U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Marietta Center for Advanced Academics
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 311 Aviation Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Marietta	GA	30060-2463
City	State	Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Cobb

Telephone (770) 420-0822 Fax (770) 420-0839

Web site/URL https://www.marietta-city.org/Domain/15 E-mail triciapatterson@marietta-city.k12.ga.us

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. Grant Rivera
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail grivera@marietta-city.org

District Name Marietta City Schools District Tel. (770) 429-3100

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 Mr. Jason Waters
(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. 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):
   8 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   2 Middle/Junior high schools
   1 High schools
   11 K-12 schools

   22 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
   [X] 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	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	56	60	116
4	48	60	108
5	61	54	115
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	165	174	339

*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):

1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
8 % Asian
21 % Black or African American
19 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
46 % White
5 % 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: 3%

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 ***to*** the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred ***from*** the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	9
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	334
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
15 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 26 %
Total number students who qualify: 87

8. Students receiving special education services: 2 %
7 Total number of students served

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

0 Autism	0 Multiple Disabilities
0 Deafness	0 Orthopedic Impairment
0 Deaf-Blindness	1 Other Health Impaired
0 Developmental Delay	1 Specific Learning Disability
0 Emotional Disturbance	5 Speech or Language Impairment
0 Hearing Impairment	0 Traumatic Brain Injury
0 Intellectual Disability	0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 29:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2013

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

MCAA will be Above the Line as we provide an advanced STEM education with an emphasis on innovation, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.

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

Students with a qualifying standardized test score (75% or higher) in math and reading are eligible to apply. Applications consist of the MAP scores (standardized test), report card, and behavior record.

PART III – SUMMARY

Marietta Center for Advanced Academics (MCAA) is an Elementary Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) Magnet School serving 3rd-5th grade students within the Marietta School District. The award-winning school is located in the urban community of Marietta, Georgia. Through an application process, MCAA admits a limited number of students annually from within the Marietta city limits and surrounding counties. The population is very diverse and provides an accelerated curriculum for students who may otherwise not have the opportunity. The program at MCAA focuses on STEM education for all students by enriching all content areas, emphasizing communication and collaboration while finding solutions to real-world problems, and giving all students, including underrepresented populations, such as females and minorities, the chance to excel in a STEM environment. Over the past thirteen years, MCAA has developed into a model STEM school and, through research of schools and programs in Georgia and throughout the world, an effort is consistently made by the community and staff that support the school, to stay on the forefront of advanced academics. Through the addition of curriculum and educational experiences that help students discover, explore, and present material they are learning in all subject areas, the school is staying grounded in its original meaning for existence (STEM education), while recognizing the need to change and grow with the times, providing students with all learning styles and strengths a chance to excel. We are a team at MCAA and our success rises or falls on our behavior. Therefore, students and staff are asked to be Above the Line in all areas. Above the Line behavior is defined as being intentional, on purpose, and skillful.

The administration and staff fully believe that the development of the whole child, from the way they present themselves in their uniforms, to the way they perform on standardized tests, should be a constant focus. Students at the school are held to high expectations at all times and are recognized for their efforts to do so at school and within the community. The school also realizes that our eight to ten year old students need to release stress, relax, and have fun – so many of the learning activities involve movement and a chance to "just be a kid." MCAA is a one-to-one computing school where every students has a computer to use during the school day. The technology is used as a tool to find and design information. Many of the teachers at the school are Google Educators and several have collaborated with SMART Technologies to develop and enrich existing education platforms. Recently, MCAA has partnered with Yamaha, Marine Division, to expose students to technology of a different kind. Along with mentors and the donation of real-world artifacts, MCAA depends on partnerships such as this for financial assistance, as the school does not receive federal funding. In an attempt to aid in the creation and sustaining of innovative practices, MCAA has partnerships with local colleges, the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the above mentioned.

The unique learning experience at MCAA is also possible through the strong relationship established between the staff, community, and parents. Numerous events are planned and designed to help parents become part of their child's learning path. An extended effort is made to show students that when we go Above the Line to stay connected and involved, our community becomes a better place. MCAA has used the recognition from the 2013 Blue Ribbon Award to attract new students and educators who want to come and learn from some of the best in the nation. We continue to stay on the forefront of best practices by extending learning opportunities to our students and staff through staff development. We are proud to be a Blue Ribbon school and share knowledge, lessons, and ideas with others to the field.

