

U.S. Department of Education
2010 - Blue Ribbon Schools Program

Type of School: (Check all that apply) Charter Title I Magnet Choice

Name of Principal: Mr. Scott Pollack

Official School Name: Oak Forest Elementary School

School Mailing Address:
1401 W 43RD ST
Houston, TX 77018-4106

County: Harris State School Code Number*: 101912211

Telephone: (713) 613-2536 Fax: (713) 613-2244

Web site/URL: <http://es.houstonisd.org/OakForestES/> E-mail: SPOLLACK@houstonisd.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.

_____ Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*: Dr. Terry Grier

District Name: Houston ISD Tel: (713) 556-6000

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.

_____ Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Greg Meyers

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.

_____ Date _____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*
The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Blue Ribbon Schools Project Manager (aba.kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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 2009-2010 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 Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 or 2009.
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

All data are the most recent year available.

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

1. Number of schools in the district: (per district designation)	178	Elementary schools (includes K-8)
	39	Middle/Junior high schools
	37	High schools
	2	K-12 schools
	256	TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 10405

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. 1 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position 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	10	15	25	6	0	0	0
K	54	54	108	7	0	0	0
1	64	70	134	8	0	0	0
2	50	70	120	9	0	0	0
3	69	80	149	10	0	0	0
4	61	61	122	11	0	0	0
5	62	57	119	12	0	0	0
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL							777

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
2 % Asian
12 % Black or African American
44 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
42 % White
0 % 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: 8 %

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.	29
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	31
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	60
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	757
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.079
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	7.926

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

Total number limited English proficient 63

Number of languages represented: 2

Specify languages:

Spanish, Vietnamese

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 41 %

Total number students who qualify: 317

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: 7 %

Total Number of Students Served: 55

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>10</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>4</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>13</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>31</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>4</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>4</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> </u>
Classroom teachers	<u>43</u>	<u> </u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>2</u>	<u> </u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>8</u>	<u> </u>
Support staff	<u>3</u>	<u> </u>
Total number	<u>58</u>	<u>0</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 17 :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%.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
Daily teacher attendance	96%	95%	97%	97%	96%
Teacher turnover rate	5%	14%	9%	12%	12%
Student dropout rate	%	%	%	%	%

Please provide all explanations below.

The 14 percent turnover rate for the 2007-2008 school year can partially be attributed to 3 retirements. In addition, a special education program was relocated to another campus and a structured learning class program was instituted at Oak Forest.

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

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2009 are doing as of the Fall 2009.

Graduating class size	_____	%
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	_____	%
Enrolled in a community college	_____	%
Enrolled in vocational training	_____	%
Found employment	_____	%
Military service	_____	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	_____	%
Unknown	_____	%
Total	_____	%

PART III - SUMMARY

Located in the midst of towering oak trees, Oak Forest Elementary School opened its doors for the first time in 1949 as a school welcoming scholars to reach their fullest potential. Over the years, Oak Forest has continued to serve the surrounding communities. In 1974, Oak Forest became a Vanguard Magnet School and began serving gifted and talented students from throughout the Houston Independent School District. Students are challenged with a curriculum that stresses problem-solving, originality, creativity, and project based learning centered around the uniqueness of each student. This goal is accomplished with the Renzulli Learning Program that highlights the interests of the learner and bases the instructional decisions around those interests. Other exciting facets of the Vanguard program include Spanish Classes, Hand-bell lessons, Recorder lessons, Piano, Continental Math League, Creative Dramatics, and a curriculum based on the Scholars and Knowledge Model that emphasizes depth and complexity. In 2002 Houston ISD voters approved a bond referendum to rebuild and improve Houston school buildings, and Oak Forest was slated to receive a new state of the art building. The current building opened its doors in its modern facility in 2004 with a grand ribbon cutting ceremony.

