



## PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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12AL1

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 2011-2012 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 foreign language courses.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2006.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 or 2011.
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

12AL1

All data are the most recent year available.

## DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)  
 (per district designation): 3 Middle/Junior high schools  
1 High schools  
0 K-12 schools  
7 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 2348

## SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Urban or large central city
4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 11
5. Number of students as of October 1, 2011 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total			# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0		<b>6</b>	0	0	0
K	84	84	168		<b>7</b>	0	0	0
1	74	71	145		<b>8</b>	0	0	0
2	77	76	153		<b>9</b>	0	0	0
3	97	79	176		<b>10</b>	0	0	0
4	79	82	161		<b>11</b>	0	0	0
5	0	0	0		<b>12</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total in Applying School:</b>								803

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native  
1 % Asian  
19 % Black or African American  
3 % Hispanic or Latino  
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
76 % White  
1 % 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 2010-2011 school 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, 2010 until the end of the school year.	24
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2010 until the end of the school year.	38
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	62
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2010	792
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.08
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	8

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 1%  
 Total number of ELL students in the school: 15  
 Number of non-English languages represented: 3  
 Specify non-English languages:

Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and Spanish.

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 43%

Total number of students who qualify: 346

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-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 10%

Total number of students served: 77

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>13</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>39</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>3</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>15</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>41</u>	<u>0</u>
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	<u>15</u>	<u>3</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>13</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	<u>18</u>	<u>0</u>
Total number	<u>89</u>	<u>3</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:

16:1

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

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	96%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	%	%	%	%	%

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

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2011 are doing as of Fall 2011.

Graduating class size:	<u>0</u>
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	<u>0%</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>0%</u></b>

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award:

- No
- Yes

If yes, what was the year of the award?

Forest Hills is an elementary school with various strengths. A primary strength would certainly be the ability to reach and teach all students. Forest Hills has a unique population with about 50% of students coming from affluent homes where education is valued. This group of students comes to Forest Hills with a wealth of background experiences and a rich vocabulary. These families make Forest Hills the educational choice for their children because of the strong parental involvement and high student achievement associated with the school. Forest Hills has experienced a large influx of families from local private schools over the past two years due to the economic downturn. Although these families may no longer be able to afford a private education, they are fiercely invested in their children's education. Conversely, the other 50% of Forest Hills' students have socioeconomically disadvantaged families where many of the parents lack a high school diploma and most live in public housing and are unemployed. This group of students suffers from a lack of exposure to books, life experiences, and family support. Many of these parents are difficult to reach by phone or mail and offer no input or support to the school in the education of their children. The strength of Forest Hills is the ability to bridge the gap between these two differing student groups and maintain high expectations for all with 21st Century educational goals. The delivery of differentiated instruction for all is the means by which the faculty and staff are able to accomplish this goal. Reaching and teaching all students is strength for Forest Hills.

A significant accomplishment which supports Forest Hills' ability to provide differentiated instruction which will reach and teach all students is the 2011-2012 Alabama Adequate Yearly Progress Report from the State Department of Education. The report revealed that Forest Hills met 17 of 17 goals. In addition, all subgroups of students (special education, black, white, and free/reduced lunch) showed a positive proficiency index in reading and all but the special education subgroup showed a positive proficiency index in math. The special education subgroup improved their proficiency index in math from -18.15 in 2010 to -0.21 in 2011. Forest Hills' is reaching and teaching all students as demonstrated by the proficiency levels on the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test. In the spring of 2011, 100% of 3rd and 4th graders scored proficient in reading. On the same assessment, 95% of 3rd graders and 96% of 4th graders scored proficient in math. Student achievement is an accomplishment for Forest Hills.

Forest Hills is worthy of Blue Ribbon status based upon ever-increasing student achievement amidst Quadrant 4 instruction based on rigor and relevance. Considering that 50% of our population possesses significant knowledge and skill gaps, our staff is committed to developing students capable of critical thinking and problem solving. At Forest Hills, all learning is made relevant by an interdisciplinary approach with a focus on applying learned knowledge and skills to authentic problems and unpredictable tasks. Problem solving and critical thinking skills are difficult to develop in our disadvantaged students. The staff works diligently to identify and close gaps in knowledge and skills for these disadvantaged students while simultaneously providing quadrant 4 instruction with rigor and relevance for all students. Any school successful at this feat is worthy of Blue Ribbon status.