MCAA is rich is traditions and extra-curricular activities. Some examples include: STEM Showcase Days when educators and parents are welcome to come and learn from what we have established as a model STEM school; grade-level extended learning experiences off campus (3-4 per grade level) that are directly connected to standards and current topics; an Evening of the Arts to showcase our students' many artistic talents; digital competitions at the local and state level; participation in Science Olympiad, Reading Bowl, Math Olympiad, Odyssey of the Mind, Lego-Robotics, Inventure at Georgia Tech, and Women in Engineering writing competition; Revive the Vine gardening club to integrate science and math to model Farm-to-Table curriculum;

Some of our school's strengths and accomplishments are: 1:1 laptops for students; 95% Gifted certified teachers; first STEM Certified School in Georgia; SMART Showcase School designated by SMART

Technologies; Georgia Platinum Award; Georgia School of Excellence in Student Achievement; Lab School for the National Association for Gifted Students; Georgia Library Media Exemplary Award; Georgia Department of Education – Superintendent's Distinguished Achievement Award; and an Intel Technology Success Story.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

While MCAA is a STEM school with a math and science focus, teachers work to enrich reading and writing/ELA in ways that integrate STEM thinking. As students journey through the writing process we encourage them to think as engineers. Students learn to generate ideas, develop plans and then create authentic opportunities to revise their thinking, much like that of an engineer. We use the Reading and Writing Units of Study by Lucy Calkins as our base for instruction, but enrich with best practices that include small group, guided instruction. Teachers have been trained extensively by our Instructional Coach to implement the Units of Study mentioned above and differentiate the lessons based on the advanced level of our learners. Due to the fact that most of our students read above grade level, we enrich with appropriate content considering age, interest, and reading level. We use data from the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment that is given three times a year to create strategy groups and target specific skills. Our Media Specialist and Media Paraprofessional work with students to create excitement about reading and build reading stamina, and choose books that are a perfect match for our students.

MCAA also uses the Georgia Milestone data to reflect and create tutoring groups for students based on their areas of weakness and strength. For example, this year several students are working on conventions of writing and the narrative writing process in before-school tutoring. Also, some students qualified for Advanced Content based on their achievement on the Milestones. We serve those students through small group instruction within daily groups in fourth and fifth grades. Our Academic Coach works with our ELA teachers to provide specific, detailed lessons for this. In order to serve as many students as possible with this content, groups are flexible.

Our school consistently qualifies for the State Reading Bowl competition and meets the District Reading Genre goals.

1b. Mathematics:

In mathematics, MCAA students are taught the standards with hands on activities that stimulate their thinking, allow for movement, and generate collaboration. During math, we use concept based instruction as a means of organizing new information in a manner that children are able to see and identify, while using a number of patterns and connections between facts and concepts, or ideas. Each day, students are exposed to a Number Talk, which is a short discussions among the teacher and students about how to solve a particular mental math problem. The focus is not on the correct answer, but on all the possible methods of finding the answer. Each student has a chance to explain their method. This allows students to decide on the most efficient method and promotes mathematical discourse among them.

Teachers work with small groups that are formed using Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment data. This helps teachers determine the exact skills that need to be taught. As the students rotate to stations, they use technology to enrich the standard being taught as well. Students also use technology to complete project-based activities. For example, third graders completed a Quadrilateral City project in which they designed a city using different geometric shapes and then used a coding program to extend the experience. Students use a variety of spaces to enrich their learning for math which include the Minecraft Lab (coding) and outdoor learning spaces (gardens). The students get a chance to work in partnerships and groups to complete multi-step tasks within the math classroom.

Critical thinking and problem solving are an integral part of student learning as math standards are intentionally embedded into engineering design challenges. This allows students to make real world connections as they apply math skills. During the daily Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) block, students frequently apply a variety of math skills such as measurement and economics as they draft designs and budgets for completed products. In addition, data from formal math assessments (such as

Georgia Milestones) is used to determine standards that are integrated into our engineering design challenges for additional practice and application. At MCAA we strive to prepare our students for 21st Century learning. We realize that the careers our students will have may not exist yet, but our STEM program purposefully integrates mathematics so that our students are prepared to be at the forefront of innovation.

