

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Lisa Nash

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

Official School Name Heards Ferry Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 6151 Powers Ferry Road

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

Sandy Springs GA 30339-2924
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Fulton

Telephone (470) 254-6190

Fax

Web site/URL

http://school.fultonschools.org/es/heardsferry

E-mail nashl@fultonschools.org

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. Jeff Rose

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail rosej@fultonschools.org

District Name Fulton County Schools Tel. (470) 254-3600

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. Linda Bryant

(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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 59 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 19 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 18 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 96 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
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	26	23	49
K	80	75	155
1	48	65	113
2	60	58	118
3	55	66	121
4	60	62	122
5	56	53	109
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	385	402	787

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 5 % Asian
 - 8 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 77 % White
 - 4 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 5%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

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, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	21
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	36
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	770
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%
9 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 8%
Total number students who qualify: 60

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
101 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.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <u>17</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>11</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>21</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>29</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>6</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	33
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	20
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	21
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	9

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 22:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
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 2017.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

To develop self-motivated, globally minded thinkers through inquiry and reflection.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Heards Ferry Elementary School is part of the Fulton County School System, one of the oldest and largest school districts in Georgia. Founded in 1871, the Fulton County School System is quite unique. It is not the largest in terms of student enrollment but it is one of the largest systems in terms of geographic size. The system, which spans more than 70 miles long, is physically bisected by the city of Atlanta and its school system. Heards Ferry opened in September of 1970 to accommodate 249 students in first through seventh grades. At the time, the school was named for its location on Heards Ferry Road, in the heart of Sandy Springs, Georgia. In 1986, the middle school concept was developed in Fulton County, and the 6th and 7th graders were removed from Heards Ferry. In the early 1990's the ethnic composition of Heards Ferry changed due to the Majority to Minority program and with the changing of attendance zones, creating an atmosphere of diversity. Since that time, attendance zones have been redrawn which in turn changed the demographics of the school once again. The population has continued to grow over the years, and the school relocated to a brand new and much bigger building for the start of the 2015-2016 school year. This relocation removed the school from its neighborhood setting and placed it on the same property as Fulton County School's Board of Education where the majority of the county's administrative employees work. Employees working in the building next door can choose to send their children to our school through the county's hardship program. As a result, approximately 15% of our student population lives approximately 20 miles or more outside our attendance zone. Parents choose to move to Heards Ferry's attendance zone in order to send their children here because of our exemplary reputation. They select us over the various prestigious private schools in the area. Heards Ferry currently has 787 students in grades pre-k - 5th. Currently, 77% of our population are Caucasian, 8% are African American, 5% are Asian, 5% are Hispanic, 4% are Multicultural, and 1% are American Indian. English Language Learners make up 1% of our population, and 13% of our students are in special education programs. Our gifted students make up 21% of our population. Heards Ferry has two prekindergarten classrooms, seven kindergarten classrooms, five first, second, third, and fourth grade classrooms each, and four fifth grade classrooms. In addition to the general education classrooms, there are two self-contained specialized instruction classrooms that serve the needs of moderately intellectually disabled students, one special needs prekindergarten classroom, one inclusion pre-k classroom, and one kindergarten special needs classroom. We are lucky to have a school counselor, school psychologists, speech language therapists, occupational therapy specialists, physical therapy specialists, and adaptive PE, art and music teachers on our team. All of our students are served by our dedicated and talented staff comprised of 102 females and 6 males with over 75% of these staff members holding a master's degree or higher. The mission of Heards Ferry Elementary is to develop self-motivated, globally minded thinkers through inquiry and reflection. Fulton County Schools became the largest charter school system in July 2012. The charter system designation has given Heards Ferry local school autonomy and the freedom to pursue special programs that will benefit our unique needs like the world-renowned International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP). Heards Ferry is one of only three elementary schools in our county to pursue IB certification. Through the network and resources available through this program, our students receive a "world-class education." Inquiry is at the center of everything we do allowing students to guide the learning process. Heards Ferry is a high achieving school, but academics is not our only focus. Through IBPYP we have been able to provide students the opportunity to make connections to the world outside their community and produce risk-takers who question the status quo while at the same time show compassion and giving hearts. We take great pride in not only producing students who achieve at high levels, but also students who are well-rounded, engaged, and self-motivated. We have won numerous awards for our commitment to service and outreach. Our students are encouraged to take action when they see a need and many have created their own school-wide service projects. Our school has produced state media fair finalists, county technology fair finalists, state technology fair winners, county spelling bee finalists, state STEM competition winners, and our student art is displayed in our state's capitol. We have won numerous grants for our learning garden and we implemented a farm to table nutrition program in our cafeteria. We strive to create educational experiences for students that meet their unique learning profiles. Through our commitment to personalized learning and continuous achievement we allow students to learn at their own pace. We use a variety of resources to accomplish this goal. We are rich in technology with three 3D printers, iPad carts and laptop carts at every grade level, desktops in every classroom, three computer labs, an Epson Bright Link in every classroom, a comprehensive e-library, and a bring your own device program. In addition, we have a science lab with a dedicated science lab instructor to

