

U.S. Department of Education
2022 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 Mr Jeff McCann Jr.
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Thurman Francis Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 221 Todd Lane
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Smyrna State TN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 37167-3226

County TN - Tennessee

Telephone (615) 904-6715 Fax (615) 459-7710

Web site/URL https://tfs.rcschools.net E-mail mccannj@rcschools.net

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. Jimmy Sullivan E-mail sullivanja@rcschools.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Rutherford County School District Tel. (615) 893-5812

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. Tiffany Johnson
(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, leave blank.*

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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2016 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: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

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.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 24 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 10 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 11 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 46 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	34	32	66
1	32	38	70
2	29	47	76
3	33	37	70
4	34	42	76
5	40	46	86
6	34	55	89
7	26	42	68
8	33	36	69
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	295	375	670

*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):
- 0.6 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3.9 % Asian
 - 14.6 % Black or African American
 - 6.7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 69.9 % White
 - 4.3 % 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 2020 - 2021 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, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	36
(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, 2020	667
(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. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 17 %

Total number students who qualify: 113

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 1 %
8 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. All students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>1</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</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: 6
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	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.	14
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.	2

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 20:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	95%	90%	94%	97%	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 2021.

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.

Our mission is for students to acquire knowledge for successful problem solving and to participate in experiences that build character. The vision of Thurman Francis Arts Academy is to provide a well-rounded education for each child through a dynamic curriculum enriched by the arts.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

https://tsbanet-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/policy_tsba_net/ETYFyKpmJ95LttFdZeQq94EBUeFrRmvTfYVOirnkmU5PBA?rttime=FpNsW3L82Ug

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

Thurman Francis Arts Academy is a choice, "magnet" school. Eligible students may reside anywhere in our county-wide school district. Students are selected based on academic ability and performance. Students applying for kindergarten through 3rd grade are screened with an established "IQ" test that generates a numeric score. Scores in the above average to "gifted" range are required for entry. Students applying for 4th - 8th grade provide their latest scores on standardized, state-assessments. Students with scores in the high "On-track" to "Mastery" range are qualified for entry. Other selection criteria include an assessment of literacy skills in K-3 and a recommendation from a prior teacher for all applicants.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

According to parents, Thurman Francis Arts Academy is Rutherford County’s best keep secret. Thurman Francis Arts Academy, home of the Rams, has seen its share of changes over the years. To truly understand and appreciate the context of this community we should start at the beginning. Thurman Francis School, as it was named in 1967, opened as a junior high school consisting of grades seven, eight, and nine. That structure did not last long. Because of growth in the area, the school was converted to a fifth and sixth grade traditional program. In school year 2000-2001, Thurman Francis became the second school in Rutherford county to be designated a magnet school - a magnet school based on the Leonard Bernstein model of enriching students’ learning experiences through arts integration into everyday curriculum. By 2003, Thurman Francis had officially become a kindergarten through eighth grade school. At this point, all classes in grades six through eight were magnet. The kindergarten through fifth grade classes remained a mixture of magnet and traditional. On average there were two classes of traditional students per grade level up to fifth grade. Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, Thurman Francis Arts Academy finally became a magnet school for all students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Thurman Francis Arts Academy is an accelerated school for those students able to thrive in a more challenging learning environment. The selection process is based upon high achievement on report cards and standardized tests such as TN-Ready, SAT-10, and CogAT. Along with high achievement, TFAA requires recommendation letters from a student's current teacher. What makes TFAA special is the fact we are the only magnet school within the Rutherford County School district that offers students a variety of opportunities to explore the arts along with a dynamic academic curriculum. Programs such as art, dance, music, strings, and band are all a part of the everyday curriculum for students. Along with these art options you will find students creating, producing, and directing the morning broadcast, communicating in Spanish, and using technology to produce presentations. There are a variety of after school events that allow TFAA students to explore options beyond academics.

