



## **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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

---

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 10 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 16 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, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	72	58	130
2	55	57	112
3	57	56	113
4	57	50	107
5	0	0	0
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
<b>Total Students</b>	241	221	462

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 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
  - 0 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2017 – 2018 school year: 2%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	7
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	461
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 100%  
Total number students who qualify: 462

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %  
74 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>3</u> Autism                  | <u>16</u> Multiple Disabilities                |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>9</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>23</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>11</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>2</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:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	4
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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.

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	93%	94%	93%	94%	93%
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 2018.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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.

KIPP DC At Heights Academy, is grounded in the values of achievement, community, and persistence. We strive to instill a motivation to grow, learn, and improve in each of our students. We set our scholars up for future academic success in rigorous, intentional, and loving learning environments, where they always feel valued.

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

Families submit applications through the My School DC common lottery, with the exception of families that are already within KIPP DC Heights Academy’s feeder school KIPP DC Discover Academy early childhood school. For these families, Heights Academy is considered a right-to-attend school and they do not need to submit an application via My School DC.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

---

KIPP DC Heights Academy was founded in 2011 and is located on KIPP DC’s Douglass Campus in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, D.C. Heights Academy is housed with KIPP DC Discover Academy (PreK3-K) and KIPP DC AIM Academy (5th-8th).

Heights Academy is grounded in the values of achievement, community, and persistence. Students at KIPP DC Heights Academy embrace the joys and challenges of learning. We work with students to become thoughtful thinkers and teammates, who will return as college-educated leaders to their community.

To realize our vision and help our students develop academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally, we have created a comprehensive plan for student success. We set rigorous and highly ambitious goals for students, with the knowledge that being “proficient” or “on grade level” is often not enough to prepare students for success in college and careers. Moreover, our network instructional leadership team continually meets with experts in education and selects curricula that push students to high levels. Instruction at Heights Academy is grounded in strong core subject teachers and complemented by electives, including the arts and additional courses that enrich the student experience. We support our teachers with robust development and collaboration opportunities, ensuring they have the time and tools needed to grow as professionals and create meaningful learning opportunities for their students each day.

At Heights Academy, we strive to instill the motivation to learn, grow, and improve in each of our students. Our school is one that is welcoming, joyful, positive and productive. Great instruction is the key to our success. We are intentional and urgent every day, in every classroom. All of our students can and will learn. Every child is known, loved, and celebrated as a reader, writer, mathematician, thinker, and growing human being. Our classrooms are beautiful, challenging, and engaging.

In the 2017-18 school year, Heights Academy students achieved some of the highest marks among charter elementary schools in the District of Columbia. In fact, 67% of all students scored level 4 or higher on the Mathematics PARCC assessment and nearly 50% of students scored a 4 or higher on the ELA PARCC assessment.

Our students are able to achieve the results in large part because of the emphasis we place on establishing learning environments that are nurturing, welcoming, and loving. Our educators pride themselves on delivering meaningful learning experiences in the classroom by establishing relationships with our students and families.

We also believe in maintain strong relationships with each other, cognizant that camaraderie and teamwork is vital to delivering to our students the world-class education they deserve. Each summer, we gather for two weeks before students first day of school to cement and internalize our school’s vision. This vision is not just a document or statement—but the guiding light by which we center our work and anchor everything we do for our students and families. At Heights Academy, it is tradition for staff to gather every morning at 7:35 a.m., before students arrive, as a whole team to set the tone for the day and highlight a part of our shared vision for student success.

Heights Academy has a strong tradition of family involvement and parent participation. Every week, students are given a “report card” to take home that details progress and gives parents an up-to-date look on where their child stands. This helps to drive parent interaction through constant communication. We have an open-door policy where parents are welcome at any time to observe teaching or ask questions. Parent communication is vital, and we use a variety of touchpoints (phone calls, emails, weekly letters, and one-on-one chats) to let them know that we are accessible and we value the role they play in helping us deliver a world-class education to our students.

Throughout the year, we also host a number of family-centered traditions and robust programs that celebrate the rich cultural history of our staff, families, and communities. Black History Month showcases and programming for Hispanic Heritage month are a snapshot of how we expand learning outside of the

classroom, while also celebrating what makes students, staff, and families unique. These events draw a large number of families to see student performances and presentations, and have become part of our collective effort to affirm our students' identities.