The brand for Florence City Schools is based upon the mascot being a Falcon and aptly is "Futures Take Flight". The vision for Forest Hills is to be a premier school which educates a diverse population for a global society. The vision for Forest Hills fits directly with the previous paragraphs where strengths and accomplishments were described. At Forest Hills, the primary focus is to reach and teach all students to prepare them to be 21st century learners. The school mantra is "Failure is NOT an Option". The Forest Hills staff is committed to every instructional strategy, research finding, intervention, resource, program, and professional development which will afford our students the opportunity to succeed.

Forest Hills is nestled in the northeast corner of Florence, Alabama. The city of Florence offers numerous recreational opportunities for students. Updated facilities exist for various sports and there are numerous parks, playgrounds, and walking trails. Forest Hills has proximal location to the University of North Alabama. The UNA Department of Education plays a vital role in instruction at Forest Hills through clinical experiences, student intern placements, reading partners, and professor expertise. The presence of these educators in training has proven beneficial to our students, faculty, and the university. The student population at Forest Hills is very much a reflection of the community. There are affluent neighborhoods with million dollar homes on one side of Florence and 3 housing projects on the other side. Forest Hills is comprised of students from both extremes.

### 1. Assessment Results:

Forest Hills' students are administered two standardized assessments. First, the Alabama Reading and Math Test (ARMT) is a criterion referenced assessment administered to all third and fourth graders annually. Students receive Level I, II, III, and IV scores. Level I indicates that the student did not meet the standards. Level II represents a student that partially met the standards. Level III indicates standards were met and Level IV indicates that standards were exceeded. The other standardized assessment taken by Forest Hills students is the Stanford 10 Achievement Test. It is a nationally normed test and reveals students' performance compared to students in the same grade level across the nation. Data is reported in national percentiles.

Forest Hills' student achievement has increased steadily over the past 5 years. Data which reveals the increases is derived from the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT) and the Stanford 10 Achievement Test. The data table in Section VI reflects the state criterion- referenced test (ARMT), but the Stanford 10 Achievement Test data will also be discussed below.

First, the ARMT is administered to all third and fourth graders annually in Alabama. Data from the ARMT is provided in the Data Table for Section VI. The ARMT data reveals an ever increasing trend for all students and all subgroups. The ARMT is scored with Level I indicating standards were not met while Level II shows standards were partially met. Level III represents that standards were met and Level IV demonstrates that standards were exceeded. With the scoring key in mind, third grade students in 2007 were 96% proficient at levels III and IV in reading and 81% proficient at levels III and IV in math. In 2007, fourth graders were 94% proficient at levels III and IV in reading and 90% proficient at levels III and IV in math. In 2010, third grade students increased reading proficiency at levels III and IV to 97% while math proficiency revealed a gain to 91% (a 10% gain since 2007). Fourth graders in 2010 showed a slight decline with 92% proficiency in reading at levels III and IV and 86% proficiency in math. However, the staff takes great pride in the ARMT data in the spring of 2011. Third grade students were 100% proficient at levels III and IV in reading, with 70% being at level IV. Third graders demonstrated improvement in math achievement as well. In 2011, 95% of third graders were proficient at levels III and IV with 83% being at level IV. Fourth graders also had tremendous gains in 2011. Fourth grade students were 100% proficient in reading with 82% being at level IV. For math, 96% of fourth grade students were proficient with 85% being at level IV.

Students demonstrated marked improvements over the past five years on the Stanford 10. Achievement is reported in national percentiles. Because this national data is not included in Section VI, it will be discussed here. In 2007, third graders ranked in the 69<sup>th</sup> national percentile on Total Reading and the 65<sup>th</sup> national percentile in Total Math. Also in 2007, fourth graders ranked in the 74<sup>th</sup> national percentile in Total Reading and the 70<sup>th</sup> national percentile in Total Math. Skipping to 2010, third graders performed in the 73<sup>rd</sup> national percentile in Total Reading and the 77<sup>nd</sup> national percentile in Total Math. In addition, fourth graders ranked in the 74<sup>th</sup> national percentile in Total Reading and the 76<sup>th</sup> national percentile in Total Math. Data from the spring of 2011 was also strong. Third graders ranked in the 73<sup>rd</sup> national percentile in Total Reading and the 81<sup>st</sup> national percentile in Total Math. Remarkably, fourth grade students scored in the 84<sup>th</sup> national percentile in Total Reading and the 87<sup>th</sup> national percentile in Total Math.