In addition to the state of the art facilities inside the school, the Oak Forest Parent-Teacher Association has worked tirelessly with staff members to create a beautiful school grounds that can provide real life learning experiences for students. Oak Forest has a beautiful and spacious arboretum that contains a water feature, outdoor stages for performances and guest speakers, a compost pile, and a butterfly garden that has been recognized by Monarch Watch as an official Monarch Waystation that provides all of the resources necessary for the monarch butterfly's annual migration. A separate garden area also exists where students maintain a vegetable garden. Other features include a covered basketball court for physical education instruction, several playgrounds, and a weather station that is affiliated with a local television station.

The mission of Oak Forest Elementary School is: As a cooperative body of parents and educators, we want to provide a nurturing atmosphere which produces lifelong learners who are prepared academically and socially to make responsible contributions as they strive to reach their maximum potential. This mission communicates to the entire community that Oak Forest educators are dedicated to making sure that all students are performing at the highest possible level. This mission is furthered with the vision we share with our district to create a college and career ready culture for all students. The tools given to the students at Oak Forest Elementary enable them to become active life-long learners who are able to achieve at high levels throughout their lives.

Oak Forest utilizes Houston ISD's CLEAR (Clarifying Learning to Enhance Achievement Results) curriculum, which is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and we offer a variety of programs to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all students. In addition to the Vanguard Program, Oak Forest offers a Bilingual, English as a Second Language, Multiage Looping, and two Self-Contained Special Education Programs for students with autism and multiple impairments. The multiage looping program is part of a pilot program designed to reduce the retention rates in elementary school. Students in the program remain with the same teacher from kindergarten through second grade. Oak Forest students also have the opportunity to participate in a variety of extracurricular activities including Odyssey of the Mind, History Fair, Continental Math League, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Art Contest, Science Fair, Band, Name that Book, Handbell Choir, Wordmasters, Rainbow Challenge Math Competition, and Robotics.

Oak Forest is very fortunate to have a supportive community. Students are regularly able to hear from guest speakers who are able to discuss and demonstrate how they utilize academic concepts in real life. Students also participate in several field study lessons each year where they are able to apply their learning in a different setting. For example, students from Oak Forest visited the Johnson Space Center, Texas A & M-Galveston, the George Observatory, and the Houston Arboretum during the past year. Parents are regularly invited to the school for a variety of events, including math nights, literacy nights and parent workshops. Oak Forest has a translation device to ensure that all parents have the ability to participate in parent meetings. By working closely with the community, Oak Forest is able to provide a relevant and meaningful education for all students.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. **Assessment Results:**

In the state of Texas, students are assessed using the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), a criterion referenced test. The TAKS is designed to measure students' mastery of the state approved curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Students at the elementary level are assessed annually in grades 3, 4, and 5 in reading and math. Students are also tested in Grade 4 in writing and Grade 5 in science. Schools can earn a performance rating based upon student achievement. In order to receive an exemplary rating, at least 90% of students in all student subgroups must meet the minimum standard for each subject. The subgroups include economically disadvantaged, African-American, Hispanic, and White. Oak Forest earned an exemplary rating during the 2006-2007 and 2008-2009 school years. During the 2005-2006 and 2007-2008 school years, a recognized rating was earned which requires at least 75% of students in all student subgroups meet the standard. Oak Forest received an acceptable rating during the 2004-2005 school year. In order to meet the minimum standard, students must obtain a 2100 scale score. Students can also earn commended performance on the TAKS by achieving at a very high level. Commended performance requires that students earn a scale score of 2400. Students who meet federal and state criteria may be assessed using an alternative assessment. Since the 2007-2008 school year, students who qualify for an alternative assessment have taken the TAKS-Alt. Before 2007-2008, the State Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA) was used as an alternative assessment. Students are assessed based upon goals that are specified in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Additional information may be found at the Texas Education Agency website, www.tea.state.tx.us/.