MCAA students who participate in Math Olympiad excel even further and typically place in their competitions.

1c. Science:

Science is elevated to a different level at MCAA through the resources we have built while becoming a model STEM school. We are fortunate to have two science labs that are used by the science teachers to create and develop hands-on learning experiences for our students. Lessons include students making soil-testing kits, dissecting sharks, and creating model environments. Through asking questions, investigating claims, and modeling, our students are fully engaged in a student-centered environment. Students obtain, evaluate and communicate as they "get messy" in our science labs.

Experiencing virtual worlds using VR Google Expeditions in the classroom enriches the learning experience in science as well. Our teachers incorporate the Discovery Education Science Tech Book, which, as quoted by the publisher, is a breakthrough K-12 digital science textbook that changes the way students and teachers experience real-world science. We follow the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE), which are based on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The GSE promotes Three Dimensional learning through the integration of core ideas, science and engineering practices, and crosscutting concepts. At the end of each year our students participate in the Invention Convention as a culminating activity. Students have a chance to create or improve on an invention. Our students are learning to think like scientists and engineers each day.

Science plays a huge part in our Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) units. STEM is integrated into the schedule daily. All students participate in challenges that are connected to the current content and embody the engineering process. Students are required to collaborate, communicate, think creatively, and use critical thinking to complete the challenges. Some examples of STEM Challenges include: Wired to Change, Submerge with a Robotic Arm, Sphero Design, Neuron Choice, and Creative Roller Coasters.

MCAA students participate in many field trips throughout the year to enrich our curriculum. Third grade students participate in hands-on learning at the Tellus Science Museum. Each grade level takes an overnight field trip to Camp Fortson, a 4-H camp, where they attend classes that support the GSE. Fourth graders visit Sparkles Roller Rink to learn about the science of force and motion and simple machines as well as an overnight visit to the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

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

In social studies, students learn about civic, economic, geographic, and historical understandings through an inquiry approach and the principles of the C3 Framework to prepare them for college, career, and civic life. Teachers bring history to life by utilizing technology, primary and secondary documents and resources, high quality literature, and artifacts that allow students to immerse themselves in the historical period. Social Studies teachers make STEM connections by integrating Engineering Design Challenge, hands-on activities, and technology based projects within their units. Students use the principles of design to create products associated with content, such as designing and constructing Native American Homes and Hoovervilles. Some students use visual journals to document and synthesize the information they are learning. Teachers have researched and are implementing the Museum School Model for Social Studies instruction to extend learning. Our inaugural Exhibit Night will be held this spring. MCAA brings social studies to life by using real-time simulations, such as Christmas in the Colonies and Jazzy Good Times, and inviting guest speakers who are experts in the historical period studied. Students extend learning by participating in many social

studies related field trips including the Holocaust Museum, Etowah Indian Mounds, Civil War Museum, and Marietta Youth Museum.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The visual and performing arts curriculum at MCAA cover the Georgia Visual and Performing Standards. Our Arts department believes it is important to promote a desire for discovery and a genuine interest in making connections while exploring the world in which we live. Our programs aim to create experiences and develop an environment that exhibits collaboration, engagement and empathetic relationships. Our arts instructors model how to become caring citizens by being kind and considerate; maintaining a high level of honesty, integrity, determination, acceptance, and perseverance; and enhancing personal creativity and flexibility while developing new perspectives. We also create ways for students to use the arts to connect to the community. For example, our fifth graders have enjoyed a year-long connection with the Marietta City Schools Early Learning Center.

The Innovation Lab is a unique course offered to our students. In this Lab, visited in the specials rotation with art, music, and PE, student voice and choice and showcased through solution-focused and project-based lessons. The space for the lab is sponsored by SMART Technologies and students are involved in the following: Brain Teasers and Puzzlements as engagement activities that strengthen critical thinking muscles and skills; Growth Mindset Journals that showcase inspirational figures of the week, mindset vocabulary, critical thinking, creative mindsets, and goal planning to help students understand their emotional well-being; United Nations Global Goals ask students to research and apply knowledge through (COM)Passion Projects to make; and timely tech lessons that integrate the previously mentioned in an engaging, technical way so as to incorporate International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards.

