, set design and blocking, theatrical make-up, stage lighting, sound and vocal technique, critical analysis, and evaluation of the aesthetics.

Visual art is taught in a fully-equipped art studio to all students' PK-5. Our exploratory program encourages

students to create original art, apply creative problem solving skills, and develop a lifelong commitment to art.

Vocal/choral music is a comprehensive approach to music with instrumental and vocal components. Using percussion instruments, recorders, keyboards, and voice, students learn how to listen, analyze, create, perform, and respond to different types of music.

Instrumental music, an elective at FHAE, offers beginner and intermediate instruction in orchestral strings and piano keyboard for students in grades 2-5. Band is offered for students in grades 4-5. Students in the instrumental music program are taught basic musicianship, teamwork, performance techniques, and rehearsal/practice skills in an instrumental music classroom.

At FHAE, we take pride in providing our students with a comprehensive program that supports student achievement while strengthening their social, emotional, and academic growth.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Forest Heights Academy of Excellence seeks to meet the different learning styles and abilities of each student through a variety of instructional methods that provide multiple opportunities for success. Teachers maximize instructional time with bell-to-bell instruction ensuring that students are actively engaged in activities that foster academic and personal achievement.

A hands-on approach to learning creates a classroom environment that encompasses content across the curriculum. Thematic planning is held at the beginning of each grading period. Theme-based, cross-curricular activities are planned and interwoven throughout that grading period. The Louisiana State Standards are used for the purpose of guiding instruction.

Differentiation is integral to the functioning of FHAE. Teachers differentiate assignments based on academic levels of rigor and learning styles. Teachers bring samples of differentiated assignments to weekly grade level meetings illustrating how they are meeting the needs of ALL students.

Students' core subjects are supplemented with the integration of the arts, technology, content learning centers and physical education. This integration reinforces content within the general education classroom while providing students with an alternative method of learning core content. Through weekly collaboration meetings, art teachers and classroom teachers build a curriculum to enhance student learning and to reach multiple learning styles.

Teachers at FHAE strive to provide students with educational strategies tailored to the needs of the individual student. Small group instruction is provided within the core subjects to target specific students and ensure skill mastery. These flexible groupings are based on data from formative assessments and change regularly to meet the needs of the students.

Student achievement has improved through the use and analysis of multiple indicators. Teachers at FHAE utilize a variety of assessment strategies to gather data to drive their instruction. Formative assessments in the classroom inform teachers and students about student understanding at a point when academic adjustments can be made. These adjustments help to ensure students achieve targeted standards-based learning objectives. Examples of formative assessments found in the FHAE classrooms include, exit tickets, differentiated assignments, rubrics, computer based learning programs (Achieve3000, Accelerated Reader, Eagle, etc.) student projects, constructed responses, peer assessments, teacher observations, self-assessments, and bi-weekly written common assessments.

Summative assessments are also analyzed by teachers to drive their instruction. Teachers view student performance from the previous year's high-stakes test to make SMART (Specific, Manageable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely) goals for each student and to identify students who may need additional support and intervention. They also analyze other measures of summative assessments, such as district benchmark exams and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). Teachers are able to gather a

comprehensive understanding of each student's performance through the use of multiple indicators.

FHAE has maintained narrowed gaps between the highest and lowest performing students and developed processes for reviewing individual student data to ensure that all students are progressing. Teachers at FHAE monitor student performance through weekly data meetings and analysis of formative assessments. While analyzing data, teachers identify students who may need additional support and strategize methods to help them to achieve success. Strategies may include additional small group instruction, pull-outs with a content specific coach, and/or computer based intervention programs. The progress of all students in mastering educational standards is monitored by a process of progress monitoring. Teachers monitor student progression to a given target monthly through interim assessments and/or running records.

When progress monitoring attempts continue to show a lack of student growth, the student will receive tier 2 interventions using the Response to Intervention plan (RTI). RTI is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. Teachers may also schedule a School Building Level Committee (SBLC) meeting to discuss additional steps to ensure goal mastery. The SBLC meeting usually consists of the student's classroom teachers, on-site content specialists, guidance counselor, and principal.

FHAE has maintained a grade of A for ten years. In order to remain at this high level of academic success, FHAE has implemented a rigorous curriculum. The teachers work diligently to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse group of students. Ongoing collaboration and data analysis enables teachers to identify gaps in instruction and provide support where needed. Multiple efforts contribute to the success of our school.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Forest Heights, we understand that the way students, parents, and teachers view our school climate is a strong predictor of the social, emotional, and academic outcomes of our students. With a positive climate, we have experienced fewer behavior problems, increased academic achievement, higher self-esteem, and more commitment to school. We are able to maintain our positive school climate with intense collaboration among our stakeholders, best practice techniques, effective evaluations, and useful resources.