Over the past 5 years, student achievement at Oak Forest has been steadily increasing and the achievement gap between subgroups has also been closing. Of particular significance is the improvement in commended performance. In most subjects and grade levels, the percentage of students performing at the commended level has nearly doubled over the past 5 years. Due to the high level of commended performance, Oak Forest was named to the 2009 Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC) Honor Roll and received a Gold Performance Acknowledgement from the Texas Education Agency in Reading, Math, Science, and Writing. The gains in student achievement can be attributed to many factors, but one of the most positive initiatives has been the commitment of Oak Forest staff to the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) concept. During PLC meetings, teachers and staff concentrate on answering the key questions of "What do we want students to learn?", "How will we know when they have learned it?", "What will we do if they did not learn it?", and "What will we do when they have learned it?" PLC's ensure that all students have the benefit of a high quality curriculum and that their progress is continually assessed. When students are unsuccessful, Oak Forest has several intervention programs in place to help students master the curriculum. Along with afterschool tutoring, a reading specialist and a literacy coach are available to provide small group interventions. A strong intervention assistance team (IAT) is also in place to recommend instructional strategies to help struggling students. These interventions help all Oak Forest students achieve at the highest level possible.

2. **Using Assessment Results:**

Assessment results are used by Oak Forest Elementary School to monitor, evaluate, and improve both teacher instruction and student performance. Teachers work together in professional learning communities with the goal of using assessment results to develop instructional strategies for all students and especially for those students who are underperforming or struggling to grow as learners.

Assessment results from regularly administered, grade-level common assessments provide essential and timely data for the professional learning communities. Teachers at Oak Forest Elementary use this data to help each other develop a best practices approach to instruction. Teachers with a track record of success in a particular subject take the lead within their learning communities with suggestions of how to best use assessment results to help students succeed in that subject. This practical use of assessment results has helped Oak Forest Elementary

consistently attain higher levels of growth and achievement among all students in TAKS-level language arts, for instance.

Oak Forest Elementary also uses data from district benchmark assessments to identify learning gaps in student achievement. Based on an analysis of the disaggregated benchmark data, teachers form small groups for re-teaching. For example, the fourth-grade team uses benchmark data to determine which students need a specific kind of re-teaching. Small learning groups are then formed from across the grade-level. One teacher may work with a group on phonics skills, while another teacher works with a group on comprehension strategies. In this way, the fourth-grade at Oak Forest Elementary uses assessment results to utilize instructional time for the betterment of all fourth-grade students. As new assessment results are received, the learning groups are re-evaluated to meet current student needs.

Oak Forest Elementary uses assessment results from both benchmark and common assessments to evaluate student growth and achievement as part of a systematic and on-going approach to meet the specific needs of all students.

3. Communicating Assessment Results:

Oak Forest Elementary School regularly communicates assessment information to all stakeholders. Each fall, we host an open house where teachers and parents discuss classroom learning objectives and expectations. At the end of the first nine weeks Oak Forest has a Parental Involvement Day where students are dismissed early, and parents attend parent and teacher conferences. The conference is used to review previous assessment information, including Stanford Tests, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), and the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), as well as to discuss current progress. Teachers continue to communicate TPRI results and benchmark results for all core academic subjects to parents and students throughout the school year. In addition, student grades can be accessed by parents online using the Houston Independent School District's (HISD) Parent-Student Connect. In order to ensure that all parents are able to access their child's grades, Oak Forest hosted six parent training sessions, including four trainings in a computer lab setting, and parents have access to Parent-Student Connect in the Oak Forest Library during school hours. Information on Parent-Student Connect is also available on the Oak Forest Elementary Website, <http://es.houstonisd.org/OakForestES/>, and has been provided at numerous community meetings. Additional information and instructional resources are also available to parents on the Oak Forest Website, in our monthly newsletter, and during math and literacy nights that are specific to each grade level.

School-wide assessment information is also regularly shared with parents and the community. In the fall, parents receive a copy of the School Report Card that is provided by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and outlines student achievement, attendance, staffing, and budgeting information. In addition, the school accountability rating is discussed during the first PTA Meeting of the school year. Throughout the school year, parents can also access the school profile at houstonisd.org and the Oak Forest Website. Houston ISD is one of the first school districts in Texas to begin using a Value-Added Assessment System, and parents and community members are able to access the Value-Added Data for all Houston ISD schools at www.houstonisd.org/aspire. The Value-Added information is also discussed during a PTA Meeting and other community forums where parents and community members have an opportunity to ask questions about this information.

