

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2009 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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Type of School: (Check all that apply)  Elementary  Middle  High  K-12  Other  
 Charter  Title I  Magnet  Choice

Name of Principal: Mrs. Amber Lail

Official School Name: The First Academy Lower School

School Mailing Address:  
2667 Bruton Boulevard  
Orlando, FL 32805-5753

County: Orange State School Code Number\*: N/A

Telephone: (407) 206-8610 Fax: (407) 206-8721

Web site/URL: www.thefirstacademy.org E-mail: amberlail@thefirstacademy.org

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\*:

District Name: N/A Tel:

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Scott Boyd

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Original signed cover sheet only should be mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as USPS Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, NCLB-Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, US Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

## PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2008-2009 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2003.
6. The nominated school has not received the No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, or 2008.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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

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All data are the most recent year available.

**DISTRICT** (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

Does not apply to private schools

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

- Urban or large central city
- Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
- Suburban
- Small city or town in a rural area
- Rural

4.   8   Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

     If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	8	5	13	7			0
K	22	26	48	8			0
1	32	30	62	9			0
2	27	35	62	10			0
3	26	37	63	11			0
4	28	42	70	12			0
5	32	47	79	Other			0
6			0				
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL</b>							397

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:                    0 % American Indian or Alaska Native  
    2 % Asian  
    7 % Black or African American  
    7 % Hispanic or Latino  
    0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
    80 % White  
    4 % Two or more races  
    **100 % Total**

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting 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.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 5 %

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

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	14
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	8
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	22
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	423
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.052
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	5.201

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 0 %

Total number limited English proficient 0

Number of languages represented: 0  
 Specify languages:

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0 %

Total number students who qualify: 0

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 6 %

Total Number of Students Served: 22

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>0</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>11</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>5</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>21</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Total number	<u>34</u>	<u>5</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19 :1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	95%	96%	97%
Daily teacher attendance	98%	94%	94%	94%	96%
Teacher turnover rate	7%	28%	18%	27%	23%

Please provide all explanations below.

- The daily teacher attendance rates under 95% between 2004 and 2007 include paid professional development days as well as personal and sick days. The increased percentage for 2007-2008 reflects administrative decisions made to decrease the number of days teachers are taken out of class for reasons other than illness.
- The teacher turnover rate from previous years tends to reflect the transient nature of the Orlando area. In addition, leadership decisions were made to change key personnel to meet increased professional expectations and affect student achievement. The substantial decrease in the turnover rate for 2007-08 demonstrates effective personnel decisions and also economic influences which have impacted job changes and kept families in the area.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2008 are doing as of the Fall 2008.

Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>0</u> %
Enrolled in a community college	<u>0</u> %
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>0</u> %
Found employment	<u>0</u> %
Military service	<u>0</u> %
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	<u>0</u> %
Unknown	<u>0</u> %
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>100</u></b> %

## PART III - SUMMARY

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The First Academy (TFA), a Christ-centered college-preparatory school serving approximately 1,000 students in grades kindergarten through twelve, has been Central Florida's first choice in private Christian education since 1987. Since that time, the school has continued to grow the academic, fine arts, and athletic programs which have elevated its students to the highest levels of achievement.

The First Academy is accredited by the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The school is comprised of three divisions, a) the Lower School (Transitional Kindergarten to fifth grade), b) the Middle School (sixth to eighth grade), and c) the Upper School (ninth through twelfth grade). Each division, though under the same board and headmaster, is led by its own principal and administrative staff.

The mission of The First Academy is to prepare children for life as Christian leaders who put character before career, wisdom beyond scholarship, service before self, and participation as a way of life. TFA's vision is to forge an enduring partnership between church, home, and school that will produce powerful and effective student leaders who will impact their world for Jesus Christ through Biblical thought and action. The exceptionally qualified faculty strives to unlock the strengths of each student, with a passion to teach the mind and reach the heart.

As a college-preparatory school, The First Academy is dedicated to the continual pursuit of academic excellence. The scope and sequence of the Lower School curriculum is based on the Stanford Achievement Test Series Tenth Edition Compendium of Instructional Standards for the core academic areas, and the Florida Sunshine State Standards for the special areas including Music, Art, Physical Education, and Spanish. To help ensure the success of all students, the Lower School launched The Learning Center, which offers programs such as Higher Ground, classes designed to enrich the educational environment of academically accelerated students. The Learning Center also provides programs for students needing additional assistance as they strive for academic success.