To build upon TFAA's previous Character Education Program, "RAMS", TFAA has adopted a house system that represents 4-character pillars: R-Respect/Responsibility, A-Acceptance, M-Motivation, and S-Self-Control/Self-Discipline. The premise is that “No RAM is left behind.” We at TFAA want each child in the building to know that adults and peers are there for him/her at any time. The four houses are: Uborathe house of excellence; Motus-the house of motivation; Quantum-the house of respect; and Nnabot-the house of acceptance.

The mission of the TFAA house system is to create a school community where students work together to support each other as they grow academically throughout their K-8 school years. The purpose of each house is to provide guidance and support for academic, social, and personal development during each student’s time at TFAA. Each house is comprised of a variety of students from kindergarten thru eighth grade. Once students have been assigned to a house they will remain in that house until the end of their middle school experience at TFAA.

Mixed level houses provide opportunities for students in different grade levels to create new friendships, experience leadership opportunities, gain intrinsic motivation through perseverance, and learn how to work as a team. The house system instills teamwork, friendship, cooperation and leadership. Another strength of the house system is that it provides incoming students with a natural and supportive transition to TFAA.

Having a house system gets students involved in planning community service projects and other school events. Most importantly, the house system creates healthy competition and encouragement for students to comply with the TFAA 10 Essentials - expectations for a healthy school environment. Points are awarded to students who exemplify any one of our TFAA 10 essentials.

The COVID model of virtual teaching combined with in-person learning presented a shift in the traditional classroom structure. Teachers showed resilience and creativity as they took on the challenge of becoming more familiar with technology integration and online instruction. Students who opted for the online instructional model were held to the same high expectations as students who continued to attend in-person.

Projects were assigned, science experiments were conducted, and students were extensively held to online etiquette expectations. Instruction occurred daily in “real-time” and did not take a recorded video approach. Teachers carved out office hours during the day to ensure their availability to parents and students for any technology questions. School counselors also provided virtual check-ins to address the social-emotional needs of our students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas:

Thurman Francis Arts Academy ensures that the needs of all students are met through educators collaborating to provide an aligned curriculum, promote literacy-rich environments, and cultivate independent readers, writers, and thinkers ready to meet the demands of an ever-changing society. The implemented curriculum is comprised of programs that have been vetted and carefully chosen. The unique ability of our program is that TFAA teachers take the provided curriculum and collaborate with team members to develop lesson plans that will extend the learning. This includes incorporating project-based learning activities that provide students with opportunities for high levels of learning.

TFAA is unique in its approach to the overall curriculum and instruction in that our teachers dive deeper into the standards and extend curriculum because of our student's gifted abilities. This deeper dive into the curriculum allows students to explore and accelerate their understanding of the content well beyond grade-level expectations. We also cater to the whole child by incorporating the arts. Students take a variety of courses beginning in kindergarten that ignite their artistic abilities. Examples of courses offered include Spanish, STEM, and Orchestra which are available to students throughout their K-8 path.

Collaborative planning occurs between general education teachers and the specialty area teachers to bring the classroom content to life. Specialty area teachers meet with each grade level to determine the current units of study and design lesson plans that merge the content with each student's creative abilities. Arts in all forms provoke questions and curiosity and readily serve as a model for the academic thinking we want students to embrace. Knowledge of what has been learned is displayed in a variety of formats such as visual arts, dance, music, media arts, and drama.

1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

For grades K-5, the EL Curriculum is a program that supports a three-dimensional version of high achievement. The ELA content is designed to promote mastery of knowledge and skills, build character, and embed culminating tasks that require high-quality student work. Most of the lessons are grounded in a text that is at or above the expected complexity level. The text is utilized to develop knowledge that is worthy of student's time. Teachers use questions and tasks to reflect the depth of textual analysis required by grade level standards and to integrate these standards to build knowledge. Students are responsible for developing their thinking, analyzing text and synthesizing knowledge both orally and through writing with appropriate supports as needed. Teachers supplement the curriculum to address differences in the rate, depth, and pace of learning for students at TFAA.