provide our students with rich, hands-on experiences. Our entire staff is involved in making instructional decisions through our curriculum and instruction team. We house a state-of-the-art news programming system that our students operate to deliver the daily news school-wide. Each fifth grade is able to anchor our school news program one week during the school year. Heards Ferry has long held the reputation for strong parental involvement and high achieving students. We continue to be recognized as a leading school in our county and state with our dedicated teaching staff, comprehensive academic programs and superior test results consistently thriving academically on multiple criteria including the Georgia Milestones End of Grade (EOG) Assessments and the IOWA test. On the most recent EOG Assessment our 3rd graders earned the highest math score in the county in the Level 2, 3, 4 categories, and our 5th graders earned the highest science score in the county in the Level 3, 4 categories. We consistently score in the top ten out of 59 elementary schools in our county on the EOG and IOWA in all grades and all subjects. We have scored over 90% on the CCRPI since its inception. We have received an A rating from the state five years in a row. Heards Ferry won the National School of Excellence award in 1992 and in 2016. Also in 2016, Heards Ferry was designated as a Beating the Odds School from the state of Georgia and received a 5 Star Climate Rating. In 2017, Heards Ferry won the Gold Award for Highest Performing Schools in the state of Georgia and again earned a 5 Star Climate Rating. We work very closely with our parent population and contribute much of our success to their unending support. Roughly 80% of our parent population joins our parent organization, our school had the highest parent voter participation in the county in last year's School Governance Council elections, and each family commits to ten volunteer hours yearly. All of our stakeholders work as partners in ensuring our students receive the best education and experiences possible. We are committed to teaching students how to think, not what to think and to producing citizens of the world who will ultimately leave our world a better place. Heards Ferry strives to strike an important balance between holding the highest academic standards and ensuring the development of the whole child physically, emotionally, intellectually, and ethically. We work tirelessly to create and maintain an environment where students feel valued and empowered as citizens who are tasked with the important job of making a difference in the community and the world. Heards Ferry works in partnership with our School Governance Council, our parent/teacher organization, and many surrounding businesses and organizations to ensure that we meet and exceed our goals.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Heards Ferry Elementary strives to create a personalized learning environment where all students are challenged to reach their highest potential through the continuous support of highly qualified, collaborative educators. Our teachers are committed to preparing our students to become inquirers and problem solvers through the utilization of research based strategies and challenging learning experiences allowing students to progress through the standards at their own pace. While the Georgia Standards of Excellence is the foundation of our core curriculum, differentiating the content, process, product, and learning environment in teaching these standards in order to meet the individual needs of each learner is paramount to our success. We utilize a balanced literacy approach for reading and writing instruction. In reading, all grade levels utilize the Lucy Calkins Readers Workshop model in order to teach the Georgia Standards of Excellence reading standards. We chose this approach to reading instruction for our students because the majority of our students come to us already reading and comprehending. Teaching the standards through the Lucy Calkins theory ensures that our students can apply critical reading skills and strategies in all subject areas and analyze text in a deep contextual way in order to extend the skills beyond levels. Additionally, our leveled library supports the curriculum and development of both emergent and advanced readers. Students are exposed to a variety of text types and text complexities. Encouraging students to dive into poetry, historical fiction, nonfiction, and fictional texts is crucial to creating well-rounded readers. Teachers perform ongoing informal reading inventories using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System and running records in order to guide their reading instruction. Students are exposed to a variety of text types and text complexities and learn to support their reasoning and understanding with text-based evidence. Writing instruction is a critical component of our balanced literacy program. We use the Lucy Calkins Writing Units of Study theory for teaching the Georgia Standards of Excellence writing standards. Using this program, teachers implement writing through a workshop approach similar to the reading workshop. We chose this approach to writing to integrate with the reading approach, and because standardized test scores revealed that our students needed a more formal and explicit approach to writing instruction. Students receive exposure to and practice in the elements of writing encouraging exploration and independence in the craft of writing. They learn strategies to build their writing skills and also have the opportunity to observe models of the various phases of the writing process. While writing instruction is taught daily in isolation, it is also incorporated into every subject area in meaningful ways. As with reading and writing instruction, we use the workshop model in math. The Georgia mathematics curriculum used at Heards Ferry Elementary focuses on actively engaging the students in the development of mathematical understanding by using manipulatives and a variety of representations, working independently and cooperatively to solve problems, estimating and computing efficiently, and conducting investigations and recording findings. There is a shift towards applying mathematical concepts and skills in the context of authentic problems and for the student to understand concepts rather than merely follow a sequence of procedures. Computational fluency is developed through Number Talks where students are encouraged to critically solve problems and talk through their thinking and learning with peers. Flexible groups are determined using formal and informal assessments. In our mathematics classrooms, students learn to think critically in a mathematical way. They develop an understanding that there are many different ways to a solution and sometimes more than one right answer. Through Stanford University's Red Bird computer program, students have access to rich STEM projects, career pathways, and contextualized problems to inspire a love of mathematics and connections to the real world. Our science and social studies standards are taught through hands-on, inquiry-based, teacher-created trans disciplinary units of study developed through our International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program. The base of these units is the Georgia Standards of Excellence for science and we use the Houghton Mifflin Science Series as our curriculum resource. We focus on three dimensional learning which incorporates science content, crosscutting concepts, and science/engineering practices. Because we value deep conceptual understanding, teachers provide authentic learning experiences and opportunities for inquiry in our school-wide science lab with a science instructor. Students in all grades connect their learning through reflection writing. The social studies curriculum integrates problem solving strategies and inquiry-based projects with reading and writing taught through trans disciplinary units. The units align to connecting themes and enduring understandings that transcend units. We use frameworks to organize and teach the Georgia Standards of Excellence within