Fruits of the rigorous curriculum can be seen in many achievement milestones, including 47% of fourth and fifth graders qualifying for the Duke Talent Identification Program this past spring, and 28% of the fourth and fifth graders achieving a 4.00 GPA this fall to qualify for the Headmaster's List. In addition, 32% of our first through fifth grade students were invited to participate in the Higher Ground program based on scoring in the 95th percentile or above on achievement/ability assessments. Also, in spring of 2008, all grade levels, kindergarten through fifth, met or exceeded the NCLB – Blue Ribbon Schools criteria in reading and math on the Stanford 10 Achievement Test.

The First Academy Lower School has implemented many programs to nurture and equip the students beyond the academic curriculum. One example of this is the third, fourth, and fifth grade Student Leadership Program which emphasizes character and leadership qualities embodied in TFA's mission statement, Honor Code, and the school year theme. Another program, *God's Plan for Growing Up*, is designed to meet the developmental needs of fifth grade students and recently received the *Exemplary School Program* award from ACSI. Along with the high academic rigor, TFA offers a wide array of after school activities in The Royal Academy of the Arts and the Youth Sports program.

Central Florida families are drawn to TFA because of its unique essence that has best been described as, "definitively Christ-centered, distinctly college-prep." The strong tuition assistance program opens school admission to families from many different backgrounds and contributes to the diversity of the student population. In keeping with the family atmosphere, parental involvement is highly valued and critical to the success of the school and its programs.

## PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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### 1. Assessment Results:

The First Academy has established a comprehensive system for evaluating individual and group progress. In addition to a variety of on-going formal and informal assessments, the Stanford Achievement Test - 10th Edition (SAT 10) is administered to all K-5 students as a means of comparing academic progress to national norms. Individual student progress as well as grade level gains are monitored with scores obtained through yearly SAT 10 testing. For five consecutive years, from 2004-2008, TFA's SAT 10 reading and math scores have met or exceeded standards set by NCLB-National Blue Ribbon Schools in the first, second, and third grades. In the past two years, reading and math scores from all grade levels qualified TFA as being ranked in the top ten percent in the nation. This is particularly significant considering that TFA's admissions criteria of 50th percentile and above in reading and math is broader than other comparable college-preparatory schools.

A review of SAT 10 reading scores has revealed notable findings over the five year period. First and second graders scored significantly above the Blue Ribbon qualifying scores. For example, first grade scores ranged from 79-87th percentile in 2004-2008, which significantly exceed the Blue Ribbon criteria of 66th percentile. Second grade scores ranged from 76-85th percentile, exceeding the Blue Ribbon criteria of 67th percentile. Also, third grade scores ranged from 74-84th percentile, exceeding the Blue Ribbon criteria of 74th percentile four out of the five years. While fourth and fifth grade reading scores for 2007 and 2008 were in the top 10% of the nation, these scores met but did not significantly exceed the criteria as in first, second and third grades. Fourth grade scores reflect steady progress over the five year period but also reveal an opportunity for growth.

In the area of math, second and third grade SAT 10 scores met the Blue Ribbon criteria for the five year period of 2004-2008. First grade scores met the criteria three out of the five years and maintained scores in the 80-90 percentile range all five years. The assessment data also shows that grades three and five had significant gains ranging from the 78-86th percentile in third grade and 81-89th percentile in fifth grade. Again, fourth grade scores met the Blue Ribbon criteria in two out of the five year period, revealing an opportunity to target areas to improve and increase SAT 10 math scores.

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is the state assessment given to grades three to ten in Florida public schools. Beginning in 2005, Florida administered custom forms of the SAT 10 reading and math subtests for the norm-referenced portion of the test. A comparison of TFA's third through fifth grade scores to the third through fifth grade FCAT scores shows that TFA consistently scored significantly above the public schools in both reading and math. From 2005-2008, TFA students averaged 15 percentile points higher than public school students in reading, and 12 percentile points higher in math.