Middle School students and teachers utilize the Amplify curriculum as an interactive core curriculum that brings complex texts to life. Amplify ELA is a blended language arts curriculum designed specifically to support students in grades 6-8 and prepare them for high school and beyond. With Amplify ELA, students learn to tackle any complex texts and make observations, grapple with interesting ideas, and find relevance for themselves. Students are engaged through dynamic texts, lively classroom discussions, and meaningful digital experiences. The program not only covers required content for all grade levels but also allows teachers time to add supplemental lessons and activities. Multiple entry points and differentiated supports allow every student, regardless of fluency or ability level, to engage deeply with the same complex texts and rigorous curriculum.

The district-administered CASE assessment is one source of data that allows us to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in ELA. Administered twice per year to gauge students' progress towards mastery of the standards covered at various times throughout the year (winter/spring). Modeled after each state's summative assessment blueprint, CASE Benchmarks are developed with the rigor, standards alignment, and

reliability of state tests.

EasyCBM is used in grades K-5 as a progress monitoring tool that allows us to collect data about a student's current level of performance in early literacy skills. It is designed to give teachers insight into which students may need additional instructional supports and provide a measurement of the effectiveness of their teaching. System reports provide information that supports evidence-based decision making, and the Interventions interface streamlines the process of keeping track of students' instructional program. Included are measures of early literacy (letter names, phoneme segmenting), phonics (letter sounds), fluency (word and passage reading fluency), vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

While our school doesn't currently have a high need for an embedded intervention program, teachers do however use the results from both above-mentioned programs to develop more individualized instruction during small group lessons. Each assessment provides real-time student performance data organized so that it highlights key patterns relevant for lesson planning, individual student conferences, and parent conferences. The data is analyzed student by student and skill by skill to make informed decisions that will help all students meet and exceed expectations of high levels of learning.

1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Thurman Francis Arts Academy implements a core curriculum that is aligned with the district vision of empowering teachers to create engaging and intentional learning experiences for all students. District specialists create detailed curriculum guides that embed sound mathematical practices to address focus, coherence, and rigor. Teachers begin each math lesson with number sense routines to provide deep meaningful practice that will give students the opportunity to deepen their facility with numbers. Instructional strategies such as Number Talks, Esti-Mysteries, and Cube Conversations are a few of the variety of ways teachers build the foundation for number sense understanding in our students.

Research shows that gifted students must be allowed to assume ownership of their own learning. At TFAA, teachers establish this by incorporating rich math tasks that improve skills in areas such as accessing information, higher-order thinking, flexibility in their approach, and communication for sharing their results. These tasks engage students in sense-making through deeper learning and require high levels of reasoning and problem-solving. Graham Fletcher's Three Act Tasks is one instructional strategy that is used by math teachers to engage, promote solution-seeking, and strengthen each student's ability to persevere through difficult problems.

Formative data assessments are used to provide teachers with evidence that indicate students' skill level, their concept mastery, and their progress toward curriculum goals. It is the expectation that teachers at TFAA use this data to adapt their instruction. The implementation of formal data meetings have proven to be an effective tool for keeping all conversations student-based and focused around PLC question #4: What will we do when students have learned the content? Students are also provided with immediate feedback as teachers schedule individual data chats that empower them to take control of their learning as individual goals are established during this process.

I-Ready Mathematics is the curriculum that is used for grades K-8. It is an online learning platform that helps teachers to identify areas of support and/or enrichment for all students. The learning path is personalized after a diagnostic assessment is administered at the beginning of the school year and progress is continuously monitored so that teachers can adjust as needed. Students work at a pace that is just right for them because the lessons are based upon their individual skill level and need. These lessons are fun and interactive in an effort to keep students engaged as they learn.

In addition to I-Ready, teachers utilize Reflex Math to adapt an individualized course for student mastery of basic math skills. Reflex Math is used to build fact fluency and boost student confidence in mathematics. Formative data is collected from the reports to help teachers create targeted instruction in a small group setting. These are effective because the teaching is focused on the homogeneous student group with the goal of improving an identified skill. Small group instruction is used as a space not only for support but as a space to encourage student thinking.