All achievement gains in the past five years can be attributed to professional development. In reading, Forest Hills is an Alabama Reading Initiative School and implements research based strategies. For math, Forest Hills is an Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Demonstration Site and implements research based instruction. Both professional development initiatives will be discussed in detail in Part V, question 6.

There is not an achievement gap of 10 or more percentage points between the test scores of all students and the test scores of any subgroup in the 2011 data.

## **2. Using Assessment Results:**

It is the belief at Forest Hills that both effective assessment procedures and effective use of the associated data are vital to student and school improvement. All data must be viewed in light of the vision for Forest Hills and the needs and expectations of the stakeholders. Data is used by all stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, parents, and students, to identify strengths and weaknesses with students, curriculum, and programs. It is the principal's responsibility to lead teachers, parents, and other stakeholders through the process of gathering, reading, analyzing, and interpreting data.

The value of the instruction at Forest Hills is only as good as the results yielded. It is crucial that curriculum and instruction and assessment are all aligned. The school seeks to use multi-sourced data that is relevant, timely, and disaggregated. Examples of such data include demographic and socioeconomic information, absentee rates, suspension and disciplinary rates, benchmark test grades, report card grades, DIBELS progress monitoring, and scores on the state criterion referenced ARMT as well as the nationally normed Stanford 10. The school also uses "soft" data including surveys, observations, and interviews. The overriding point with the use of assessment data is to systematically use the data to make data driven decisions to address identified instructional gaps with students, curriculum, and programs. These data driven decisions most often occur within the context of collaborative meetings. There is evidence of the systematic use of assessment data at Forest Hills in the form of ever-increasing student achievement as outlined in the Section VI data table.

Assessment data is most often analyzed in collaborative meetings. These meetings take the form of grade level meetings, data meetings, vertical teaming meetings, and Administrator Meetings. At Forest Hills, a master Excel spreadsheet is maintained by the principal. Data is submitted by teachers to be entered on the spreadsheet. The data is filtered to show the percentage of students scoring at 80 or above on benchmark assessments, the percentage scoring at 60 or above on benchmark assessments, and the percentage of students failing the assessment. The data is also filtered to show disaggregated subgroup data much like the data table in Section VI of this application. The principal adds discipline and attendance data to the spreadsheet as well. With careful analyzing of the data in the collaborative meetings listed above, patterns and trends emerge. Not only are students that are at-risk identified, but teachers that may need support in the classroom emerge as well. The crucial next step is to modify instruction to bring about improvements in the data. The collaborative meetings listed above are also used to plan, refine instruction, and structure intervention groups. Even data that has been collected and analyzed is useless unless action plans are implemented to bring about improvement.

For assessment data to be useful, it must be presented in a clear and concise manner. To some stakeholders, including teachers, data can be overwhelming. The principal's role is to present and communicate the data in a means that allows for improvement. Data is communicated to stakeholders through charts, graphs, reports, newsletters, websites, and the Forest Hills Continuous Improvement Plan. In addition, data is presented clearly and concisely to parents at meetings and conferences. As a Title I School-wide school, assessment data is often presented to parents at parent involvement meetings. It is crucial that data not be communicated without a guided interpretation. Again, data can be overwhelming for many. However, when interpreted in a simple manner, assessment data can be used by all for student, curriculum, program, and school improvement.

In closing, this school views continuous assessment and data analysis as one of the prerequisites to continuous improvement at Forest Hills. With the Forest Hills vision as the guiding force, the school seeks to continually evaluate teaching and learning in an effort to improve student achievement. The systematic use of assessment data from students, the curriculum, and programs is the cornerstone for continuous school improvement at Forest Hills.