In keeping with the school's mission, vision, and educational goals, specific standards are targeted to achieve successful results. As teachers and administrators continue to use the data obtained through the SAT 10 to sharpen and enhance instructional strategies and content, TFA is well on it's way to meeting the goal of achieving 90th percentiles in both reading and math for all grade levels.

### 2. Using Assessment Results:

The school uses standardized testing results in a variety of ways to determine the effectiveness of instruction and curriculum. The Otis Lennon School Ability Test is administered in conjunction with the SAT 10 each year and is used to compare student ability and achievement scores. Diagnostic testing in reading and math is used to track individual student progress at least three times per year. School leadership teams use assessment

results to evaluate and prioritize annual professional development needs in the areas of curriculum and instruction. Teachers and administrators collaborate in the decision-making process to determine changes with curriculum or school programs.

Teachers work together as grade level teams to evaluate SAT 10 individual, class and grade level scores. Teams use assessment results to determine areas to target for improvement and make recommendations for curriculum changes and/or instructional strategies. A new math curriculum was implemented in 2007 for fourth and fifth grades in response to analysis of math problem-solving scores. As grade level teams review test data, an *Instructional Priorities Worksheet* is completed with a plan of action for the following school year. For instance, as a result of examining 2008 reading sub-test scores, second grade teachers noted a decrease in reading comprehension, and implemented specific strategies to target reading comprehension. The *Instructional Priorities Worksheet* is reviewed by teachers periodically throughout the year. Progress is assessed and the plan adjusted, as needed, in order to meet the goals outlined in the instructional plan.

Teachers use individual student scores to assist with class placement and to assess learning needs. For example, students who achieve scores above the 95th percentile may qualify for Higher Ground or Critical Thinking Skills classes or recognition for specific programs such as the Duke Talent Identification Program. In addition, teachers use individual scores to recognize and assess student learning needs. Students whose scores fall below the 50th percentile in reading and/or math are flagged as a "concern," and may be placed on academic review or probation, requiring tutoring or further testing for learning difficulties. Teachers, parents and administrators work together to develop a plan of action to raise the student's achievement level. These students are more closely monitored throughout the school year with additional diagnostic assessments to track progress.

### **3. Communicating Assessment Results:**

The First Academy uses various tools to communicate the academic progress to students, parents and to the community. TFA views the teacher-parent partnership as vital to the success of the school and its students. Therefore, teachers are expected to communicate student progress on a regular basis. Grades are available to students and parents online and are updated weekly. Teachers notify parents during the quarter when a student's grade drops below 70 percent so that the parent has the opportunity to assist the teacher in helping foster success with the student.

The school website, RenWeb, TFA Today, The Royal Reporter, and First Impressions provide information on overall student achievement. For example, these communications include information on percentages of students that qualify for the Duke Talent Identification Program and statistics stating how our students scored compared to national norms. Tables showing K-5 standardized test results for the past three years are also available through the Admissions Office. "Coffee" sessions are scheduled to allow time for parents to meet with administrators and other school leaders to ask questions, give input or address any concerns about academics.

SAT 10 results are shared in a variety of ways throughout the year. Individual student reports, along with a letter to help parents interpret the results, are sent home with the final report card at the end of the year. Administrators are available during the summer months to discuss questions parents may have regarding both individual and group scores. During the first quarter of the year, teachers conduct conferences with every family. SAT 10 results are discussed in conjunction with indicators of student progress such as grades and other standardized diagnostic assessment results for reading and math.

### **4. Sharing Success:**

The First Academy networks, educates and shares successes with other institutions through a variety of means including conference presentations, accreditation team participation and meeting with teachers and staff from

other schools. Schools both large and small often visit the campus for a first-hand look at the high quality classroom instruction, facilities and the many programs and services offered. In the event TFA is awarded Blue Ribbon School status, the number of schools seeking to learn from our successes would grow exponentially.

The Learning Center and Higher Ground have served as models for other schools that desire to develop programs for academically talented students and/or those with specific learning disabilities. God's Plan for Growing Up, the school-wide Crisis Management Plan, the Instructional Priorities Worksheet, and the Standards and Benchmarks Timelines are resources that have been shared with other schools. Also, detailed curriculum and program information is provided to local, state and national schools, upon request. Faculty and staff often make themselves available to other professionals by telephone or electronic communications, as well as during on-site visits.