1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The goal of our school is to engage students with phenomena to make sense of the world around them. Science content storylines are used to introduce the students to high-quality science units. Following Ambitious Science teaching, thoughtful sequencing of main learning goals and science ideas along with matched investigations, allows students to make sense of the anchoring phenomena. This lesson structure requires to take accountability for their learning. The teacher can act then as a facilitator. Anchoring phenomena connects the student learning and empowers students to think critically throughout each unit.

Teachers at TFAA consistently work with district-level specialists to ensure that lessons are aligned with the school's mission and vision. In the development of lessons, the following items are required components: phenomenon, science and engineering practices, crosscutting concepts, three-dimensional instruction, and three-dimensional assessments. These components help to give students purpose for what they are expected to know and do by the end of each unit.

In alignment with TFAA's vision for students to flourish as problem-solvers, we have multiple opportunities for them to participate in STEM related activities. First, the Robotics club is designed to appeal to students in grades 5-8. Students are involved in the design, construction, and use of a machine to perform tasks that solve a given real-world problem. Second, students in grades 3-4 can participate in the Coding Club. The club is an introduction to basic coding skills in which students can program Dash and Dot robots to complete challenges provided by the instructor. Finally, STEM is offered as an elective course to our 6-8 grade students. Each of these opportunities directly impact the next generation of innovators. It is our plan at TFAA to incorporate a full-time STEM teacher in the 22-23 school year to broaden the number of students obtaining knowledge allowing them to improve their critical thinking skills.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Social studies is important for students to be able to connect with the past and relate it to the future. TFAA's current ELA and social studies programs blend nicely, promoting cross-curricular connections. Delivering lessons that apply across multiple disciplines fosters an environment where students can make real-world connections to current issues.

During these times of uncertainty TFAA has seen the need to strengthen school/community relations more than ever. Due to Tennessee's rich history, the Middle TN area has extensive opportunities for students to engage with the past. The TN State Library and Archives has been a great resource for teachers to incorporate primary sources for use in the classroom. Additionally, the TN State Museum has developed an educational outreach program called Traveling Trunk. All trunks provide teachers with creative lesson plans, museum quality mounted images, primary source artifacts, reproductions, and much more. Teachers have used the trunks to keep students engaged and bring history to life.

COVID protocols have prevented the opportunities for in-person field trips, therefore virtual field trips have been incorporated into the curriculum. A variety of local businesses have been able to schedule ZOOM meetings and provide an interactive experience for various topics.

TFAA teachers also develop lesson plans that integrate the arts into the social studies curriculum. The learning is extended by allowing students to demonstrate what they have learned through a variety of artistic activities. This alternate pathway allows students to demonstrate how they make sense of concepts, vocabulary, and events of the past. This broadens the number of students who will obtain knowledge that allows them to improve their critical thinking skills. Teachers are more effective when they use this strategy to meet the needs of diverse learners. This ensures we are keeping our mission and vision at the forefront of our daily instruction.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Thurman Francis Arts Academy is proud to offer a wide array of daily instruction in areas outside of core content. All students in grades K through 5 participate in a daily rotation that includes six related arts classes: physical education, dance, visual arts, music, computer technology, and Spanish language instruction. Each of these courses is taught by licensed, certified teachers. Every class has scheduled library/media center time on a bi-weekly basis. In addition to those offerings, students in grades 4 and 5 have a period of instruction where they can choose from string instrument instruction, percussion and piano keyboarding, or band. Middle school students in grades 6 through 8 receive two elective periods each day where they can explore their talents and interests via various options including: band, strings, physical education, dance, health, guitar class, ukulele class, visual arts, television broadcasting, computer technology, STEM, Spanish (for high school credit), "Genius Hour" (marketing class focusing on real-world problem-solving), and "A Squared" (Arts and Academics exploratory that focuses on integrating the arts into core content areas, resulting in culminating tasks). As many of these classes rotate each semester, students may choose up to four different exploratory options each year. The additional offerings we have at TFAA are what sets us apart from other schools and gives our students a unique experience and generates a creative atmosphere.