The arts department mentioned above and our Innovation Lab teach Growth Mindsets to establish a shared vocabulary and a culture of acceptance that allows students to explore the Arts. Education researcher, Dr. Carol Dweck, coined the terms fixed mindset and growth mindset to describe the underlying beliefs people have about learning and intelligence. When students have a growth mindset, they believe they can get smarter and they understand that effort makes them stronger. Therefore, they put in extra time and effort, which leads to higher achievement.

Health and physical education at MCAA consists of a wide range of standard based and STEM integrated activities. Physical Education (PE) class provides students with opportunities to try a variety of activities to help spark an interest to lead them into a healthy life in adolescence and adulthood. We provide students with a sport education model, which consists of a variety of character development traits. Students are able to demonstrate collaboration, cooperation, leadership and sportsmanship. This model helps students to be successful in their future academic endeavors. MCAA health and PE programs also incorporate curriculum to help support our local feeder programs within Marietta. This helps to encourage students to be active and healthy outside of school to work towards living a healthy, active life. Connecting to the community is encouraged in PE by inviting our Marietta High School athletes to come and help model sports students can play and help with Field Day and our Fun Run.

Our Media Specialist collaborates with teachers to support their curriculum and teach research standards. Students are exposed to materials that are appropriate in regards to their reading level and taught research skills while using books about the social students and/or science content they are currently learning. Technology is integrated during the lessons and students are inspired to use 21st Century skills to explore their world. Students learn how to be responsible digital citizens during media lessons and our media

specialist organizes staff development for the staff. Through our staff development, teachers have learned how to use Google Sites for student portfolios that highlight student projects and field trips; Google Classroom for staff to communicate with students, give quizzes, turn in assignments, and share resources for class; Google Education Apps that help students and teachers utilize the Google Education Apps to communicate, present, and manage material including (Docs, Slides, Sheets, Drive, Sites, and Drawing). Other innovative tools incorporated in Media lessons include: Tynker, Tinkercad 3D, Spheros, Do Ink Green Screen App, Minecraft Education, and SMART Learning Suite. The media specialist also manages the Makerspace and STEAM store, which provide MCAA students and staff space and materials to work collaboratively.

3. Special Populations:

At MCAA, about 65% of our population is identified as gifted and is served through numerous models to meet their unique needs. Gifted resource is delivered for one segment each day in the area of STEM and cluster or collaborative models are used in math and science. Our population of gifted students is diverse academically, culturally, and socioeconomically so assignments and projects are differentiated to meet individual enrichment needs. Due to the high percentage of students receiving gifted services, 95% of our staff is gifted endorsed, therefore students grow through enrichment activities consistently throughout all content areas. Lessons for our gifted population are aligned with the STEM challenges that all students participate in, but they are extended to assess skills in advanced research, creative thinking, higher-order thinking and problem solving, and advanced communication and collaboration. Emotional development of self and becoming self-directed learners are also taught and assessed.

We serve special education students with the co-taught, inclusion model in areas where they require support. Our instructor is Orton-Gillingham trained and coaches our entire staff through behavior management strategies. MCAA currently has seven English Language Learner (ELL) students. Students are served using the inclusion model for all content areas. In order to continue building solid language skills, these students use Lexia, a program that provides explicit, systematic, personalized learning in the six areas of reading instruction which targets skill gaps as they emerge. This data provides teachers with student-specific resources they need for individual or small-group instruction. Support staff assist teachers with remediation lessons and school home communication to ensure fidelity of the program.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The overall climate of a school is a direct result of the culture that is built there. A positive school culture is one in which all students are encouraged to be the best version of themselves. Students need to feel safe, supported, and ready to learn. This is what we work for every day at MCAA. We achieve this by incorporating elements of both Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) and social and emotional learning to create the most conducive environment for learning. We have clear schoolwide expectations, consistent supports, and a positive behavior management system.