4. Sharing Success:

The educators at Oak Forest feel that it is important to share their experiences with other schools, the community, and aspiring teachers. Houston ISD provides many opportunities for teachers to share and discuss instructional strategies, and Oak Forest teachers have been well-represented in these efforts. Several teachers are involved as developers and presenters of the district's curriculum. Two science teachers have participated in a year-long science collaborative in which elementary science teachers come together to share their experiences and receive extensive professional development. In addition, the Oak Forest Gifted and Talented Program has been visited by not only Houston ISD teachers, but by teachers and administrators from other districts as well. One of the greatest examples of how Oak Forest has shared its success is our Multi-age

Looping Program. This program consists of multi-age classrooms in which teachers remain with the same group of students for at least two years. As part of this program, the teachers attend monthly Professional Learning Community Meetings where teachers from across the district discuss instructional strategies and participate in an online blog. The Oak Forest teachers are very involved in these meetings and have hosted visits from their colleagues to model best practices for a multi-age classroom. The teachers and administrators also presented at the Houston ISD Leadership Conference. This annual conference brings leadership teams from throughout the district together to discuss innovative educational practices. Oak Forest has also participated in Houston ISD's Principal for a Day Program where members of the community spend the day in schools learning about the challenges and experiences of teachers and administrators. Finally, Oak Forest is very active in supporting aspiring teachers. Oak Forest teachers regularly mentor student teachers and host students who are observing classes. Oak Forest has now entered into a partnership with the University of Houston. During the semester prior to student teaching, students spend two full days per week with an Oak Forest mentor teacher working with small groups and assisting in the classroom. Oak Forest will also host the university classes for one day each week.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

For all subject areas, Oak Forest utilizes Houston ISD's CLEAR (Clarifying Learning to Enhance Achievement Results) curriculum which is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and employs many teaching strategies to ensure the individual needs of all students are met.

Oak Forest teaches reading and language arts using a variety of instructional techniques crafted to meet the needs of students with different learning styles and interests. Teachers use leveled texts in both guided and independent reading activities to provide students with instruction that is tailored to meet their individual needs. Reading instruction is supported by the librarian who collaborates with classroom teachers to incorporate literature into units of study and assists students in selecting books that will help them grow as readers. A school wide Accelerated Reader Program is also used that provides an opportunity for students to take comprehension tests on the computer after finishing books. The immediate feedback provided after testing allows the student and the teacher to monitor reading success and adjust as needed to ensure the greatest growth possible. Both individual and school wide incentives are provided to students, and students work hard to achieve the reading goal that will allow them to have their picture placed on the Accelerated Reader Wall. Writing instruction begins in the pre-kindergarten and is emphasized at all grade levels. In the third grade, all students participate in the Writers in the Schools (WITS) program in which a published author visits the classroom on a weekly basis and guides students through the writing process, developing fluency and creativity. Students are taught grammar and are provided daily practice through Daily Edit and Mountain Language activities. Classroom teacher's use of interdisciplinary units of study allows for the constant integration of reading and language arts skills throughout the school day. Students who require interventions are identified early in the school year. In addition to classroom interventions, Oak Forest utilizes a Literacy Coach who works with small groups of students on specific reading skills, and a Reading Specialist who works with dyslexic and other struggling readers to ensure that all students are reading on grade level or beyond.

Math instruction at Oak Forest goes above and beyond the basics to include varied and enriched methods of instruction to ensure the success of every student. Through the use of manipulatives and problem solving techniques, students develop a concrete knowledge of math concepts. A variety of technology resources are also used that can provide real life examples for students. Most classrooms at Oak Forest are equipped with an interactive whiteboard, document camera, and LCD projector so that teachers are able to make math lessons more accessible for students by using software, games and the internet. The document cameras provide a method for teachers to model the use of manipulatives so that students can be successful while working independently, and the interactive whiteboards provide illustrations and models of mathematic principles in an engaging way. Each week students attend the math lab – a computer lab with individualized instructional programs that focus on math skills and concepts. By collaborating with the classroom teacher, the math lab instructor is able to have students focus on the math objectives that need more attention. A Family Math Night is also held for each grade level and students and parents are invited to participate in fun and engaging math activities.