We believe that excellent academics, safe and structured schools, empowered teachers, and emphasis on a sense of belonging, and support through college are the foundation for student success, and we strive to provide this for every student. We know that every student is different and we personalize learning based on a student's needs, skills, and interests. We empower our students to advocate for themselves and others, and help them foster social and emotional strengths that are essential for their own success. Relationships underpin all of this. We strive to develop strong relationships and truly know each of our students and families, as we help them realize their full potential.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

---

### **1. Core Curriculum:**

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts:**

A strong English Language Arts curriculum is a cornerstone of a world-class education. KIPP DC Heights Academy's curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Heights Academy places an emphasis on developing and strengthening literacy skills among our students. We use Reader's and Writer's Workshop curricula to build a love of reading and writing for students at every level. Classrooms have libraries aligned to students' reading levels according to the Fountas and Pinnell assessment, giving students choice in the books they read. Literacy instruction is strengthened through blocks for Core Knowledge Language Arts, balanced literacy, and reading intervention each day. We also use close reading to improve comprehension and build students' confidence as readers. We teach students to develop their proficiency and power as writers, readers, speakers, listeners, and problem-solvers.

KIPP DC Heights Academy chose these English Language Arts curricula for their ability to educate students in foundational literacy skills and their flexibility to be infused through all parts of the school day, not just the literacy block. Furthermore, KIPP DC prides itself on implementing only researched-based curricula at the elementary level.

We provide teachers with daily lesson plans, daily and summative assessments, and learning tools to help maximize the effectiveness of each lesson. To ensure our teachers truly understand the content, we have two literacy content meetings every week. Our teachers also do a lot of collaborative content planning and content work to share strategies, evaluate new opportunities to engage students in the content, and also build chemistry. We believe our teachers are best able to fuel student achievement when they are focusing on lesson delivery and not the complexities of developing a balanced literacy program. This approach to literacy instruction ensures there are not islands of literary excellence during a student's career at Heights Academy, but rather a comprehensive system of excellence aligned across a student's experience in elementary school and beyond.

#### **1b. Mathematics:**

Similar to our literacy curriculum, KIPP DC Heights Academy's math program is also aligned with the Common Core State Standards. We use a combination of MyMath and EngageNY for the core math curriculum and build a conceptual understanding of math through cognitively guided instruction. This allows students to build on their own intuitive approaches to problem solving and expand students' mathematical understanding. We strongly believe that technology can enhance and deepen understanding to support continued growth in math and also diversify the avenues by which students can learn, thus we also use STIMath and Khan Academy technologies.

Students' conceptual understanding and the ability to apply mathematics is enhanced when students have frequent opportunities to communicate about math. Therefore, we provide students with opportunities to read, write, and talk about math to build conceptual understanding and the ability to apply the skills being taught.

As with our literacy curriculum, we provide teachers with daily lesson plans, daily and summative assessments, and learning tools to help maximize the effectiveness of each mathematics lesson. This approach allows teachers to focus on student learning and lesson implementation. Much like in literacy, our teachers also do a lot of collaborative content planning and content work in math to share strategies, evaluate new opportunities to engage students in the content, and also build camaraderie. Our network-wide mathematics team takes best practices from across KIPP DC's five elementary schools and quickly implements them at each school. We provide our teachers with ample planning and collaboration time to allow for quick adoption and confidence when engaging students in lessons.

### **1c. Science:**

Establishing an effective elementary science program is essential for providing students with a strong foundation in science concepts, instilling a sense of wonder and curiosity in their world, and answering the need for critical thinkers in an evolving STEM-based society. Heights Academy was the first KIPP DC School to adopt a full-time science curriculum for grades 1-4, leading the region in elementary science coursework. At Heights Academy, teachers in grades 1-4 use FOSS, or the Full Option Science System Curriculum. FOSS is a leading science curriculum from the Lawrence Hall of Science which integrates the three dimensions of the Next Generation Science Standards. By fully implementing FOSS at Heights Academy, we ensure that our students are engaged in inquiry-based learning using the Disciplinary Core Ideas, the Science and Engineering Practices, and Crosscutting Concepts. FOSS Curriculum uses phenomena to engage students in questioning and then begin a series of hands-on, minds-on investigations to think critically and build deeper understandings of the natural world. Using an inquiry-based model allows our students to work collaboratively, engage in robust discourse and produce authentic student work. Through FOSS students engage in outdoor investigations using our outdoor classroom and record daily work in an interactive science notebook. FOSS curriculum is also aligned to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Math, which allows our students to apply and practice key grade-level skills in reading, writing, and math.