### **3. Sharing Lessons Learned:**

The faculty at Forest Hills holds the belief that as educators, we are all in this together. Therefore, the faculty engages in an ongoing sharing of strategies and instructional activities. This sharing of ideas and resources just allows our students, and the students of other schools, to have the most diverse educational experiences possible. Three main avenues are used at Forest Hills to share lessons, strategies, and information.

First, we have several faculty members that have been asked to present at professional development sessions or conferences. After the faculty was fully trained with the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative, some teachers were asked to serve as trainers for future summer institutes. In addition, our PE program has garnered recognition across the state. One of our PE teachers serves as an officer for the Alabama State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance. This educator frequently makes presentations across the state regarding the successes of our program and new trends in the field. Also, teacher leaders almost always play a role as presenters at school or system professional development. Professional development and sharing of information and ideas is most meaningful when it comes from a colleague.

In addition, Forest Hills teachers use collaboration to share ideas and strategies. This teacher collaboration takes place in many settings. Teachers may share ideas at grade level meetings within their own school or at vertical teaming meetings with another elementary school in the district. An excellent avenue where this collaboration emerges is in Professional Learning Teams (PLT's). PLT's are utilized for a small group of teachers to research and collectively learn about topics of interest. Not only do members within a PLT gain information, but each individual PLT shares an overview of their learning.

Finally, technology has emerged as an exceptional means for teacher sharing. There are many internet tools utilized by Forest Hills' teachers. The district provides an internal sharing site on the server so that teachers can upload documents and lessons for teachers within our school and district to view. File sharing websites such as Google Docs and Wiki Teacher have allowed our teachers to share content with others in our school as well as with other teachers across the county.

The philosophy of the Forest Hills faculty is that there is no need to reinvent the wheel! We are advocates of sharing our wheels and borrowing the wheels of others.

### **4. Engaging Families and Communities:**

The faculty at Forest Hills holds the belief that we must cultivate partnerships with other educators, parents, and community members to form a school learning community which will enhance students' learning opportunities. Research shows that such an environment will improve schools, strengthen families, invigorate community support, and increase student achievement. Several strategies are used at Forest Hills to accomplish this goal.

First, two-way communication between families and the community is established. Forest Hills uses Weekly Class Calendars, quarterly school newsletters, a website, a digital marquee, and a Facebook page to open these communication lines. In addition, all staff members are available to meet the needs of families related to their children. We conduct Parent Involvement Meetings as a Title I requirement. These meetings are beneficial in building relationships. We organize two Open Houses per year where parents and the community are invited to tour the school and converse with the faculty. Any parent willing to communicate will certainly have the opportunity at Forest Hills.

Next, the use of volunteers is a means of engaging families and the community. Forest Hills is well known for the number of volunteers on campus daily. Parents can be seen in teacher workrooms daily completing tasks for teachers. Parents can be seen regularly in classrooms assisting with classroom activities. Another example of utilizing volunteers is the annual Forest Hills Book Fair. The Book Fair is

completely organized and run by parent volunteers. Also, parents volunteer and post our students' artwork on Artsonia.com. This allows the artwork to be posted in a timely manner while utilizing volunteers. When we have International Days, parents cook food from various countries for the students to taste.

Finally, we use involvement in student learning to engage families and the community. During our aerobic unit in PE, parents are invited to bring canned foods to use as weights for aerobics. After Parent Aerobic Day, all canned foods are donated to the Salvation Army. We host a Parent/Teacher Basketball Game to raise money for the March of Dimes. Parents enjoy playing and students love the competition. All funds from this event are donated to the March of Dimes and our students also learn about birth defects.

In closing, engaging families and the community is a definite strength at Forest Hill. It is believed that much of our student population growth has come from the reputation of welcoming families and community members.

## 1. Curriculum:

Forest Hills adheres to standards in the Courses of Study for each core area, art, music, physical education/health, and technology. The Common Core Standards are also considered in instruction. Teachers collaborate to find ways to meet the standards while making learning engaging.