To supplement the hands-on science instruction in their classrooms, students also regularly meet with our science lab teacher in a state of the art science lab. In addition to all of the science equipment, the lab has an interactive whiteboard, document camera, student response system, and ten computers. Students participate in hands-on experiment-based lessons and keep a science journal to record their observations. Oak Forest also has a weather station, arboretum, butterfly garden, and a raised vegetable and herb garden to provide opportunities for real-life experiences for observation, data gathering and recording. Numerous guest speakers who work in the field of science visit Oak Forest to help students understand how the science that they are learning in class impacts the real-world. During the yearly science fair, students have the opportunity to use the scientific method to design, conduct and report on an experiment.

Teachers use a variety of methods to teach social studies. Oak Forest teachers encourage inquiry-based investigations of world cultures, geography and historical events. Teachers regularly augment the textbook curriculum to have the students create group presentations, listen to guest speakers, and conduct research. Oak Forest participates in the Junior Achievement Program, where representatives from local businesses help students understand economic concepts and even create and manage a business. Students also have the opportunity to participate in the History Fair by researching and creating a presentation about a topic of interest.

Oak Forest offers many programs outside of the core academic subjects. We have a thriving music program. Students have the opportunity to learn not only music appreciation and theory, but to learn to play the recorder and piano. In the 4th and 5th grades, Oak Forest offers hand bell choir and membership in our award winning band program. We have an art lab where students are able to explore their creativity through the use of a variety of media and are able to create ceramic sculptures with our kiln. All students participate in Physical Education, learning about sports, health, nutrition, exercise and sportsmanship. In our computer lab, students learn basic computer skills with keyboarding beginning in kindergarten. Students also receive a weekly Spanish lesson where students learn basic vocabulary and phrases to help prepare them for middle school Spanish classes. The Oak Forest After School Program offers a variety of programs to students, including fencing, Spanish, ballet, gymnastics, robotics, karate, and photography.

2a. (Elementary Schools) Reading:

(This question is for elementary schools only)

The Oak Forest reading program is based on the Houston ISD Horizontal Alignment Planning Guide which outlines the curriculum so that each grade level builds upon previously taught reading skills. This guide allows us to use our adopted basal reader, Harcourt Brace Open Series, along with multiple supplemental materials to enhance our differentiated reading program. Our goal is to foster an environment where all children can experience success and develop as life-long readers. This goal can only be accomplished with the help of every faculty and staff member, volunteer community readers, visiting authors, and the students themselves. Older students are paired with younger students as reading buddies in order to model strong reading skills. Our students use every opportunity during the day to read, whether in line for the restroom, after finishing lunch, when work is completed, or when they arrive early at school.

Technology boosts reading skills through a separate computer reading lab where children have access to websites that reinforce, challenge, and motivate them to be successful in reading. The Renzulli Learning Program is used to adapt the curriculum to meet each child's specific learning style. In addition, interactive whiteboards, document cameras, and LCD projectors are available in most classrooms to help make instruction more engaging for students.

Strong phonemic awareness and phonics programs in the primary grades are the first stepping stone to reading success. Multi-sensory teaching provides a strong structure for both spoken and written language. It is a cumulative process that establishes patterns and the use of early decoding. Quality literature instills a hunger for reading. Oak Forest maintains a library that is able to meet the needs of all students. The Accelerated Reader Program is used to motivate all children to become life-long readers with high comprehension as students are recognized for meeting specified reading goals. Every classroom is a print-rich environment that is immersed in quality literature, and teaching in thematic units allows teachers more opportunities to extend the use of literature. Students' reading skills are challenged in competitions such as Name that Book and the spelling bee. Reading is also encouraged through Houston ISD's summer reading program, The Millionaire Club, and the March of Dimes Reading Champions Program.

When students require additional interventions, Oak Forest utilizes many different programs. All students attend a weekly reading lab where the lab teacher works with the classroom teacher to focus on specific objectives and skills. In addition, a literacy coach is available to work with small groups of students, and a reading specialist provides additional instruction to students with dyslexia as well as support struggling readers using the FastForward Software Program.