the units. The Harcourt Social Studies Series is a resource we use to plan our units. Our focus is on a standards based social studies classroom where the teacher plans authentic learning experiences, provides a solid foundation in social studies to promote application of skills and knowledge, and helps students make authentic connections. Our pre-k is a state lottery funded educational program for all eligible four-year-old children in Georgia. The purpose of Georgia's pre-k program is to prepare children for success in kindergarten and later school years. The classroom is structured to provide a positive, flexible, and relaxed environment for the purpose of achieving desired goals. Opportunities to explore, discover, experiment, create, understand, and learn are ongoing. A variety of experiences provided in the pre-k learning environment results in a unique abundance of behavioral, academic and social growth for the pre-k child. Social graces are taught and stressed. The classroom is divided into various work areas: art, manipulatives, blocks, housekeeping, language, math and science.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Heards Ferry Elementary aims to enrich students' learning environment by making connections between all curriculum areas and by engaging students in real-world learning experiences through application of skills. Students attend specials classes for 45 minutes per day every day of the week. They attend art, music, and Spanish one time per week, and physical education two times per week. Students also participate in technology /library/media lessons once per week. Each of these teachers incorporates the current unit of inquiry from the classrooms into their lessons. In music, students at Heards Ferry undergo a journey which begins in kindergarten with exploring their singing voices, playing instruments and moving creatively. Through a spiral curriculum culminating in fifth grade, they develop the ability to understand formal musical notation and become independent musicians by means of increasingly challenging reading and writing activities. They also become familiar with musical styles (symphonic music, opera, jazz, blues, spirituals and the like) that reflect and influence our history and culture. They are encouraged to learn the values of acceptance and open-mindedness, as well as expand their language skills, by hearing and performing music from around the world. Quaver's Marvelous World of Music, an interactive program which aligns with the National Standards for the Arts, provides the base curriculum for music. In chorus, which is offered after school to fourth and fifth graders, students supplement their experience by developing their vocal and performing skills and representing our school in various venues in the community. Students in art class experience a myriad of Visual Art disciplines on a weekly basis. They participate in conversations about aesthetics and other philosophies of art. They are trained to think critically and analyze what they see in the works of master artists as well as their own work. They become immersed in the history and culture of artists from all over the world like Leonardo Da Vinci, Frida Kahlo, Katsushika Hokusai, and Henri Matisse. The artwork we study spans centuries of art from the cave drawings of Lascaux to the contemporary works of digital artists at Pixar. Through modeled lessons, students explore multiple art mediums such as paint, clay, and pastels that help develop their fine motor skills, creativity, and life skills such as patience and responsibility. Students learn to communicate in the language of art and design through the visual elements and principles outlined in the county curriculum that is based on the National Art Standards and Georgia Performance Standards. Students also participate in community art exhibits in our school building, county administrative buildings, state legislative buildings, and local businesses. Our annual Fine Arts Night welcomes the local community to our school and showcases the artistic talents from each student in our school. Our physical education program is based on the Georgia Performance Standards. Our goal is to instill a love of physical activity in our students. We believe that by teaching our students the basic fundamentals of throwing, catching, striking, rhythms and dance they will find an activity that resonates with them. We have created a learning environment where our students are comfortable taking risks as they explore different ways to be physically active. We understand that what interests one student may not apply to another. We teach the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle and making wise decisions with regard to nutrition. Our goal is to instill in our students that physical activity and good nutrition are life-long choices. Understanding that physical activity not only nurtures the body, but the mind as well the soul, creating a balanced, well rounded individual. The final piece of our program is teaching our students good sportsmanship including winning with humility and losing with grace. The media program is led by the school METI (Media and Educational Technology Instructor). The program is rooted in educational technology, digital citizenship, reading promotion, and research skills. There is a flexible calendar in which teachers can sign up for integrated educational technology lessons that align with what students are doing in