In reading and language arts, the basal series has been specially adapted to make sure that it meets Course of Study standards. It provides for students working on, below, and above grade level. Computer programs such as “Riverdeep”, “My Reading Coach”, “Brain Child”, and “Accelerated Reader” are used by classroom teachers, Title I professionals, the computer aide, and by special education teachers to supplement and enrich. Retired teachers work with students who need help or enrichment. Emphasis is placed on writing across the curriculum. A “Word of the Week” helps to promote the acquisition of new vocabulary.

In math and science, teachers have been trained in AMSTI (Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative). This emphasizes a hands-on, problem solving approach to teaching. All math instruction is quadrant 4 focusing on problem solving and critical thinking. Workshops were attended for two summers. Some teachers have also been trained in AIMS (Activities In Math and Science). Teachers are provided with manipulatives and trade books for math. Materials have been created to play math games and practice math skills. Students are encouraged to find multiple ways to solve problems and answer questions. AMSTI provides a specialist for each grade level, who teaches model lessons, sets up activities, and helps teachers in other ways to create a successful math program. Students keep math journals. “Riverdeep” and “Brain Child” have math components to provide individualized instruction. Additional help or enrichment is provided as needed by special education teachers, Title I teachers and aides, retired teachers, and classroom teachers through the use of small groups, partner work, peer tutoring, and individual attention.

Four AMSTI science units are provided to teachers each year. These units cover Course of Study and Core Curriculum standards. All science instruction is quadrant 4 focusing on problem solving and critical thinking. Students participate in the scientific process through the use of hands-on activities such as watching plant life cycles from seed to seed, raising frogs and hermit crabs, identifying unknown substances, and many more. All materials needed are provided in large tubs which teachers use and send back to be replenished for the next year.

Students learn about social studies in many ways other than the use of a textbook. The Pledge of Allegiance is said daily. Students learn about famous figures and events. The media specialist collaborates with regular teachers to help with writing reports, doing research, and educating students about special subjects. Students experience “International Days” where they learn about other countries through activities, special speakers, and a Mexican Hat Dance. The event is culminated by an international feast with foods parents prepare from recipes given by teachers. Students in some grades learn from veterans and current soldiers.

The arts are emphasized at Forest Hills. Adaptive art and music are provided for students with handicaps. Art students participate in “Artsonia”, an on-line art exhibition. Their art is often included in the local Renaissance Faire. Music students participate in programs, and learn about elements and enjoyment of music. Fourth graders may participate in Show Choir, which has two major, and several smaller performances during the year.

The P.E. program helps keep students physically fit. Students learn athletic as well as life skills. They learn about the importance of proper nutrition and exercise. The program often works with families and the community.

## **2. Reading/English:**

At Forest Hills, there is a collaborative approach to the reading curriculum and instruction. The belief is that for reading instruction to be effective, children must master certain reading skills before moving to the next level. Kindergarten focuses on phonemic awareness which includes hearing, identifying and manipulating sounds of spoken words. In First Grade, the focus is phonics where students are able to connect the sounds and letters with words. They begin to read and develop fluency. In Second Grade, students become fluent readers and are able to connect fluency with reading comprehension. Before students enter Third Grade, the goal is that children are independent readers with a solid foundation to become life-long readers.

The school-wide reading approach consists of daily whole group lessons with additional daily small group lessons for all students. Students are grouped by reading levels for small groups. A combination of data is used from reading series grades, DIBELS data, STAR scores and teacher observations to determine whether the child should be in an “approaching”, “on grade level” or “beyond” group. Groups are re-evaluated periodically. If students struggle with a skill, teachers pull them for mini-lessons to reteach that skill. Small groups are also used for enrichment for advanced students.

When students struggle with reading, there are many different interventions that involve a variety of staff. When teachers notice problems with certain students, the child is pulled for another small group, known as “intervention group”. This is in addition to the small groups all children get each day. Intervention groups may be lead by the teacher, the Title teacher or assistants or the ARI Reading Coach. Records of progress from the intervention are kept. If adequate progress is not made, the teacher brings the child to the “Problem Solving Team” where there is brainstorming and planning for more interventions. These interventions will include explicit, research-based instruction from Highly-Qualified teachers. Some of the programs used are “My Reading Coach”, a research-based computer tutorial and the “Triumphs” program, which is the intervention component of our adopted reading series. An additional intervention is where retired teachers lead intervention groups for 30 minutes with select students. This effort is funded through an \$8000 grant from our state senators.