The administration and faculty have implemented programs where students can engage in activities that promote academic, social, and emotional growth. Fifth grade students participate in an intensive 10-week elementary curriculum, DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program, where a DARE Law Officer covers many topics that help students understand and deal with social pressures while strengthening their own self-image. Parents and the community are invited to join in a yearly culminating program. Other programs, such as Second Step and Harmony, integrate social-emotional learning into classrooms through short teacher-led lessons. This program decreases problem behaviors and increases whole-school success by promoting self-regulation, safety, and support.

At FHAE, we believe that a school must have an approach that sustains the implementation of effective practices to maintain a positive school climate. This is the guiding principle in our implementation of PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports). School-wide expectations of being responsible, respectful, and safe is enforced daily. These expectations are exercised by the students as well as the teachers in all perimeters of the school. Every faculty and staff member awards PBIS tickets to students exemplifying the expected behavior anywhere on the school campus. Students are awarded with weekly and monthly incentives encouraging positive behavior. Teachers who promptly turn in student raffle tickets also receive incentives. This school-wide proactive approach has decreased the amount of behavior referrals by celebrating students' good choices and creating a positive learning environment.

This positive school culture creates an environment where teachers feel valued and supported. The school administration recognizes faculty and staff as professionals offering support at all times. The administration strives to provide teachers with worthwhile professional development and supplies/materials necessary to increase student achievement. In addition, teachers' efforts are recognized by monthly Parent Teacher Association (PTA) luncheons, personal celebrations recognized during staff development, and a week-long teacher appreciation celebration. These efforts have led to strong teacher morale making Forest Heights a fun and rewarding place to work.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parent and community ties can have a systematic and sustained effect on learning outcomes for children's academic success and school improvement. Forest Heights provides engaging activities throughout the year, welcoming families to join in the learning process. These activities facilitate partnerships between home and school. Meet the Teacher, Open House, Fall Festival, Doughnuts with Dad/Muffins with Mom, Career Day, and art showcases are some of the many programs that welcome families and the community into our school. Additional educational opportunities, such as Math Night and Literacy Night, encourage parents and students to experience learning together in an atmosphere quite different from the usual classroom setting. Volunteer dads and community leaders participate in our Real Men Read activity. These men read a chosen book to their assigned classes while promoting a love of reading.

FHAE has partnerships with local universities, such as Louisiana State University and Southern University. The Education department at these universities partner pre-service teachers with FHAE master teachers to gain field experience in the elementary classroom. These pre-service teachers learn from the master teachers and offer support in the classroom by providing students with small group instruction and additional insight into the best educational practices. Through our university partnerships, student athletes from both local universities have visited the school as incentives for students and served as hard-working

role models encouraging student success.

Through our art curriculum, we have developed partnerships with the local symphony and ballet and additional performance groups, such as Dancing Drums. These organizations provide our school with student workshops, concerts, and performances to strengthen our students' talents and appreciation for the arts. As a visual and performing arts dedicated magnet, our students' talents are constantly showcased to parents and community members. Parents are invited to quarterly sharing sessions where students exhibit artwork and perform techniques learned in the visual and performing arts classrooms. In addition, mini-musicals and concerts invite families to view performances of our students' talents while engaging parents in artistic collaboration efforts.

Our strongest community involvement effort occurs at the end of every school year when FHAE hosts our annual Spring Production. This performance involves over 300 students participating in an elaborate, full sound/light production. Each year, this is a huge success being witnessed not only by the community and students at FHAE, but by students from neighboring schools throughout the district. Community sponsors, parent volunteers, and local press help make each year's production fun, memorable, educational, and possible.

3. Professional Development:

The most important in-school determinant of a student's success is the quality of teaching. Therefore, the most important resource we have is to provide high quality, professional development for our teachers. At FHAE, students' academic success is enhanced when our teachers experience powerful, professional support acquired through continuous learning and self-improvement within the teaching profession. The faculty and staff meet this need through various methods, many of which involve collaboration with colleagues to achieve best practices in the classroom and to implement research-based strategies and curriculum.

Additionally, classroom teachers attend district-level in-services to improve student learning. These in-services are conducted by teacher experts where they learn a variety of new information which includes Common Core Standards, technology and best teaching practices/strategies. Leading teacher-training organizations such as Michelson Academy and Math Science Partnership (MSP) also provide ongoing professional learning opportunities to science and math teachers to inspire them to translate research into practice in the classroom. The Principal and Magnet Site Coordinator attend the Magnet School Conference yearly to stay abreast with the latest trends and updates concerning the management of the magnet program. Most of the teachers attend the Model School Conference which brings together highly successful educators from across the country to share how they have embraced the best practices and emerging trends in classroom instruction. These trainings also build continuous professional learning networks. Echo Seminars are being conducted after attendance to these types of trainings to ensure that the school community also acquire the skills and knowledge gained from the workshops. Moreover, the faculty receives valuable training by participating in online professional development. This online training meets the professional needs of the teachers without compromising the instructional time for the students. The courses can be completed during the teachers' most convenient schedule. Other professional development opportunities include examining student data, classroom observations and walkthroughs, vertical planning, peer or expert coaching and mentoring, thematic planning and curriculum mapping, maintaining reflective logs, and reading professional journals, magazines, and books.