At MCAA our school wide goal is to be "Above the Line". To reach that goal behaviorally, students work to be: Ready, Responsible, and Respectful. These three traits are modeled by staff and directly taught to students. Clear behavioral expectations to achieve these three traits are defined for each specific location in the school on signage from our PBIS matrix.

MCAA is proud to have a safe environment where support and consistent procedures create structure and predictability for students, which increases instructional time and leads to student success. We have visual schedules, organized transitions, and classrooms that are set up to foster an environment where students can strengthen their collaborative and interpersonal skills.

The positive behavior management system at MCAA has created a culture that is not punitive, but rather rewards appropriate behaviors, improving relationships between students and staff. Students earn rewards for meeting and exceeding schoolwide expectations both as individuals and working together as a class.

Our counseling department supports a positive environment at MCAA through their mission to provide equitable access to a comprehensive, developmental counseling program that assists all students' acquisition of attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed for their academic, career, and social-emotional development. The MCAA counseling department services all students through individual and group counseling, parent/teacher consultation, and core curriculum lessons.

In a school with high academic demands, staff are well aware of the expectations consistently placed on them. An effort is made by the administration to recognize when teachers need support or a break. For example, teachers are given the freedom to dress down on Fridays and spend extra time at lunch once a month. The staff enjoy breakfast treats and dinner when they are asked to come in early or stay late for a PTSA meeting. There are multiple times a year that the staff also participates in after-school activities together to create a true sense of community with one another.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

MCAA understands the importance of family and community involvement and is strategic about planning and implementing volunteer opportunities. Parents take part in conferences, visit the classrooms frequently, attend and volunteer at school activities, and go on field trips. Our Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) is very involved and raises funds to help support academic and structural improvements throughout the school. Annually, the PTSA organizes and runs a Fall Festival, Turkey Trot, Holiday Carnival, Game Night, and several dress-down/doughnut days. The PTSA welcomes all families to become members and participate in these activities.

MCAA has an annual Career Fair where students share a resume with local businesses who have partnered with us. Our partners help with STEM challenges, provide financial assistance, and send student-mentors. Partners include: Yamaha Marine Division, SMART Technologies, Georgia Institute of Technology, The American Society of Civil Engineers, and Zaxby's.

MCAA supports feeder schools in the district by creating vertical relationships between their students and ours. Our fifth graders collaborate with the Early Learning Center for several activities and we invite High

School students to participate in special events.

MCAA is working to increase and supplement the communication we have with our non-English speaking families. The school hosts Coffee Talks that are aimed at Spanish speaking parents with little to no English. They meet once a month and topics have included: How to Access Student Accounts and Grades, How to Prepare for Your Child's Conference, Board of Education 101: Function/Importance, PTA: Function/Importance, and many others based on teaching the actual standards that the students are learning. The group also participates in a Fall Hispanic Picnic, College Outings to local schools, the Atlanta Latin American Association - Latino Youth Conference (for parents and students), and an End of Year Spring Celebration.

Communication is a key component to a strong relationship between the school and home. Teachers update their web sites consistently and send weekly newsletters, including content to be taught, upcoming activities, and important news. The Principal also sends a weekly email to all parents that covers district and school-wide events and showcases student work. In addition, parents are welcome to email, meet, or call the principal directly. The Principal hosts several "Fireside Chats" throughout the year. At these events, she invites parents and the community to come to a central location (off campus) to meet and discuss current events and ask any questions about their child's educational experience.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development is an essential component of the support that is provided to the faculty of MCAA. Our approach to planning and implementing professional development mirrors that in which we expect teachers to use when planning for their students. Through a process of formative classroom observation and teacher feedback we develop a professional learning calendar that meets the current needs of our teaching staff as well as propels us towards our School Strategic Plan goals. We use a Growth Mindset approach when introducing new learning to our teachers, allowing them space to learn, try, adjust and improve. We believe that teachers learn best when they have the opportunity to immediately apply what they have learned. One of the ways we allow for that is to have teachers participate in what we call “lab-sites”, in which we treat the classroom as a learning laboratory in which teachers go in and practice a new strategy or instructional method that they have just learned with actual students in real time with immediate feedback from instructional coaches or district instructional coordinators. When a “lab-site” experience isn’t possible, we incorporate collaborative planning time directly following their learning, so that they can immediately integrate new ideas into their lessons with support and feedback from instructional leaders. These planning times include teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators. Teachers and administration value this collaborative approach to professional development as it allows for an open dialogue about instructional expectations and for all faculty members to learn together.