In addition to these offerings during the school day, Thurman Francis Arts Academy offers many extra-curricular opportunities open for exploration, both before and after school. Our Robotics program is a hallmark of our school and is open to students in grades 5 and up, while younger students can prepare for this opportunity by joining our Coding Club. This club focuses on simple coding and working with small robots that can be programmed to perform functions from student generated code. As our focus is on the arts, Drama Club is a popular choice for students. Each year they work to put on a lavish, musical production that involves students in sixth through eighth grades. These performances are open to the public and typically draw many community members. Other art-focused opportunities include choir (both advanced and apprentice), Rock Band (by audition only), Dance Company (Lyrical and Hip-hop), Art Club, Photography Club for grades 6-8, and Yearbook Club. All of this leads up to our end of year Talent Show.

Many other opportunities are available to develop knowledge and leadership skills such as, Spanish Club, Book Club, Junior Beta Club, First Priority (Faith-based Club), Debate Team, Math Club, and Student Council. Our Student Council consists of student leaders in grades 6-8 that actively participate in service projects and decision-making processes for our school.

Multiple team sports are offered for students to develop their athletic abilities. This includes basketball, soccer, tennis, track, swim, cross-country, golf, and archery for boys and girls. Additionally, baseball, softball, cheer, and volleyball are available for our students to enjoy.

In short, Thurman Francis Arts Academy students have a myriad of offerings, both required and elective, to explore the vast opportunities that make our school unique.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Due to effective tier I instruction and high levels of student academic abilities at Thurman Francis Arts Academy, students are not typically identified as performing below grade level. According to the data from quarterly screening tools, very few students qualify for tiered interventions, as outlined by our district/state-wide response to intervention policies. Students identified as needing additional support, per data from common formative assessments and teacher observation, are given additional time and support in the tier I setting. Teachers collaborate with instructional coaches and administration to develop a plan of support. Paraprofessionals are often used in the process of individualized and small group instruction to assist

students in reaching proficient levels of performance on identified standards and skills. Identified students are progress-monitored at regular intervals to assess progress and adjust support plans.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

With the high performance levels demonstrated by students, the focus of instructional interventions for Thurman Francis Arts Academy is on providing enrichment opportunities. As the focus is on engaging in arts opportunities, student learning is enriched and extended by incorporating the arts into daily instruction. Students at TFAA are afforded multiple opportunities to engage in various art-focused settings.

Kindergarten through fifth grade students receive daily instruction in dance, visual arts, music, foreign language, and artistic incorporation of technology. Additionally, students in fourth and fifth grades engage in an enrichment block each day by receiving instruction in string instruments, percussion instruments, piano keyboarding, and band. Middle school students are scheduled two elective course each day that focus on their choice of enrichment opportunities to include, band, string orchestra, visual and graphic arts, foreign language, guitar, ukulele, dance, television broadcasting, genius hour (creative problem-based learning), and "arts with academics" (creative project-based learning) classes.

The nature of Thurman Francis Arts Academy is to provide higher levels of instruction in the tier 1 setting. As students must demonstrate high ability levels to earn entry into our school, our focus is on meeting the instructional needs of high-level learners. Students are engaged daily in instructional strategies designed to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Teacher questions focus on higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy and depth of knowledge scales. Socratic method is a common strategy used to engage students in debate and discussion within the classroom to deepen thinking and encourage student to student feedback. Lessons are planned and instruction is delivered at high levels of rigor to push students to achieve at levels higher than grade-level.

3c. Special education:

While it is rare to have a student with special education needs at Thurman Francis Arts Academy, we often have a small number in need of those supports. Clearly, students can be gifted yet still have a disability in some area. Currently, three students are served for their identified needs as other health impaired, specific learning disability, and autism spectrum disorder. Those needs are met in the regular classroom setting with the inclusion model of instruction. Additional staff are present in class to assist with supporting the needs of identified students and assistive technology is utilized when appropriate. The special education teacher consults regularly with students and teachers to monitor the designated accommodations in each student's individualized education plan. Five students identified as speech impaired are served weekly by a certified speech-language pathologist. The instructional method employed is termed, "speedy speech" in our district. In that model, students are individually pulled from the classroom for short (5 - 10 minute) sessions of intense speech instruction that minimize time away from classroom instruction.