A collaborative approach to reading has proven successful at Forest Hills. Success is realized when collaboration leads to help for a child. Collaboration offers more solutions than the “single teacher” approach.

## **3. Mathematics:**

The core of the math curriculum at Forest Hills is based upon investigations from the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). The investigations are correlated with the Alabama Course of Study and well as Common Core Standards. According to a news release by the U.S. Department of Education, students that participate in the AMSTI curriculum show gains in math equal to 28 extra days of school in one year’s time. The cornerstone of the school’s math instruction is interdisciplinary problem solving and inquiry. In keeping with our focus on quadrant 4 instruction coupled with rigor and relevance, all math instruction with the AMSTI investigations is designed to focus on inquiry, cooperative learning, brainstorming, data collection, journaling, and research. The goal of all math instruction is to develop students that possess core mathematical knowledge, skills, and concepts and are capable of applying this knowledge in real life scenarios and unknown circumstances. Without the ability to apply the knowledge and skills learned, Forest Hills students will not become 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. Manipulatives are a key component of accomplishing these goals in that children develop a concrete knowledge base of math as opposed to just a superficial understanding.

An interdisciplinary approach to problem solving and inquiry is key to the Forest Hills math curriculum and instruction. Students are daily engaged in writing in math journals, reading about math and its applications in literature, graphing daily real life activities, cataloging data, applying math in music acquisition, and exploring geometric shapes around the campus. Math is integrated into every subject, every day.

The math instruction is differentiated in many ways. First, students that possess gaps in mathematical skills or knowledge are provided with intervention in small groups. “Riverdeep” software allows us to utilize technology to customize lessons designed to fill skill gaps for students. Because Forest Hills is a Title I School-wide school, students receive small group or one-on-one assistance from Title I staff. The school also received \$8000 from a state representative to be directed toward Math and Reading Excellence. This \$8000 is used to pay retired teachers to provide intervention in small groups or one-on-one. On the other end of the spectrum, math needs are met for advanced students. Students that possess above grade level math competence participate in small group instruction aimed at advancing skills and knowledge. Individually prescribed lessons with the “Riverdeep” software also advance students that are beyond grade level.

#### **4. Additional Curriculum Area:**

Forest Hills has an exceptional physical education program. There is an outstanding curriculum, community involvement and parent engagement. Two goals for the program are fighting childhood obesity and ensuring cardiovascular health. Forest Hills has a Track Club that meets weekly during the school hours. Students have goals to walk, jog, or run around the track. Track Club is a major contributor to the goals of childhood obesity and cardiovascular health. Track Club awards are given to students that meet their goals. Students also participate in assessments for Presidential and National Physical Fitness Awards and we have a high percentage of students that qualify. Students work at home on Presidential Active Lifestyle Awards. Again focusing on parent involvement, we ask parents to document weekly their child’s physical activity. Data to support progress toward our goals was recently revealed in recent health screenings by America Kidcheck. In fact, 75% of first graders had a low Body Mass Index.

Students are taught skills to become active for life. The PE teachers take PE classes to the skating rink each fall and to the bowling alley during the winter. There are monthly Skate Nights to raise funds for the PE program as well as foster parent involvement. The PE department received a grant from the Alabama State Department which provided \$3000 worth of Wii fit equipment. Students participate weekly with the Wii and are periodically assessed to measure progress.

Our school has a diverse population. Some students are highly athletic, whereas others are less so. There are also multi-handicapped students. An adaptive PE class is provided for students who are handicapped to the extent that they are unable participate in a regular PE. All students learn and practice sign language daily. This provides them with small motor skills, as well as equipping them to communicate with our deaf students.

Our PE department reaches out to families and the community. Parents participate in Volleyball Parents’ Day, Aerobic Parents’ Day, and a Teacher/Parent Basketball game. On Aerobic Parents Day, students and parents use cans of food as hand weights. Those cans are then donated to the Salvation Army. The Parent/Teacher basketball game raises money for the March of Dimes. Students participate in “Jump Rope For Heart” to raise money for the American Heart Association.