The heart of the mission statement of The First Academy is to prepare children for life outside of the school so they will be an example in the community. TFA invests time and resources in research, development, and implementation of new programs and initiatives to help students develop in character, wisdom, service and participation. The students are the best example of the school's achievements and it is a privilege to share them, as a living example of our success, with the community and throughout the nation.

## PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Curriculum:

The First Academy offers a comprehensive curriculum designed to stimulate young minds and develop important critical thinking skills in order to prepare children to become outstanding leaders in their community. The core subject areas include Reading, English, Math, Science, Social Studies and Bible. Special Area classes are provided for all students in kindergarten through fifth grade. National and state standards and objectives are used to set minimal expectations for student achievement in all subject areas.

Reading and English integrate phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, grammar and writing skills, as well as provide students the opportunity to read quality literature. Computer-based programs such as Accelerated Reader® are used to develop and strengthen reading skills. The school places a strong emphasis on reading comprehension. Students that score 100 percent on Accelerated Reader® comprehension tests are recognized as part of the 100% Club. Other diagnostic assessments are used several times a year to monitor student progress and demonstrate skill development. The Shurley English curriculum was adopted last year to specifically increase skills in grammar and writing. The Shurley English approach to instruction includes jingles, chants and recitations to reinforce knowledge of the parts of speech and diagramming sentences. Writing instruction is another area that has been enhanced with intensive teacher training and the implementation of Thinking Maps. Students in grades K-5 are able to use eight types of Thinking Maps to organize thoughts in order to produce quality writing. Writing progress is monitored school-wide to track student performance.

Mathematics instruction begins with a hands-on approach in the early years, helping students make strong connections with sorting, patterning, and graphing, as well as building number skills. Students must demonstrate mastery of basic number facts with addition, subtraction and multiplication by third grade in order to prepare for the demands of the fourth and fifth grade program, when students are introduced to the algebraic processes.

The Science program is standards-based and gives consistent instruction from kindergarten to fifth grade. All students are engaged in a variety of hands-on exploratory activities including experiments, projects and science fairs. The fifth grade SAT 10 scores showed a significant increase in the past two years with the implementation of a science lab.

Kindergarten through fifth grade Social Studies provides students the opportunity to learn about American heritage and culture. The Christian-based curriculum is supplemented with resources to meet the expectations of the school's curriculum standards and objectives. Performance-based assessments such as the Wax Museum in third grade and the State Fair in fifth grade, provide students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge beyond written tests.

Bible is considered a part of the core curriculum. In addition to a survey of Bible stories and themes, instruction focuses on helping students develop a Biblical Worldview. Teachers utilize the Building on the Rock Bible curriculum for primary instruction and incorporate The Truth Project video series to develop knowledge of Bible themes and integrate biblical concepts in other subject areas.

Special Area classes provide enrichment and enhance classroom instruction. Rhythm, style and form are explored during Music as students sing, dance and play instruments, including keyboards in a state-of-the-art piano lab. A life-long love of art is cultivated as students explore artistic expression, art history and art criticism through the use of varied mediums during Art class. The Spanish curriculum incorporates foundational language skills, cultural awareness, as well as differentiated activities for advanced students.

Physical Education classes, scheduled multiple times per week, provide students the opportunity to develop strength, coordination, agility and flexibility promoting an active and healthy lifestyle. Additional enrichment classes are provided for third through fifth grade students in the areas of choral performance and beginning Band.

## **2a. (Elementary Schools) Reading:**

The First Academy utilizes a comprehensive approach to teaching reading and language skills that includes phonemic awareness, explicit phonics instruction, vocabulary development, oral fluency and comprehension. Open Court/SRA (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill) is the core reading curriculum at The First Academy. The school adopted the program many years ago and continues to use it as the basis for reading instruction as it meets the needs and expectations of the standards and benchmarks. The curriculum builds strong foundational skills in phonemic awareness and phonics instruction and infuses quality literature. The reading curriculum is supplemented with Accelerated Reader© to promote comprehension skills. Students are expected and encouraged to read books within their reading zone and to achieve comprehension scores of 85 percent or higher. Kindergarten students may participate in the Accelerated Reader© program once they have reached a specific reading level.