Our science teachers write detailed weekly lesson plans in addition to long-term unit planning using the FOSS Teacher Guides and FOSS Web Online Planning Tools. To ensure lesson and content internalization, our science teachers attend weekly planning meetings and receive feedback on lesson plans. In addition to reviewing lessons, teachers analyze student work and assessment samples to ensure student mastery, identify misconceptions and plan for re-teaching strategies. Our science teachers meet as a team bi-weekly for a formal team development session to enhance teacher understanding of science concepts and the three-dimensions of the Next Generation Science Standards. Each science teacher also receives a weekly lesson observation with instructional feedback. Heights is committed to the ongoing professional development of our science team and sends the science team to the annual National Science Teachers Association Conference to receive additional professional development and growth opportunities.

### **1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

In social studies, we also follow the Core Knowledge curriculum infused with Writers and Readers Workshop components. Our units of study include influential leaders throughout history, social movements, the Holocaust, technological innovations throughout time, ancient civilizations, and periods of conflict. In addition, each class spends an intensive period of social studies instruction during Black History Month educating students on important civil rights leaders, with an emphasis on leaders from the Washington D.C. area. We are blessed to be a short trip away from numerous cultural institutions that help reinforce social studies and science instruction. Past field trips, to supplement our units of study, have included trips to the National Zoo, Air & Space Museum, Anacostia Community Museum, Fredrick Douglass National Historic Site, National Gallery of Art, National Museum of American History, and National Museum of African American History & Culture.

We strive to make social studies come to life by showing students how it applies to their lives. We use texts that are both mirrors of our students' experiences and expose them to the rich diversity of cultures across the world. We assess comprehension and ensure that regardless of level our students are prepared to engaged citizens, ready to contribute to society.

### **1e. For secondary schools:**

### **1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:**

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Heights Academy compliments effective, high-quality instruction with robust curricular offerings to give our students a well-rounded education. Our art class is designed to hone fine motor skills, expose students to a variety of art techniques and theory, and promote self-expression. Physical education at Heights Academy exposes students to a wide variety of sporting activities and physical endeavors, while complementing our social-emotional curriculum by promoting confidence, teamwork skills, and perseverance. Physical education also serves as an avenue to reinvigorate students and push through each day's challenges. Spanish class exposes students to Hispanic culture and enhances their literacy skills through instruction in the fundamentals of Spanish. Music class prepares students with the foundation of music theory and practice and facilitates student participation in orchestra as they transition to middle school.

Heights Academy also offers a wide range of after-school activities and clubs to allow students to explore their passions. Journalism club gives students the platform to improve their abilities as writers in a positive and nurturing environment. Girls on the Run creatively integrates life-skills and promotes confidence, camaraderie, and fitness through running. Engineering club exposes students to scientific methods and engineering activities outside of the classroom, developing a love of science and offering exposure to future STEM-related career paths.

We complement our literacy curriculum with a library established for students through our partnership with Georgetown University. We receive books from Georgetown which are in turn stocked in a library where students can select books from a wide-range of genres to check out. Each classroom also has a "mini-library" where students are able to check-out up to six books at a time to take home. Both work to continue to strengthen our students' literacy skills, while promoting family reading.

Heights Academy has a strong social-emotional curriculum to facilitate emotional literacy, self-control, social competence, positive peer relations, and interpersonal problem-solving skills. Our educators also receive extensive training in trauma-informed teaching to respond to behavior struggles in order to preserve the physical safety, sense of belonging, and relational trust of students and adults. Our goal is to support the development of the whole child in order to set our students up for long-term success.

## **3. Special Populations:**

Instruction for special student populations is individualized through our continuum of services. General education and special educators review data to determine a student's least restrictive environment (LRE) to receive services which range from specialized instruction being delivered in the general education classroom to tailored, researched based interventions that occur outside the general education classroom. Heights Academy believes that special student populations are best served with their non-disabled peers and uses a variety of inclusive practices to provide specialized instruction inside the general education setting. Such inclusive practices include unpacking specialized instruction practices through content meetings, data analysis meetings, co-planning meetings, push-in academic and behavioral support, and multiple co-teaching models.

Instruction for students with identified disabilities is determined both on their area of deficit (where we need to add additional scaffolds to allow access to curriculum) and areas of strength (where we can leverage the current strengths to gain additional understanding). For example, a student with a verbal processing deficit may receive additional visual aids for vocabulary that is being taught whole group. Additionally, a student with an impacted working memory but strong verbal comprehension may have the addition of pre-teaching and repetition of information within the lesson to allow for multiple at-bats with the material. Students who have an attentional deficit may receive preferential seating within the classroom next to a high achieving peer to remind them of the expectations while the teacher ensures that they check-in with the student frequently throughout independent work time to keep the student engaged and on task.