3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:

Thurman Francis Arts Academy currently has no students identified as English language learner.

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant, homeless), if a special program or intervention is offered:

Thurman Francis Arts Academy currently has no students that fit the "other populations" criteria.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Our mission at Thurman Francis Arts Academy is to see all students acquiring knowledge for successful problem solving while participating in experiences that build character. We pride ourselves on setting high academic expectations for our students. Over the years, TFAA has been recognized by the Tennessee Department of Education as a “Reward School” for multiple years. Some might ask, how does TFAA get such results? We keep students motivated and engaged throughout the learning process. Teachers accomplish this by integrating the arts into units of study utilizing project-based learning and by using the latest technology programs. We are a one-to-one school, with each student having access to his/her own laptop. Students use laptops to engage in real-time collaborative lessons during instruction, complete classroom assignments, and facilitate video discussions.

Because we place high expectations on academics, our students naturally engage themselves in the process of setting, reflecting, and revising academic goals. As a result, we celebrate their hard work, dedication, and achievements with the TFAA family each grading period. We invite students and their families to recognize distinguished citizenship, and exceptional grades during an “Awesome Awards” celebration.

TFAA’s middle school students are beginning to think about college and career readiness. Our counselor works with students to bridge the gap between middle and high school. She administers the You Science assessment which looks at a student’s aptitudes and interests, then takes the findings to build classroom lessons teaching students how to shift through the results in order to make informed decisions about high school career and technical pathways.

TFAA has a very involved student council comprised of 6th-8th grade students. Our administration involves the student council in decision-making processes. They have been very influential in providing leadership and in planning activities and service projects for the school.

COVID brought a whole new set of challenges academically and social-emotionally. The challenge was to keep the same level of engagement we are accustomed too while trying to reach students virtually. As a collaborative group, we created plans to address both in-person and distance learning. We learned how to use Zoom, Teams and other online platforms for virtual communication. Even in the virtual realm, teachers were able to build dynamic student-teacher relationships. Interactive games were played with in-class students partnering with distance learning students. Through it all, we kept expectations high and continued engaging in exciting and inspiring daily lessons as if all students were here in the building.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

History has shown the strong connection between the parent-teacher organization and the school. At TFAA, we strive to engage as many family members and community agencies as possible to support growth and development of the whole child. Our parent-teacher organization (PTO) gives TFAA’s parents and teachers opportunities to work together to supplement and enrich learning experiences for our students.

Our parent teacher organization creates, schedules, and implements the family and community engagement activities. The PTO meets monthly to discuss business, fundraising, and plan up-coming events. TFAA believes by providing students and families with opportunities to engage with the school environment and build appropriate relationships with the faculty, they will enhance student attendance, increase positive behavior, and positively impact academic achievement.

Throughout the year, our PTO plans “Spirit Nights” to bring the school community together while giving back to local businesses. These events allow us to support local businesses financially while a percentage of the proceeds go directly to the school. School-wide events connect teachers and students through student and staff dress up days, competitions, and performances to get the students excited about raising money for the school. Our biggest fundraiser, “Fun Run”, is an event where community and parent owned businesses

donate money to help off-set the costs involved in running a fundraiser while our students run or play kickball tournaments for sponsorships. This yearly fundraiser averages \$50,000 a year and the money go directly into teachers' accounts for the purchase of instructional supplies or large purchases for the school.

PTO supports us through various committees such as campus beautification, teacher appreciation celebrations, refreshments for students, and collecting needed supplies for classrooms. Without the strong support of our PTO throughout the years, many of the school's improvements would have not been possible. In front of our campus, there is an arts-focused walking trail with various mounds that showcase the arts. Families volunteer their time by adopting a mound ensuring the front of the school remains aesthetically pleasing. In addition to maintaining the school's appearance, PTO strives to make sure teachers and staff feel appreciated by celebrating birthdays, hosting monthly teacher luncheons, and providing dinner on parent-teacher conference night and so much more. We consider our parents true allies.