The P.E. program uses an interdisciplinary approach. During “Read Across America Week”, students participate in special “Seussical” physical fitness centers.

## **5. Instructional Methods:**

Forest Hills has a variety of students academically and socioeconomically. It is imperative that instruction be differentiated. With approximately 50% of our students coming from socioeconomically disadvantaged homes while the remaining 50% come from affluent homes where education is valued, differentiation is essential. The focus for instruction is quadrant 4 problem solving with rigor and relevance. For our disadvantaged students to be successful, teachers must differentiate to fill knowledge and skill gaps daily. Classroom teachers modify instruction according to academic levels, maturity, special needs, and learning styles of students. Small groups, partner work, and peer tutoring are some examples.

Special education students function in inclusion classrooms whenever possible. They receive accommodations from special education teachers and assistants. Differentiation evolves when special education teachers collaborate with general education teachers to meet the needs of students. When inclusion is not appropriate, students are pulled to resource classrooms in small groups to meet learning needs. There are two groups of MR, multi-handicapped, and autistic students that spend most of the day in a resource classroom. However, these students also join a regular classroom as appropriate for lunch and non-academic subjects. When students are unable to participate with peers in regular activities, they receive Adaptive P.E., art, and music to meet individual needs.

Gifted students in grades 3 and 4 are pulled once each week to work with the gifted education teacher. The goal of gifted education is to compact the regular curriculum and allow these advanced students to excel in project based learning.

Students having difficulty in reading and math are served by Title I. Assistants work in classrooms to help individuals or small groups on specific skills. Differentiation occurs when these students receive instruction using explicit and varied strategies. Some students also receive differentiation with pull-out sessions by the Title I teacher. The computer program “My Reading Coach” is a research based tutorial to assist students lacking in basic reading skills.

Classroom teachers, computer aides, and the media specialist use programs such as “Brain Child”, “Riverdeep”, “Accelerated Reader”, and Gaggles to help students review skills, learn internet safety, and learn about technology. All teachers have a “Smart Board” in the classroom. “Smart Boards” increase student engagement and learning. This gives students ways to see examples of skills and content, as well as opportunities for hands-on use of technology. ELMO units and HoverCams are used with LCD projectors to support instruction.

## **6. Professional Development:**

Forest Hills has participated in three major professional development ventures which have impacted student achievement. All three ventures are closely aligned with the school’s vision, system goals, and the school focus. Each will be discussed below.

First, Forest Hills has been engaged in a five year commitment with the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). To be eligible for participation in the professional development, 85% of the staff had to commit to attend. With a 96% commitment, Forest Hills embarked in the summer of 2007 on a journey of professional development which has significantly improved math achievement. In the summer of 2007, 96% of the faculty attended a two week summer institute with AMSTI focusing on research based strategies for math instruction. In the summer of 2008, the faculty attended Year 2 of the AMSTI training for intensive professional development. Since the initial summer trainings, the faculty has received ongoing, embedded professional development from the local AMSTI specialists. The significant increase in math achievement noted in Data Table/section VI as well as the increase on the Stanford 10 detailed in section IV/question 1 can unquestionably be attributed to professional development with AMSTI. A recent news release by the U.S. Department of Education noted that students in AMSTI schools show gains in math equal to 28 extra days of school in just one year.

Next, Forest Hills has participated in a yearlong professional development undertaking related to Quadrant 4 Instruction with Rigor and Relevance. Teachers participated in five sessions where the Rigor/Relevance Framework was defined, lessons with rigor and relevance were modeled, grade level planning took place, and vertical teaming related to rigor and relevance was conducted. Mindful that quadrant 4 instruction is essential to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century learners capable of problem solving and inquiry, the faculty has embraced the professional development and refined instructional methods.

Finally, technology integration has been a focus for Forest Hills for several years. All teachers have laptops for use at school and at home. In addition, all classrooms are equipped with LCD projectors and HoverCam devices. This year, Smart Boards were added to all classrooms to maximize student engagement and interaction during instruction. Professional development for the Smart Boards was provided in an embedded fashion by the Technology in Motion Director for the local in-service center. Monthly hands-on sessions have proven very beneficial in full utilization of the Smart Boards.