The reading curriculum follows a specific scope and sequence. As students progress through the grade levels, instructional methods and expectations for mastery increase. During the kindergarten year the students learn concepts of print, and letter-sound relationships. Students learn to manipulate individual sounds to begin reading words and then to read orally with accuracy and expression. First and second grade students learn and practice the rules of phonics. They learn to gain meaning from written text and to understand the principles of written expression.

By third grade, students develop more advanced reading skills and master phonics instruction. Fourth and fifth grade students must be able to read to learn, as they apply multiple reading strategies to increase comprehension and oral fluency. Fifth grade students participate in a study of different types of literature or novel studies. Throughout all grade levels, teachers incorporate a variety of hands-on and creative activities designed to instill and enhance a love for reading.

## **2b. (Secondary Schools) English:**

This question is for secondary schools only

## **3. Additional Curriculum Area:**

Bible instruction is integrated across the curriculum and is considered a core subject area, critical to all aspects of learning. The Bible curriculum consists of four components: worldview and Bible survey, integration of worldview concepts across the curriculum, leadership training, and chapel services/presentations. Summit Ministries Building on the Rock is a unique K-5 Bible curriculum designed to help students formulate and relate learned Bible facts with a genuine Christian Worldview. Worldview concepts are integrated and reinforced with The Truth Project, created by Focus on The Family. TFA faculty has developed grade appropriate lesson plans for social studies and science based on worldview components from The Truth Project. Truth Project lessons have been recognized by the ACSI as an exemplary program and the school was encouraged to provide it as a model for other Christian schools.

Student leadership is another component of the Bible curriculum. In keeping with the mission statement of the school, “preparing students for life as Christian leaders,” students in grades three to five participate in the Student Leadership Training program. Students receive instruction in twelve interactive skill modules centered on The First Academy’s mission statement, Honor Code and school year theme. These interactive lessons use visual thinking maps and involve many hands-on, group oriented activities to help students

translate foundational worldview concepts from theory to life integration. Chapel services provide a time for corporate worship as well as serve as an opportunity for student participation with classroom presentations. Christian leadership skills are reinforced as students develop confidence in speaking and performing in front of large audiences. The goal of the Bible curriculum is to put hands and feet to the qualities of servant leadership, character, wisdom, and participation, and translate TFA's mission statement from theory to real-life application.

#### **4. Instructional Methods:**

One of the core educational beliefs of The First Academy is that all students can learn and succeed in a loving environment where expectations are high. Teachers at The First Academy understand that children are unique and do not all share the same learning style. Teachers take time to learn the unique strengths and weaknesses of every student and strive to provide a wide array of educational methods to implement instruction. Accelerated Math is one tool used to differentiate instruction. Students are able to work on specific objectives and progress accordingly to meet their individual needs. Also, when academically-talented students are attending Higher Ground classes, teachers are able to give more direct attention to students who need additional help.

The First Academy believes that the objective or standard being taught is important, however the method or how the objective is conveyed is of equal or greater importance. The research-based format teachers utilize in lesson planning requires them to include a variety of methods for imparting subject area material to students. The most commonly utilized methods include direct instruction, discussion, question and answer, role-playing, story telling, hands-on activities and the use of manipulative materials, drill and practice and computer-based instruction. In addition, students are provided opportunities for cooperative learning, small group instruction and guided practice. At times, students are placed in ability groups to better meet their specific instructional needs. Students are also able to participate in science labs and experiments.

To enhance school-based instructional methods, The First Academy offers a variety of off-site, real-world learning experiences. These include field trips to the Orlando Science Center, Sea World, EPCOT, St. Augustine, local theaters, the Holy Land Experience, and Kennedy Space Center. Teachers are expected to take instruction beyond the classroom walls to enrich student learning.

#### **5. Professional Development:**

The First Academy understands that the responsibility for professional development rests with both the individual educator as well as the administration. The Master Teacher desires to continue to grow and mature in his or her field of expertise. However, the school seeks to provide accountability, as well as on-going opportunities for each teacher to expand his or her knowledge both in and out of the school setting. The school also offers a program in which teachers may receive funding towards the completion of graduate degrees.