class. Students are actively engaged in digital research, creating projects, and using presentation tools. Students also visit the media center every other week as a class to check out books. Students can independently check out books anytime as well and third through fifth grade students take initiative by participating in self-check out. Our media program also supports an e-library where students can check out books on their devices. Heards Ferry is one of only three elementary schools in Fulton County to offer a foreign language through our International Baccalaureate program. Students are immersed in fundamental vocabulary and conversational skills as well as culture of Spanish-Speaking countries all over the world. The curriculum is exclusive to Fulton County Schools and contains four units: school aspects and procedures; food and exercise; items in the home; and culture of Spanish-Speaking countries. Students engage in song, games, and projects to demonstrate verbal and written acquisition of the language. We incorporate the second language all over our building and in all classrooms by labeling items in Spanish and teaching Spanish words and phrases of the week. Heards Ferry is currently in the final phase of the candidacy period of pursuing authorization to become an IB PYP World School. Students at HFE are learning to take control of their learning. Teachers collaborate to deepen conceptual learning and increase student self-confidence and self-motivation. Students are developing the attributes of the learner profile and attitudes, learning to demonstrate respect for themselves and others and developing global awareness through collaboration and an inquiry-based, transdisciplinary curriculum with themed units.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Heards Ferry Elementary uses many different research based instructional programs to meet the needs of all learners. As a high performing school, our challenge is making sure that we not only meet the needs of our struggling learners, but also enrich the learning of our highest achievers and all students in between. Every decision we make instructionally is based on a variety of data including all types of formal and informal assessments. In the state of Georgia, schools use a system called Response to Intervention (RTI) to identify students and the missing skills in order to make them successful. This system is a pyramid of interventions through which the process of aligning appropriate assessments with purposeful instruction for all students is key. RTI is based in the general education classroom where teachers routinely implement a strong and rigorous standards-based learning environment to all students. The four-tiered approach provides layers of support to students who do not respond to the learning environment. It is designed to provide support matched to student need through the implementation of evidence-based interventions utilized with increasing levels of intensity based on progress monitoring. The use of a variety of ongoing assessment data to determine which students are not meeting success academically and/or behaviorally is used. This process is used to help identify students for special education and also helps to eliminate special education referrals that are not necessary. The goal is to support the student through the general education setting, but of course some students do not respond to the tiers of support and may join our special education community. Our special education services aim to place students needing this level of support in the least restrictive environment possible. We have students who receive monitored support, some receive support in the co-taught setting, and some receive instruction in a specialized classroom. Some students receive the Early Intervention Program (EIP) at Heards Ferry. This program is intended to reinforce the skills that are being taught in the classroom and to fill in any gaps in standards previously taught in the classroom. Students are identified based on qualification criteria provided by the county which includes test data and classroom performance and observation. In math, students work on grade level standards but spend the majority of their time using a program called "Do the Math" created by Marilyn Burns to improve numeracy, and they use mental math strategies to fill in gaps in these critical areas. In reading, they work on basic reading as well as comprehension strategies based on the needs of each student. Interventions are used and data is collected to track growth. Once students are working on grade level, they are exited from the program and our goal is that they re-enter the classroom equipped with the strategies and skills that will help them to succeed in reading and math. Evaluation for EIP is an on-going process, and all students are continuously monitored and offered the support of our program if the need should arise. The Heards Ferry Talented and Gifted program (TAG) is a response to the need to address the unique learning characteristics, interests, personal needs, and capabilities of gifted children. In order to meet the individual needs of each gifted student, the Heards Ferry gifted program enriches and expands upon the core curriculum for identified gifted students in the regular classroom, adjusts the rate and depth of their learning, provides opportunities to interact with other gifted peers, and uses a variety of appropriate teaching methods which address multiple intelligences. There are three primary goals and objectives that have been adopted in order to identify and