Understanding the need for quick, clear, and concise communication with parents, Class Dojo is an application that is utilized to connect with families. Teachers engage parents throughout the day by sharing videos and photos of wonderful classroom moments. Class Dojo is an important communication tool between teachers and parents. At TFAA, we know the strong relationships we have built between teachers and parents have contributed to the educational success of all our students.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

At Thurman Francis Arts Academy, we strive to support a professional culture by involving and engaging teachers in leadership positions. Our Leadership Team is strengthened through capacity-building processes that empower teachers who have a desire to lead.

One teacher from each grade level and related arts team are chosen to be part of a school-wide leadership team. This team meets monthly to address a variety of topics and concerns. The Leadership Team, along with the faculty, are encouraged to participate in decisions that affect the school. At TFAA, teacher input is invited, cultivated, and valued.

Due to our unique population, it is important that our teachers are equipped to address the academic needs of high-achieving students. Over the years, TFAA has partnered with Vanderbilt University's Gifted and Talented Youth program and the Tennessee Arts Academy. Partnering with these two educational agencies has provided us with much needed resources to meet the needs of our student population.

We collect data from a variety of sources such as: refinement and reinforcement data from formal observations, informal walk-throughs, input from the Leadership Team, assessment data, and interest surveys. This data is used to determine areas of focus for professional development activities. In-house professional development sessions have been led by internal experts - our teachers. Demonstrating their significant strengths in specific areas, teacher leaders organize professional development sessions for their peers. Leadership skills are fostered when teachers are given the opportunity to share their instructional strengths.

Collaborative planning is a critical component for developing effective teams. Planning time is set aside to allow teachers to unpack the standards and ensure lessons are directly aligned to state standards. Planning time is protected by limiting the number of meetings scheduled during this window of time. Strategies, such as "Breakfast with the Boss" are used to encourage open and honest communication between administration and teachers. Open communication allows the administration to stay focused on teachers' needs minimizing any miscommunication. Once a year, the administration and the Leadership Team review results from the Tennessee Department of Education's Educator Survey. Results are used to identify areas of refinement and reinforcement in the overall operation of the organization.

A positive school culture is maintained as we celebrate milestones. We firmly believe in the power of public acknowledgement. Teachers receive "Instructional Shout Outs" for using techniques that help students become independent learners. Faculty and staff receive "Staff Celebration Shout-Outs" for outstanding

success. These “Shout-Outs” are posted weekly in the Friday Focus newsletter. This approach encourages staff to find the positive in everyone they work with.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy at Thurman Francis Arts Academy is one of participatory leadership. While the principal and assistant principal serve as clear leaders, input into the whole school program is actively sought and provided by a strong leadership team. This team is comprised of administrators, instructional coaches, and grade-level/department heads. Meetings are held monthly to collaboratively drive the operation and direction of the school. Collective commitments provide the focus for the work of the Leadership Team. Weekly professional learning communities (PLC) meetings are held at the grade and subject level to analyze formative student assessment data, determine students of need, and develop plans to provide remediation and enrichment to those identified as needing such. Quarterly data meetings are held to thoroughly analyze summative student assessment data to determine standards that have and have not yet been mastered. Data is analyzed student by student, skill by skill. Vertical, subject-area collaborative meetings are scheduled monthly for the purpose of determining instructional plans across all grade levels. Comprised of the principal, assistant principal, and two instructional coaches, the Instructional Leadership Team meets weekly to analyze instructional trends noted in classrooms, determine teachers in need of support, and develop plans to provide that support. We look at observational trends, student benchmarking results, and lesson plans to determine necessary professional development to provide. A Student Support Team, including school counselors, the school resource officer, instructional coaches, administrators, and key support personnel meets weekly to discuss students in need of support for social/emotional learning, organizational habits, and other possible barriers to learning and success in school. Necessary interventions are developed and monitored by this team.