Our school professional development activities are aligned with our School and District Strategic Plan. For example, this year we have focused our professional development on bolstering small group instruction. This directly relates to the district wide goals for student achievement, preparing every student for college and career success. We have trained teachers on how to analyze and use the formative and summative data that is available to them. Using this data to inform instruction allows for high levels of differentiation through small group instruction, meeting all students where they are academically. This personalized instruction allows for students at all levels to make growth and experience success in the classroom. The hands-on and collaborative approach to professional development allows us to use innovative strategies to build teacher capacity and promote student achievement in tandem with school and district wide goals.

4. School Leadership:

MCAA values collaborative decision making with all stakeholders. Our school leadership team consists of the principal, assistant principal, a team lead from grades 3,4, and 5, the counselor, our academic coach, our media specialist, and our gifted lead teacher. The leadership team focuses on increasing their personal leadership capacity while developing ways to create an environment where students and staff stay Above the Line. Through shared leadership, the team works together to solve problems, use data to drive instructional decisions, and employ methods to stay on the forefront of trends in advanced academics.

Meetings are held twice a month and teams have the ability to bring questions or concerns to administration through their team leads at those meetings. One example of how the leadership team worked together for managerial purposes was when our new playground was installed; we worked together to develop safety rules and presented them to the students. Another example is when we worked together to determine a three-year vision for the advancement of our academic program that included ideas, time-lines, and roles. The vision was then transposed into the mandated School Improvement Plan and shared with the School District and community.

The leadership team reviews standardized test data overviews to look for trends and areas where growth should be higher. After the trends are seen, the academic coach works with the leadership team to plan staff development and/or look for resources to support the academic growth of our students. The leadership team also addresses any behaviors that might have a negative impact on the culture of the school. One example of this is when students were not following the dress code. The leadership team talked about ways to change what was needed to accept new fashion trends and the students were thrilled to be allowed to have some different options.

In addition to the leadership team, the principal works with the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) to plan and support events that contribute to the well-being of the students and community (as explained in the previous section). The principal also works with the School Governance Team (SGT) to make decisions. The SGT consists of community members, parents, and staff. This important group meets once a month to discuss the school's strategic plan, student achievement data, facility upgrades, and enhancing stakeholder participation. The SGT can take recommendations to the school board.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Collaboration is the strategy that impacts our students and staff significantly and sets MCAA apart from other schools. The students collaborate and work as teams in all academic areas. In doing so, students learn how to accept other's ideas, understand how different people feel and think, and advocate for their own thoughts and ideas (this process is often difficult for high achieving students). In STEM, the collaborative groups actually test their design challenge artifacts to see if they have accomplished the goal of the challenge. In English Language Arts, students collaborate by researching and debating hot topic issues and participating in book clubs. Students are asked to communicate these results and work together to present the information in the most influencing way possible. Collaborative groups are strategic to either avoid conflict or present it so students learn to work through their problems and frustrations.

As students learn to collaborate effectively, they are reminded to focus on how they communicate. The students are taught presentation skills as they express their ideas and thoughts during the collaborative efforts. Being collaborative learners helps the students overall. As they listen to one another and work together, they establish a pillar of trust and commitment to do their absolute best as they find solutions to problems. Academically, collaboration extends learning and helps to monitor the level of understanding as material is discussed and presented.

Teachers have to lead by example by being collaborative themselves during staff development, team meetings, and during planning. Our teachers work with one another daily to develop engaging lessons and intentional activities. At data meetings, vertical teams collaborate and make conscious efforts to form learning groups based on assessment data and student behaviors.

As visitors come into the school, they constantly comment on the way our students engage with one another and the positive environment it creates. At a school where the academics are advanced and the pressure to perform is intensified, collaboration helps us all cooperate, lead, use resources wisely, recognize one another, and reward good effort.