serve the gifted students at Heards Ferry. First is to help teachers, administrators, and parents identify the gifted students and understand their unique abilities, needs, and preferences. Second is to design and implement differentiated instructional experiences in the school and the community, and third to develop in gifted students an accurate and increasing awareness of themselves, their abilities, and their value to society. The delivery model for gifted services at Heards Ferry is a resource class in which students receive gifted services one day per week in a resource classroom. Students in grades K-3 receive a minimum of 225 minutes of instruction per week while students in grades 4-5 receive a minimum of 250 minutes per week. All TAG teachers at Heards Ferry hold an endorsement in Gifted Education from the Professional Standards Commission. Our TAG department shares these very specific teaching strategies with the general education classroom teachers, so that they can be used outside the TAG program to enrich the instruction in the general education classroom as well. No matter what program our students benefit from at Heards Ferry, teachers routinely analyze data and use that information to form small groups and plan for instruction. Our teachers aren't the only ones using data. We believe students need to become life-long independent learners, so they also routinely monitor their own data from pre- and post-assessments, set learning goals based on the data, form action plans and then reflect on their performance. Some of our teachers use all of this information to hold student-led conferences where students take the responsibility of sharing their results with their parents.

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Heards Ferry, we believe that a positive school climate is fostered through a shared vision of respect and engagement. We believe in building strong relationships with students, staff, parents, and the community. Success in academic achievement is celebrated and valued, but we believe you can't sustain long-term success without maintaining a positive school environment where all members feel valued and respected. Our students are allowed to choose from a variety of seating options in the classroom that is best for their individual learning style. Students can choose to sit on wobble stools, floor chairs, carpet squares, stability balls, or the traditional desk and chair. They are allowed to move from type to type throughout the day fostering their production and their sense of self and choice. Heards Ferry is a state certified Positive Behavior and Intervention and Supports school. We approach every situation with a problem-solving mind-set and strive to always focus on the positive in every situation and get to the root of the problem. We set school-wide expectations and all stakeholders uphold the school's beliefs which stimulates an environment of trust and positivity. We all follow the SOAR acronym which stands for Safe, Outstanding, Accountable, and Respectful. Students are rewarded for exemplifying SOAR behavior. The entire school, staff included, is divided into teams. These teams work together to focus on these positive behavior traits and celebrate each other's success. Students and teachers also incorporate the IB Learner Profile and Attitudes into their daily lives at our school. These are a set of character traits along with actions that combine to make students and adults mindful of their place in our world. We focus on attributes like risk-taker, communicator, principled, open-minded, and many others. We encourage students to take responsibility not only for their own actions, but also to act on problems they encounter. For example, one of our students started her own anti-bullying campaign when she did not feel heard and she was featured on the local news. Another student started a collection of pet donations when she saw that people around the country were donating items for humans after the hurricane, but nothing for pets. The Counseling Department at Heards Ferry Elementary strives to prepare all students for a successful transition to middle school. We aim to equip our fifth graders with the skills to be advocates for their academic, personal, and social success. Through this department the students are encouraged to be actively engaged in their learning, reflective of how their actions affect others, and display positive character traits. The school counselor at Heards Ferry Elementary strives to develop a safe and supportive environment and create equitable access to opportunities that promote personal growth. Cookies for Character is a school-wide initiative that occurs once a month and recognizes one student per class who exhibits a positive character trait. We also provide students with a platform to be leaders through recycling groups, safety patrol, and student government. The students have the ability to access the counselor throughout the day for emotional