Thurman Francis Arts Academy is blessed with a strong parent teacher organization (PTO) that offers leadership at the parental level. They meet monthly to provide support to the school, students, and parents. Communication is the hallmark of this group as they serve as an effective conduit for parents to know and understand the events and happenings key to our success. The support they provide our students and teachers is a true benefit to the emotional health of our school-wide family. From student "Ram Refreshments" to monthly "Teacher Luncheons," the PTO works wonders while making TFAA a great place to be.

As clearly evidenced by the descriptors above, the Leadership Philosophy at Thurman Francis Arts Academy is truly participatory in nature. In fact, it can be further described as a model of "servant leadership." Our leaders continuously seek to serve our community by actively collaborating, planning, and providing support and care to all stakeholders.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The current curriculum utilized at Thurman Francis Arts Academy embeds a great deal of social issues within the content. Both the EL and Amplify curricula explore topics such as the civil rights movement, racial equality, and immigration. Social Studies materials explore world-religions, particularly at the middle school level. Socratic Method and other discussion strategies are continually utilized to guide our many classroom discussions that often focus on social issues. Our high-level students participate willingly and enthusiastically in the rich debate of both current and historical events. Thurman Francis Arts Academy has formed a diversity committee to develop plans to recognize and celebrate the diversity of our school and community. Plans include multi-cultural month, displays recognizing our various origins, and artistic performances that highlight other cultures. Many of our "Essential 10 Rules to Live By" focus on character traits such as: responding in a courteous manner, treat others as you would like to be treated, and modeling proper concert etiquette during our many artistic performances. As the Arts Academy for our district, we strive to be a model for the public as our performances frequently draw a large number of community members. Our school culture is driven by our 4 character "pillars" of Respect & Responsibility, Acceptance, Motivation, and Self-discipline/Self-control. Each pillar is exemplified and represented by one of our four "houses." The house system is designed to give students a smaller group of peers with whom to interact and bond, forming relationships with those who share both commonalities and differences. It is a key method

we use to ensure acceptance of others, regardless of background and experiences. Every student is randomly assigned a house family upon entry in which they will remain a member for the remainder of their time at our school. Thurman Francis is also currently participating in the NIET pilot program, Accelerated Character Education Development (ACED). We have formed a character education team consisting of administration, instructional staff, counselors, and teachers to drive this initiative. Their purpose is to plan and monitor initiatives designed to foster and maintain a culture of acceptance and respect. Our end goal is to become a designated "School of Character." Every morning, the TFAA student body recites an alumni-composed "student pledge" promising to use their talents with pride, treat others with respect, and "do their best to ensure that no Ram is left behind."

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The secret to our success at Thurman Francis Arts Academy is our focus on the Arts. Due to the "Arts Academy" moniker in our name, we are able to offer more courses in arts-based areas than typical schools throughout the district and state. Students in grades K-5 participate in dance, visual arts, music, Spanish, string orchestra, percussion performance, piano keyboarding, band, and computer technology. Middle school students in grades 6-8 are offered two elective courses per day. Options to pick from include Guitar, Ukulele, Media Broadcasting Arts, String Orchestra, Band, Vocal Music, Visual Arts, Spanish (for high school credit), Arts & Academics (aka A2), and "Genius Hour" (marketing and presentation focus). Many after-school, extra-curricular opportunities in the arts are also provided. This would include Drama club, Choir, Dance company, Debate, Robotics, and Computer Coding. Significant research supports the position that students who participate in the arts score better in classroom performance and standardized testing. Artistic participation addresses portions of the brain that would otherwise never be utilized to their fullest degree. For Thurman Francis Arts Academy, the benefits of arts participation are numerous. We find an important benefit is student motivation. Students are motivated to do well at our school in order to enjoy the many avenues they have to explore their talents. Participation in extra-curricular activities is contingent upon maintaining high levels of academic performance. While students do not need to display any degree of talent to enter our school, they often find hidden talents they did not know they shared with their fellow students. The camaraderie and confidence developed by performing in public builds our students "soft-skills" and develops pride in always giving their best. When interviewed for reasons why TFAA is a special school to attend, students have repeatedly mentioned the multiple opportunities for them to explore and develop their talents as a key factor in why to choose our school. In short, performing builds confidence, confidence breeds success.