For both reading and math, there is an achievement gap between our general education students and our students with identified disabilities. Our special education team works tirelessly to ensure that instruction is continuously adapted to best serve our students by means of:

**Data Analysis:** Data analysis of both grade level assessments (ANET) and individual intervention data is routinely reviewed to determine where the breakdown of student learning is occurring and how to craft lessons that will allow for foundational skills to transfer back into the general education classroom.

**Aligned Interventions:** Research based interventions that align with a student's area of concern are chosen. For example, students are enrolled in Seeing Stars when a deficit with decoding is identified while students are enrolled in Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) when a deficit in reading comprehension is identified. Ensuring that intervention programming is aligned to areas of deficits is essential in making sure that students are receiving tailored intervention services.

**Blended Learning:** Students are exposed to grade level content, intervention programming and computer based programming to approach foundational skills from a blended learning approach. Computer programming is chosen based on area of deficit and grade level accessibility and includes program such as Lexia, ST Math, iReady Reading, iReady Math, and Read Naturally.

**Professional Development:** The KIPP DC network hosts a variety of professional development opportunities for special education teachers at Heights Academy. Teachers have participated in a close reading development series focusing on foundational literacy skills as well as unpacking writing standards. Additionally, teachers advocate for additional professional development opportunities held within the District of Columbia.

### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

The core to our students' academic and personal success is our strong, caring, and joyful culture. We say and fully believe: Every child is known, loved, and celebrated as a reader, writer, mathematician, thinker, and growing human being. These are more than words on a paper; they are a philosophy we as adults in the building try and model in every interaction with a child. In turn, we see our students recognizing and valuing each other as peers and fellow learners. We believe that when presented with appropriate, rigorous, and relevant academic content, students will be engaged in the learning process. Furthermore, when they have a trusting and caring relationship with their teachers, they are ready and prepared to receive information and be engaged in their education. Coupled with routine celebrations, sharing academic progress with students and families, and having conversations about where a strong education can take you, we create a drive in students to succeed and excel in life and academics.

Heights Academy teachers transform students' lives, setting the bar for what others see as possible. Together they tackle complex challenges and become more than just colleagues. We create a strong environment for staff to feel valued and supported in three ways: first, we seek to deliver unparalleled development and opportunities for them to grow as professionals; second, we seek to create a culture at our school that is successful, ambitious, intentional, and full of joy. We are intentional about hiring great people and fostering an environment to celebrate and recognize the incredible work they do. Finally, we strive to increase sustainability and communication wherever possible, and valuing our team for the leaders and professionals they are. We've found this trifecta has created a culture of collaboration and excellence that has fueled our school's success.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

We believe that our parents are our students' first teachers. At KIPP DC Heights Academy, we use a two-generation approach to support our children and families. We recognize that no two families are alike and their needs often vary. Our goal is to create opportunities for and address the needs of both children and the adults in their lives. We expect teachers to keep an open line of communication with families. Formally, we meet with parents at least twice a year during parent-teacher conferences to discuss their child's academic achievements and challenges. In practice, our staff connects with families on a weekly, if not a daily, basis to update them on their child's progress. Teachers send home family newsletters; they are available before and after school to meet in person, and also provide all families with their cell phone numbers to text or call. Our communication with parents focuses on ensuring that they understand our vision for their child's education and learning more about their goals and dreams for their child. Our school's leaders are also regularly available to families in person, via email, and by phone to further support their child's success. While the nature of our work is predominately centered on child-parent approaches such as partnering with parents to help support student learning at home, we also place significant emphasis on building internal structures to implement parent-child approaches. For example, families have access to school mental health practitioners, and partner with other D.C. non-profits to connect our families with after-school and summer programming opportunities. For example, we have a strong partnership with Springboard aftercare to provide affordable before and after school care for our families. In addition, we partner with external stakeholders such as social work agencies to help provide families with the resources necessary to combat poverty, housing instability, and mental anguish.

### **3. Professional Development:**

KIPP DC Heights Academy is committed to its teachers, ensuring that they have the resources and support they need to excel. We seek to deliver unparalleled coaching and development to our teachers so that they can maximize their impact on student achievement.