3. Additional Curriculum Area:

Oak Forest has established an enriched math curriculum based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and the Houston ISD CLEAR Curriculum. Real world problem solving experiences are provided daily at the student's level of learning from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Using problem solving boards, students are guided through problem solving strategies, such as drawing a picture or diagram, making a table or organized list, making a graph, looking for a pattern, using logical reasoning, or guessing and checking. By learning a variety of techniques, students are equipped and prepared for any type of problem that they may encounter. The students move from using a collaborative approach to analyzing and solving problems independently.

Teachers at Oak Forest use the CLEAR Curriculum and the Envision Math Program during lesson planning. The curriculum contains a pacing calendar, lesson ideas, district-developed assessments in English and Spanish, and links to other district recommended resources. Manipulatives are used at the concrete level to enhance the student's engagement with mathematical experiences before they advance to the abstract level. Student instruction is individualized in the computer lab each week with computer programs, such as Envision Math, Education City, Fast Math, and Renzulli Learning. The computer lab teacher works closely with classroom teachers to support the learning that is occurring in the classroom. Students are enrolled in the First in Math Computer program where they are able to proceed at their own pace as they advance through the levels of the program earning a place in the Math Hall of Fame. The program is not only available at school, but students are able to participate at home. Along with technology, students are empowered through rigorous instruction and meaningful feedback. They participate in math contests throughout the year, such as the Rainbow Challenge, where they work together in teams to solve problems. Students also participate in an individual math competition, the Continental Math League. Other instructional tools, such as Exemplars and the Problem Solver enable students to expand their thinking to a higher, analytical level.

Oak Forest's Exemplary rating is a community effort. Parents are encouraged to participate in their child's learning. Family Math Nights are very popular and are held for each grade level (K-5). During these math nights, parents work with their child to solve mathematical puzzles. At Oak Forest our mission is to provide a nurturing atmosphere which produces lifelong learners who are prepared academically and socially to make responsible contributions as they strive to reach their maximum potential. We want students to value mathematics and to become confident in their mathematical abilities.

4. Instructional Methods:

Students at Oak Forest Elementary are encouraged to be global thinkers by using interdisciplinary connections. Teachers create classroom environments that embrace differentiation and students are asked to model scholarly behavior. High level open ended questioning strategies that require elaborate answers develop critical and creative thinking. All teachers have received training in concept development by Renzulli, Kaplan, and Kingore.

These methods help teachers provide fun, interesting and purposeful learning experiences. The Renzulli Learning System differentiates learning opportunities based on thorough profiling of each student. Students are then challenged with educational activities that match their interest, learning, and expression styles.

Graphic organizers modeled from Kingore provide students with visuals to help organize thoughts and ideas. An overlay of the district curriculum called Scholars and Knowledge is used to differentiate with depth and complexity.

Teamwork and collaboration are key components fostering academic excellence at Oak Forest Elementary. Teachers meet as professional learning communities to plan lessons designed to enhance learning and achievement. These objectives are aligned both vertically and horizontally in the CLEAR Curriculum provide the expectations set for the students. Teachers then capitalize on the strengths of students and point out areas to improve. A system of teaching and learning is in place for project based learning. A variety of methodologies

are used at Oak Forest Elementary to serve the whole child while differentiating instruction for the diverse needs of all students. Strategies like grouping, cooperative learning, compacting, research, pacing and individualization are common place during the instructional day. These strategies and methods bridge from grade to grade to promote and maintain learning in the elementary years. Expectations are high as teachers create a safe environment for academic risks. Acceleration is offered in instruction through a print rich environment and a technology based vocabulary component. Support labs in science, art, language, and math further enrich the instruction provided by the classroom teachers. Supportive assistance is given in small groups by the Literacy Coach and Reading Specialist when deemed necessary.