and academic support. The Counseling Department at Heards Ferry collaborates with parents, teachers, and students to develop a community that promotes being well rounded and global change agents. We also have a Student of the Week program that identifies a student from every classroom who is recognized for their accomplishments for that week. In addition, we have numerous clubs and activities outside of the school day for students to participate in including chess, etiquette class, sports club, art club, STEM club, and many other activities to foster the whole child development. The Helping Hands Club pairs older students with special needs, and pre-k and kindergarten students. They provide needed support in the mornings and afternoons. Our school has a therapy dog on Fridays who frequently visits our special needs classrooms. The students can be found petting her when needed for emotional support or reading to her to work on their oral reading skills. Happy teachers make happy students. We celebrate our teachers whenever possible. Staff are treated monthly at faculty meetings, they are recognized in our weekly newsletter, and teachers celebrate each other by placing notes in our Gratitude Jar to show their thanks and appreciation for their peers. These are read aloud at our staff meetings. One week a year, our parents shower our staff with meals and gifts during Staff Appreciation Week and once per month the parents provide breakfast to our staff. We also conduct Teacher of the Year and Professional of the Year elections and ceremonies to recognize and thank outstanding employees.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Heards Ferry has a strong reputation for working closely with our families and the community to ensure student success on all levels. In 2014, the Heards Ferry Parent Teacher Organization and the Heards Ferry Elementary Foundation combined to become the Heards Ferry Eagle Alliance. The Eagle Alliance builds upon the best of the school's prior organizations while offering significant new capabilities. Membership is open to anyone who has a child at Heards Ferry Elementary or wants to support the school. We would not be the exemplary school we are today without the support of our parent organization. The Eagle Alliance funds nearly every single academic program. This includes the science lab, all writing and math programs, materials for Spanish, in-school field trips, and teacher training (including International Baccalaureate). The Eagle Alliance also funds extra-curricular activities such as chorus and the brand new STEM Club. Every single event throughout the school year is planned and funded by the Eagle Alliance. These events include such favorites as STEM Day, International Day, Field Day, the Talent Show, dates with Mom/Dad, the Harvest Festival and so many more. All of these events help build and reinforce the strong sense of community at Heards Ferry. In an arduous process that spanned more than one year, the Eagle Alliance carefully selected the brand new interactive playground equipment for grades three through five. This state-of-the-art addition to our playground is another example of Eagle Alliance dollars and volunteers hard at work. The Eagle Alliance dues and other funds raised throughout the year directly benefit all Heards Ferry Students. Heards Ferry participates in many service and outreach projects around the community, such as the Halloween candy drive and thank you cards for the military, a children's book drive for Title 1 schools, Community Action Center Food Drive (we won the award for most food donated in 2015 & 2016), Ronald McDonald House collection, Crayola Color Cycle drive, and toiletries drive for the homeless; just to name a few. Our students operate our recycling program within the school. We have a Service Stars program where students log their volunteer hours outside of school and those with ten hours of service receive special recognition and a star. Communication is key at HFE to making sure that everyone feels informed and connected. Fourth and 5th grade students serve on Student Government and share their concerns and solutions about school procedures. Our teachers meet weekly in Professional Learning Communities and in grade level meetings. We meet monthly as a whole staff for faculty meetings, professional learning, and CORE team meetings. These CORE teams were developed at HFE to give all staff members a voice in every area of the school. The administration communicates weekly to staff through a Weebly site called Weekly Notes. Teachers have class-specific Weebly sites and utilize this and the SeeSaw app to display work and communicate regularly with parents. Parents also receive a monthly grade level newsletter, a weekly email about important dates, and a monthly newsletter from the Eagle Alliance. We host periodic parent universities with guest speakers to educate parents about the information they receive such as test results and parenting skills.