Professional development is a vital practice for our staff members and for the growth of our school. All teachers participate in at least two weeks of development each summer before the start of the school year,

including all-school, grade-level, and content-specific sessions. Throughout the year, teachers receive one-on-one coaching for both personal leadership and instructional development from the principal, at least one of the vice principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders within our school. KIPP DC is committed to personalizing development and seeking teachers' input about content and delivery. We also ensure that teachers have enough time during the school day for planning, as well as time for collaboration with their peers. At heights academy, teachers meet at least twice a week with their subject-area and grade-level peers to maximize their impact and capacity.

A specific example of development is our multi-year partnership with Turnaround for Children, an organization committed to helping schools develop a trauma-informed approach to behavior management and student support. Our school leaders convene for monthly sessions related to embedding stronger behavior and support systems at our school. The primary goal is to ensure that the systems and practices within our school are informed by the experiences of the students that we educate, many of whom have faced one or more traumatic life events.

Another example of development is our network's Fellowship in Special Education. This is a yearlong teacher development program housed within KIPP DC's Capital Teaching Residency program. Fellows who complete the program gain licensure in Special Education: General Knowledge K-12 and also gain intensive professional development in working with students with exceptionalities. The components include regular coursework, assignments, observations, and feedback. Teachers are empowered to have a voice and a role in shaping their own development throughout their journey at KIPP DC. This focus on developing instructional excellence extends beyond teachers to include social workers, student support staff, and school leaders.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

Heights Academy's principal embodies the values and vision of the school, and their leadership philosophy is firmly guided by both. She embraces her role as a tone setter and leader by modeling the behavior she wants to see out of her students, teachers, and staff. She listens and is accessible to every student, parent, and staff member and expects the same commitment from her teacher's. She is not only a leader at Heights Academy but across KIPP DC organization-wide. She always puts students first in every decision she makes. She not only talks the talk but also walks the walk; never asking a teacher or staff member to do something she would not. She loves everything about teaching and pedagogy and understands the challenges our teachers go through having been in their shoes. There is a strong culture of pride in learning at Heights Academy and students genuinely show up each day eager to learn and support each other.

Heights Academy's two vice principals support the principal. The vice principals focus predominately on instruction by spending much of their day in classrooms. They coach teachers, lead content teams, and foster student achievement. They keep a close eye on student data and overall academic progress. The leadership team at Heights Academy checks in with each other constantly on matters pertaining to staff, students, and events happening around school.

Each morning, our leadership team meets to check in on staff, students, and events happening around school.

There is also strong camaraderie amongst the leadership team which helps ensure Heights Academy has a school environment that is joyful, positive, and intentional. There isn't a separate office for each, they all share one big office and exchange ideas freely. They genuinely care for each other, and most importantly our students, staff, and families.

In addition, Heights Academy's school leaders are also supported by KIPP DC's chief academic officer, deputy chief academic officer for primary schools, a network-wide student support team, and literacy and math instructional coaches. A centralized school operations and compliance team, as well as other "back office" leaders facilitate the principal, her leadership team, and teachers in maximizing their focus on student achievement.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

Heights Academy is unwavering in its commitment to strong instruction, and believes this commitment is central to student achievement. We believe in strong teacher models, guided practice, independent practice allows students to talk, think, and learn. We make sure there is some type assessment at the end of each block that gauges student comprehension of what was taught, and make sure we follow-up that day with the student if we find areas we can strengthen. No student at Heights Academy takes an exit slip home without someone following up about it, which helps to ensure what is being taught sticks and can be built on in the next day's lesson.

Our commitment to strong instruction also drives Heights Academy to create spaces for teachers to push each other, plan together, learn from instructional coaches, and reflect on their practice. There is a strong culture of collaboration and excellence that motivates educators at Heights to take advantage of every opportunity to grow as professionals and leaders, while equipping them to support each reader, writer, mathematician, thinker, and growing human being that attends Heights Academy. Strong instruction also drives Heights Academy educator's commitment to professional development and maximizing their impact on student achievement.

Relationships are also a driver of strong instruction. Meaningful learning experiences are created in environments where students feel loved and a sense of belonging, and Heights Academy teachers genuinely care about the personal connections they have with students and families. Amongst each other, teachers deeply care for one another and are all working towards the same goal, delivering to students the world-class education they deserve.

While Heights Academy employs multiple strategies to ensure student success, at its core is a commitment to strong instruction. It ensures students are learning, teachers are constantly motivated get better, and meaningful relationships are created among students, families, and each other. Without strong instruction as our beacon, our school would not be lucky enough to be nominated for this prestigious honor.