5. Professional Development:

The professional development program at Oak Forest is based upon the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model described in Dufour, Dufour, and Eaker's book *Whatever it Takes*. Oak Forest educators work together to identify professional development needs and identify how to best meet those needs in order to ensure success for all students. Each spring, teachers participate in a survey on which they are given an opportunity to express what types of professional development activities are needed for Oak Forest. The Site-Based Decision Making Committee then develops the August professional development program for the next year using teacher input and student assessment data, and the plan is included in Oak Forest's school improvement plan. All teachers are required to participate in 45 hours of professional development each year, although most Oak Forest teachers exceed this amount. All teachers are also expected to have their Gifted and Talented Certification which requires a 30 hour initial training and an annual six hour annual update.

During the school year, teachers meet weekly in their grade level PLC's to discuss student assessment data and district curriculum standards as well as participate in professional development. The principal, assistant principal, and literacy coach also participate in the grade level PLC's. Throughout the year, Lead Teachers for each subject as well as campus specialists and administrators deliver presentations during faculty meetings. Each week, all staff members receive an email bulletin that includes a link to a research article or website. The practice has evolved to the point where some teachers are now sending in articles and information to be included in the bulletin, and teachers feel more comfortable sharing valuable information with their colleagues. Voluntary workshops are held throughout the year where Oak Forest teachers and specialists share their expertise with their colleagues. Topics have included Reading Strategies for English Language Learners, Renzulli Learning, and Using the Interactive Whiteboard to Improve Student Learning. Not only do the teachers learn valuable information, but the chances for implementation are increased since there is an on-site expert to help with questions and concerns. Voluntary book studies are also held during the school year. The Houston ISD also provides many online professional development opportunities so that teachers can conveniently participate without missing instructional time.

6. School Leadership:

In addition to the principal, an assistant principal and magnet coordinator are also a part of the Oak Forest administration. However, many other staff members also serve in a leadership capacity. Each grade level has a grade level chairperson who is responsible for facilitating the grade level professional learning community meetings, disseminating information, and at times, serving as a liaison between campus administration and the grade level. There is also a lead teacher for each of the four academic content areas. The lead teacher provides professional development about the Houston ISD Curriculum, facilitates campus-wide initiatives, and serves as a resource for other teachers. Other leadership roles include an elective department chairperson, a special education department chairperson, literacy coach, 504 coordinator, campus lead mentor, and intervention assistance team chairperson. Campus administration also relies on the site-based decision making committee (SDMC) when making decisions. Since the vast majority of these positions are held by classroom teachers, other educators feel safe coming to them for assistance. They also provide many different venues that can be used to communicate concerns.

Campus administration works to ensure that school efforts focus on improving student achievement. Administrators attend grade-level professional learning community meetings and intervention

assistance team meetings to ensure that their focus is on how to impact teaching and learning. Administration also leads discussions about student data following each benchmark assessment. The meeting always focuses on how administration can help the classroom teachers by providing additional resources, professional development, or offering suggestions to improve instruction. By focusing on how administrators can assist teachers, an environment is created in which teachers feel comfortable asking for help when it is needed. This environment is also strengthened by relying on the SDMC for advice on campus programs. Classroom instruction is consistently monitored by campus administrators. Administrators visit the classroom of each teacher at least twice per week, and the focus continues to be on how administration can help improve student learning. By creating an environment where teachers feel that they have a voice and administrators are there to help them be successful, a school culture is promoted that focuses on the success of all students.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 3 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

Edition/Publication Year: 04-09

Publisher: Texas Education Agency

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	95	93	91	80	80
Commended	51	45	37	26	30
Number of students tested	118	118	120	113	122
Percent of total students tested	99	100	99	99	98
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	1	1	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	0	1	1	2
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	92	87	88	64	64
Commended	32	29	39	15	10
Number of students tested	41	48	54	41	37
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	83	100	95	88	88
Commended	33	33	33	14	22
Number of students tested	15	15	21	21	18
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	93	84	85	62	62
Commended	40	44	32	23	20
Number of students tested	42	48	56	39	45
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Texas uses the TAKS-Alt as its alternative assessment beginning in 2007-2008. Prior to 2008, the State Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA) was used. Both the TAKS-ALT and the SDAA assess students according to their IEP goals and objectives.