3. Professional Development:

At Heards Ferry we work hard to build the capacity of our teachers so that they have the tools and resources needed to support every child. We analyze our student achievement data and the practices that we see occurring in our classrooms on an ongoing basis to develop and if needed, adjust our professional development plan. We are fortunate to be a part of Fulton County Schools which offers a rich variety of professional development opportunities for employees at all levels. When an employee moves into a new position, or is looking to move into a different position, we work with them to select classes that will prepare them for their new position and we ask that they come back and share what they learned and how they will incorporate it into their work.

In addition to this individualized support, we work with our whole faculty to ensure that best practices are taking place in our Professional Learning Communities. Our work in this area is supported by our district's move toward a Standards Mastery Framework in which teachers analyze proficiency scales and prioritized standards as they plan for and evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction. Teachers also receive training on our current standards and best practices in each subject area. These trainings are conducted throughout the school year and are a collaboration between district trainings and work at the local school level. Some examples of trainings that our faculty and staff have participated in are sessions to support the implementation of the Teachers College of New York Reading and Writing Units of Study and personalized learning. Teachers also receive ongoing support for designing and teaching transdisciplinary units for International Baccalaureate's Primary Years Programme. Four of our staff members serve on the

county's Vanguard Team. This team strives to build the capacity of Fulton County educators and leaders to personalize learning through coaching and instructional technology. The members of this team support our teachers in implementing the most cutting-edge technology and personalized strategies into their classrooms. The school administration monitors the effectiveness of our professional development offerings by doing classroom visits and through our TKES (Teacher Keys Effectiveness System) observation feedback. Teachers are rated on 10 standards: professional knowledge, instructional planning, instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, assessment strategies, assessment uses, positive learning environment, academically challenging environment, professionalism, and communication. We also work with our Academic Leadership Team, which is comprised of our grade level chairs and department heads, to understand the needs of our teachers and to provide the support that will help them be the most successful in reaching each student. Teachers, who are new to our building, are assigned a mentor who is a member of our administrative team. Mentors work to make sure our new team members understand the building expectations and to provide coaching and support. We also give teachers opportunities to lead trainings in their areas of expertise. At Heards Ferry, we strive to build leaders through our vision of shared leadership.