Faculty and administrative staff work together to identify and target the areas for improvement and professional growth as this directly impacts the quality of classroom instruction. Planning and preparation for professional development begins the summer before school starts and continues throughout the school year as time each week is set aside for faculty meetings, in-services, workshops and team planning. Teacher workdays are calendared each quarter and include specific professional development opportunities to meet the needs identified by the faculty and administration. Standardized test scores and teacher feedback are used to determine areas targeted for improvement.

The First Academy is accredited by ACSI and SACS. Teachers are expected to stay current with accreditation requirements and are provided on-site opportunities to earn professional development credit towards re-certification. Students benefit from professional development when teachers are well trained to implement

curriculum materials utilizing diverse instructional methods. For example, writing instruction has been the focus of the school's professional development plan in the last year. The school provided professional development days for teacher training in Thinking Maps as the first stage of the training. Teachers are expected to provide the administration with quantitative data documenting increased writing instruction. Students in grades three to five participate in standardized testing for writing each year in the spring, which provides information on the effectiveness of instruction on student performance.

## **6. School Leadership:**

The Lower School Principal serves as part of the TFA Leadership team, which includes the Headmaster, divisional principals, and other department managers. The role of the principal is to provide leadership for the instructional and support staff and to participate in planning for programs, activities, events and training that will improve student achievement and promote success for students. The primary role of the principal is to provide an accountability structure so that yearly goals are met. For example, the principal leads the administrative staff which includes the assistant principal, guidance counselor and grade level team leaders to set annual academic goals. The leadership team meets weekly to discuss programs and policies, address student and parent issues or concerns, and work together to strengthen curriculum through vertical teaming. A monthly planner is used to assign specific responsibilities for events and activities to members of the team. This type of planning ensures the timely completion of the details outlined in the planner and provides the appropriate level of accountability in attaining the desired outcome for teacher and student performance.

The principal oversees instructional supervision. This three-tiered system incorporates self-evaluations, peer observations and principal-teacher observations. Teachers set specific goals for professional and personal growth. Peer observations allow for additional feedback from fellow teachers. The principal-teacher observation is comprehensive and provides an evaluation of classroom management, instructional methods, professional development and leadership qualities. In addition to formal supervision, the principal utilizes the MBWA theory - management by walking around. The administrative team conducts weekly and often daily classroom observations throughout the year.

Finally, the principal's role is to lead the team in achieving B.E.S.T. goals: Bolstering Spiritual Formation, Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Servant Leadership, and Telling the Story. The principal serves as encourager and mentor to faculty and support staff and is responsible for managing materials and resources to meet the specific goals.

## PART VI - PRIVATE SCHOOL ADDENDUM

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1. Private school association: Christian
2. Does the school have nonprofit, tax exempt (501(c)(3)) status? Yes  No
3. What are the 2007-2008 tuition rates, by grade? (Do not include room, board, or fees.)

<u>\$9620</u>	<u>\$10140</u>	<u>\$10140</u>	<u>\$10140</u>	<u>\$10140</u>	<u>\$10140</u>
K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>
6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>				
12th	Other				

4. What is the educational cost per student? \$ 9640 (School budget divided by enrollment)
5. What is the average financial aid per student? \$ 1770
6. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction?  
26 %
7. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction?  
34 %



Subject: Reading

Grade: 1 Test: Stanford Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: Tenth Edition/2003 Publisher: Harcourt Educational Measurement

Scores are reported here as: Percentiles

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Average Score	86	85	79	79	87
Number of students tested	62	58	61	64	48
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					

If the reports use scaled scores, provide the national mean score and standard deviation for the test.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
<b>NATIONAL MEAN SCORE</b>					
<b>NATIONAL STANDARD DEVIATION</b>					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 2 Test: Stanford Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: Tenth Edition/2003 Publisher: Harcourt Educational Measurement

Scores are reported here as: Percentiles

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Average Score	84	80	76	80	81
Number of students tested	66	60	63	58	59
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					