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 04-09

Grade: 3 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills
Publisher: Texas Education Agency

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	96	96	94	93	89
Commended	71	60	49	47	44
Number of students tested	118	119	117	113	117
Percent of total students tested	99	100	99	99	98
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	1	1	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	0	1	1	2
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	92	93	90	83	78
Commended	56	40	37	29	21
Number of students tested	41	48	53	41	34
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	100	100	90	100	88
Commended	43	53	48	29	38
Number of students tested	14	15	21	21	16
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	91	93	90	84	85
Commended	55	50	25	32	27
Number of students tested	44	52	44	38	44
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Texas uses the TAKS-Alt as its alternative assessment beginning in 2007-2008. Prior to 2008, the State Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA) was used. Both the TAKS-ALT and the SDAA assess students according to their IEP goals and objectives.

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 04-09

Grade: 4 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills
Publisher: Texas Education Agency

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	99	99	97	87	75
Commended	75	57	37	37	29
Number of students tested	118	115	109	118	128
Percent of total students tested	100	99	100	98	97
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	1	0	3	4
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	1	0	2	3
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	98	100	96	80	58
Commended	67	57	33	24	14
Number of students tested	49	47	45	42	57
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	100	100	100	81	76
Commended	73	47	29	19	28
Number of students tested	15	21	21	21	29
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	98	98	95	80	64
Commended	67	57	29	24	23
Number of students tested	52	54	38	42	53
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Texas uses the TAKS-Alt as its alternative assessment beginning in 2007-2008. Prior to 2008, the State Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA) was used. Both the TAKS-ALT and the SDAA assess students according to their IEP goals and objectives.

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 04-09

Grade: 4 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills
Publisher: Texas Education Agency

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	99	96	92	88	74
Commended	57	48	32	27	30
Number of students tested	119	113	117	117	125
Percent of total students tested	100	99	100	98	97
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	1	0	3	4
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	1	0	2	3
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	98	93	87	85	59
Commended	44	37	24	17	14
Number of students tested	50	46	45	41	56
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	100	100	95	81	79
Commended	33	29	33	29	32
Number of students tested	15	21	21	21	28
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	98	92	84	83	58
Commended	52	50	24	14	19
Number of students tested	52	52	38	42	53
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Texas uses the TAKS-Alt as its alternative assessment beginning in 2007-2008. Prior to 2008, the State Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA) was used. Both the TAKS-ALT and the SDAA assess students according to their IEP goals and objectives.

Subject: Mathematics
Edition/Publication Year: 04-09

Grade: 5 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills
Publisher: Texas Education Agency

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	98	97	94	89	89
Commended	71	61	56	45	44
Number of students tested	118	105	107	133	116
Percent of total students tested	99	100	100	97	97
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	4	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	3	3
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	96	91	98	78	89
Commended	76	51	50	28	35
Number of students tested	49	37	40	61	43
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	100	95	89	86	89
Commended	55	74	39	35	23
Number of students tested	20	19	18	31	22
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	98	97	93	82	89
Commended	70	49	53	35	46
Number of students tested	56	39	43	57	35
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Texas uses the TAKS-Alt as its alternative assessment beginning in 2007-2008. Prior to 2008, the State Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA) was used. Both the TAKS-ALT and the SDAA assess students according to their IEP goals and objectives.

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 04-09

Grade: 5 Test: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills
Publisher: Texas Education Agency

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Met Standard	96	92	94	79	87
Commended	63	42	45	21	38
Number of students tested	118	105	104	128	117
Percent of total students tested	99	100	100	97	98
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	4	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	3	2
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
Met Standard	93	80	90	66	72
Commended	48	27	33	13	30
Number of students tested	48	37	40	61	43
2. African American Students					
Met Standard	100	95	100	76	77
Commended	67	26	39	16	14
Number of students tested	21	19	18	31	22
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Met Standard	92	86	89	68	77
Commended	55	31	25	18	37
Number of students tested	55	39	44	57	35
4. Special Education Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
Met Standard					
Commended					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Texas uses the TAKS-Alt as its alternative assessment beginning in 2007-2008. Prior to 2008, the State Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA) was used. Both the TAKS-ALT and the SDAA assess students according to their IEP goals and objectives.