4. School Leadership:

The administrative team at Heards Ferry Elementary includes: the principal, assistant principal, administrative assistant, curriculum support teacher, IB Coordinator, and counselor. This team meets daily during lunch to check in with what is happening around the building and they meet weekly with an agenda based around providing quality instruction, meeting student and teacher needs, and problem solving. This team's main focus is on safety and security, instructional leadership, and setting the tone for the building. Because of our belief in shared leadership, our staff has input into almost every decision we make. We strive to ensure that every decision we make is focused on our Strategic Plan and what is in the best interest of students. The leadership team at Heards Ferry is made up of the administrative team and a representative from each grade level and special area of the school. We meet monthly and these representatives act as liaisons between the administrative team and the staff. The School Governance Council at Heards Ferry is made up of parents (elected by parents), teachers (elected by teachers), community members, school staff who are not teachers, the principal, and a representative from our parent organization. All major decisions are run through this council for feedback and ultimately approval. They ensure that the focus of the school remains consistent with the goals set forth in our Strategic Plan, help to secure special funding, approve the school budget, oversee the Request for Flexibility process, and participate in the hiring of the principal. The Request for Flexibility process gives schools autonomy and allows us to request special programs or variations from the norm that would benefit our school. The principal is the head of each of these groups, but believes that it truly takes a village to operate a successful school both academically and culturally. Decisions are never made without input from several stakeholders. All leaders at HFE believe in a shared vision of creating students who are globally-minded, love learning, and are good citizens of the world.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Heards Ferry Elementary works very hard to ensure that all students receive an education that is catered to fit their learning style and instructional needs. We have always believed that students learn at their own pace and that students do not all learn the same way. Students are allowed to move through academic levels at their own pace. For example, we may have a 3rd grade student who goes up to 5th grade for math instruction or a 2nd grade student reading at a 6th grade level and being taught at that level. If a student is performing below grade level, our goal is to always challenge and support them until they are on grade level. We operate on Fulton County Schools' adopted 7 Principles of Personalized Learning. The first principle is "Choice and Voice" where students express their learning styles and preferences as learners in the lesson. Students are given the opportunity to guide the lesson through inquiry. Second, students are given more than one way or modality to learn the material or access content through the "Varied Strategies Principle". Not all students access content to subjects and lessons within that subject in the same way. Third, students move through the curriculum at a pace that fits their individual abilities and allows for mastery of learning rather than a time-bound learning schedule through the "Flexible Pacing Principle". Students determine the pace of a unit. When students don't understand a concept, we do not simply move on because our pacing chart tells us it's time. Fourth, direct instruction is available to students when it is needed regardless of the availability of an in-person teacher with the "Just-in-Time Direct Instruction Principle". Students may use technology to access a lesson if the teacher is working with a small group. Fifth, students, parents and the community are involved in planning and setting goals, demonstration of learning, pace, and mastery level with the "Co-planning Learning Principle". Everyone is involved in setting our school goals through our Strategic Plan. The sixth principle dictates that students drive the curriculum rather than the curriculum driving the students. Assessments are guided by proficiency and competency through the "Mastery Based Assessment Principle". The final principle is "Choice for Demonstrating Learning" where students have multiple ways to demonstrate mastery of standards. One assessment does not fit all. Just because a student cannot sit and take a five-page paper and pencil test does not mean they do not understand the content. They can leverage both technology tools and traditional tools to show what they know. We were teaching this way at Heards Ferry before the method was given a name. Our students are unique individuals with their own minds, personalities, and hearts. You will not find a more dedicated staff than the teachers at our school. They are 110% dedicated to differentiating the instructional content, process, product, and learning environment so that every student finds their voice and is successful. Children deserve to be treated as individuals and not groups. Holding a child back because the group is not ready to move on stifles their academic journey. Likewise, moving a child ahead because the majority of the group is ready to move ahead does not set that child up for success. At Heards Ferry, we treat every child as an individual with a unique mind, soul, and heart. It is our primary goal to develop their lifelong love of learning through thoughtful individualized instruction.