Our art faculty also receives content-specific trainings provided by local organizations to support art integration in our school. Once acquired, the art teachers re-deliver essential skills and knowledge to the classroom teachers for integration across the curriculum.

At Forest Heights Academy of Excellence, we are committed to investing in continuous professional learning that is standard-based, results-driven, and relevant to the improvement of the administrative leadership, teaching quality, and student achievement.

4. School Leadership:

Principals play a major role in developing a professional community of teachers who guide one another in improving instruction. As the instructional leader of FHAE, the principal, in addition to being the building manager, must also develop a team delivering effective instruction. Her key responsibilities are to shape a vision of academic excellence for all students based on high standards while creating a climate hospitable to education. The principal cultivates leadership in others so that faculty and staff assume their role in embracing the school's vision and mission:

To promote a challenging, enriching education partnered with an artistic program that encourages all students to become positive, productive leaders. In other words, at Forest Heights, Grow smart! Grow creative! Grow more every day!

This educational philosophy is recited each day during morning announcements and enforced and practiced school wide. Students at FHAE recognize the value and high expectations of attending a magnet school. High expectations are the most reliable driver of high student achievement.

The principal and magnet site coordinator collaboratively lead the curriculum, instruction, and assessment activities to enhance teaching and learning in all areas. They ensure that all resources are available for both staff and students. The principal has developed and implemented remediation programs, such as Saturday Academy and Summer Enrichment. These programs target specific students in need of additional instruction to ensure that they reach a level of mastery by closing the proficiency gaps of student achievement. School leaders also provide teacher mentoring through the Teacher Advancement Program while highlighting strategies for implementing Common Core Standards.

To improve professional practices and outcomes for student achievement, the principal has established an administrative team attuned to the total needs of the instructional program. The administrative team consisting of the principal, magnet site coordinator, and a leadership team comprised of classroom teachers, are actively involved in decision making, scheduling, and assisting with teacher assessments. Weekly grade-level meetings and arts collaboration allow teachers and the administrative team to evaluate the progress of instruction, assess and discuss student data, and make revisions in the curriculum. The result is a curriculum that is vertically aligned for a more prescribed way of teaching in a magnet school.

Under the leadership of the principal, FHAE has become a model for character education as well as academic success. As a result, our school has maintained the letter grade of A for the last 10 years. The FHAE principal was named the 2012 Regional Principal of the Year by Magnet Schools of America. FHAE's outstanding performance has been the result of our leader's commitment to excellence. This commitment is evident in the outstanding performance of our students and faculty.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Strategies for academic success is a framework to align practices with the mission of learning for everyone. These strategies involve progress monitoring and then provide layers of more and more intensive strategies and interventions so that students can be successful and make progress in their learning. At Forest Heights Academy of Excellence, we utilize a wide variety of strategies, but our most effective strategy is the use of differentiated instruction across the curriculum.

A differentiated approach to teaching and learning is not a single strategy, but rather a framework that teachers can use to implement a variety of strategies, many of which are evidence-based. These evidence-based strategies include employing effective classroom management procedures, grouping students for instruction (especially students with significant learning problems), assessing readiness, and teaching to the student's zone of proximal development. The process of differentiating instruction for students depends on the ongoing use of assessment to gather information about where students are in their learning and about their readiness, interest, and learning preferences. Teachers use this information to vary the learning environment, instruction, assessment and evaluation.

We at Forest Heights Academy of Excellence increase the likelihood that students will be able to build new learning through connection of existing knowledge and preferred ways of working. This ensures that every learner is totally engaged in their learning process.

At FHAE, we create tiered assignments to differentiate instruction. These tiered activities reach each learner at their level and enable them to move forward, regardless of where they started. Every student in each classroom is engaged very quickly and together they become engaged as a community. With consistent application of this teaching practice, our students are growing academically to reach their independent levels. Daily classroom instruction involves hands-on activities and the use of manipulatives to support students' different learning styles. Direct and explicit instructions are provided along with project-based learning and cooperative learning activities to engage students, meet differential learning needs and build cooperative, team-building skills. The teachers also meet weekly with the art faculty to integrate various academic subjects with music, physical education, drama, dance, library, and art.

Differentiation as a strategy inevitably maximizes learning for our students who come to school at different entry points. It supports interests, different approaches to learning, races, cultures, languages, economic backgrounds, and experiences. The success of the students at FHAE is firmly grounded in this philosophy.