If the reports use scaled scores, provide the national mean score and standard deviation for the test.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
<b>NATIONAL MEAN SCORE</b>					
<b>NATIONAL STANDARD DEVIATION</b>					

Notes:

Subject: Reading

Grade: 2 Test: Stanford Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: Tenth Edition/2003 Publisher: Harcourt Educational Measurement

Scores are reported here as: Percentiles

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Average Score	85	81	76	81	78
Number of students tested	66	60	63	58	59
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					

If the reports use scaled scores, provide the national mean score and standard deviation for the test.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
<b>NATIONAL MEAN SCORE</b>					
<b>NATIONAL STANDARD DEVIATION</b>					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 3 Test: Stanford Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: Tenth Edition/2003 Publisher: Harcourt Educational Measurement

Scores are reported here as: Percentiles

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Average Score	86	78	85	74	79
Number of students tested	56	67	60	66	45
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					

If the reports use scaled scores, provide the national mean score and standard deviation for the test.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
<b>NATIONAL MEAN SCORE</b>					
<b>NATIONAL STANDARD DEVIATION</b>					

Notes:

Subject: Reading

Grade: 3 Test: Stanford Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: Tenth Edition/2003 Publisher: Harcourt Educational Measurement

Scores are reported here as: Percentiles

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Average Score	84	79	82	74	77
Number of students tested	54	67	60	66	45
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					

If the reports use scaled scores, provide the national mean score and standard deviation for the test.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
<b>NATIONAL MEAN SCORE</b>					
<b>NATIONAL STANDARD DEVIATION</b>					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 4 Test: Stanford Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: Tenth Edition/2003 Publisher: Harcourt Educational Measurement

Scores are reported here as: Percentiles

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Average Score	81	84	76	78	77
Number of students tested	79	65	69	58	56
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					

If the reports use scaled scores, provide the national mean score and standard deviation for the test.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
<b>NATIONAL MEAN SCORE</b>					
<b>NATIONAL STANDARD DEVIATION</b>					

Notes:

Subject: Reading

Grade: 4 Test: Stanford Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: Tenth Edition/2003 Publisher: Harcourt Educational Measurement

Scores are reported here as: Percentiles

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Average Score	82	84	78	76	73
Number of students tested	77	65	69	58	56
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					

If the reports use scaled scores, provide the national mean score and standard deviation for the test.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
<b>NATIONAL MEAN SCORE</b>					
<b>NATIONAL STANDARD DEVIATION</b>					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 5 Test: Stanford Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: Tenth Edition/2003 Publisher: Harcourt Educational Measurement

Scores are reported here as: Percentiles

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Average Score	89	81	82	78	86
Number of students tested	61	74	61	61	40
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					

If the reports use scaled scores, provide the national mean score and standard deviation for the test.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
<b>NATIONAL MEAN SCORE</b>					
<b>NATIONAL STANDARD DEVIATION</b>					

Notes:

In 2007-2008, the scoring company, Pearson, lost nine of the student tests and they were never recovered. 100% of the fifth grade students in attendance were tested; however the scores reported reflect the 61 students for whom scores were available. On June 4, 2008, we received confirmation from Aba Kumi via email that the scores reported are acceptable for Blue Ribbon criteria. Ms. Kumi instructed us to include a note on the application explaining the error.

Subject: Reading

Grade: 5 Test: Stanford Achievement Test

Edition/Publication Year: Tenth Edition/2003 Publisher: Harcourt Educational Measurement

Scores are reported here as: Percentiles

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Average Score	84	83	78	77	80
Number of students tested	62	74	61	61	40
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>2. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>3. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. (specify group)</b>					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					

If the reports use scaled scores, provide the national mean score and standard deviation for the test.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
<b>NATIONAL MEAN SCORE</b>					
<b>NATIONAL STANDARD DEVIATION</b>					

Notes:

In 2007-2008, the scoring company, Pearson, lost nine of the student tests and they were never recovered. 100% of the fifth grade students in attendance were tested; however the scores reported reflect the 62 students for whom scores were available. On June 4, 2008, we received confirmation from Aba Kumi via email that the scores reported are acceptable for Blue Ribbon criteria. Ms. Kumi instructed us to include a note on the application explaining the error.

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