## **7. School Leadership:**

Forest Hills has many leaders. The leadership philosophy is shared leadership. The leadership structure involves a principal, assistant principal, lead teachers, and department leaders. With an elementary school of 820 students as well as approximately 90 staff members, it is imperative that leadership be a shared effort. The principal possesses a very strong curriculum and instruction background, but the vision for the school would be diluted if left only to the principal to impart. Shared leadership, where the faculty embraces the adage Together Everyone Accomplishes More (TEAM), is the only effective and practical means of leading a school this size.

The principal is the instructional leader of the school. With 14 years of elementary teaching experience and experience as a reading coach with the Alabama Reading Initiative, instruction and curriculum are strengths for the principal. All programs and instruction are monitored by the principal via data meetings, classroom walkthroughs, teacher evaluations, and teacher dialogue. All monitoring by the principal has the ultimate goal of improving student achievement. Even with the large size of the school, the principal must be informed of all aspects and build relationships with all stakeholders.

In addition, there are many teacher leaders at Forest Hills. These teacher leaders usually take the form of lead teacher for a grade level or a department lead teacher. These teacher leaders impart the vision to their colleagues in weekly and monthly meetings. Teacher leaders fulfill several roles. First, they are resource providers. The principal disseminates resources to lead teachers and they are passed along to grade level teachers. Lead teachers serve as contacts for the local AMSTI staff and disseminate additional resources which become available. Lead teachers are considered the instructional specialists for their grade level. It is impossible for the principal to answer all instructional questions. Therefore, the principal selects lead teachers with whom she has the confidence to respond to instructional questions. Lead teachers are mentors and have a proven track record of student achievement and good interpersonal relationships. They fulfill the role of mentor as novice teachers are assimilated into the school culture. Finally, lead teachers are the catalysts for change when necessary. For example, the movement toward quadrant 4 instruction with rigor and relevance needed teacher support to be effective. Lead teachers at Forest Hills are never content with the status quo and are always searching for a better and more effective strategy or program.

# PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 3

Test: Alabama Reading and Math Test

Edition/Publication Year: 2004 Publisher: Alabama State Department and Harcourt Publishing

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meet and Exceed Standards	95	91	80	82	81
Exceeds Standards	83	64	46	48	52
Number of students tested	158	157	149	146	146
Percent of total students tested	98	97	97	99	97
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	4	8	5	6
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	1	1	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meet and Exceed Standards	90	86	78	75	72
Exceeds Standards	73	48	30	26	28
Number of students tested	60	52	53	47	42
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meet and Exceed Standards	89	81	74	76	65
Exceeds Standards	75	42	21	35	23
Number of students tested	28	33	34	38	26
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meet and Exceed Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meet and Exceed Standards	91	50	41	56	75
Exceeds Standards	64	10	27	31	19
Number of students tested	11	9	22	16	16
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meet and Exceed Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>6.</b>					
Meet and Exceed Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b>					
Although there were a few years where Math data remained stagnant, once refinement of the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative strategies was accomplished, student achievement in 2011 reflected tremendous gains. Professional Development and new instructional strategies led to improved student achievement. Also, no data was reported for subgroups with less than 5% in the group.					

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 3 Test: Alabama Reading and Math Test

Edition/Publication Year:  
2004

Publisher: Alabama State Department of Education and Harcourt  
Publishing

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	100	97	88	92	96
Exceeds Standards	70	73	58	54	64
Number of students tested	158	157	149	146	146
Percent of total students tested	99	97	97	99	96
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	4	8	5	6
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	1	1	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	100	94	80	91	90
Exceeds Standards	49	63	37	36	50
Number of students tested	58	52	54	47	42
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	96	91	78	95	88
Exceeds Standards	46	64	39	38	38
Number of students tested	28	33	33	38	26
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	100	80	62	81	81
Exceeds Standards	45	30	33	31	25
Number of students tested	11	10	22	16	16
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>6.</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b>					
No data was reported for subgroups with less than 5% in the group.					

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 4

Test: Alabama Reading and Math Test

Edition/Publication Year:  
2004

Publisher: Alabama State Department of Education and Harcourt  
Publishing

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	96	86	88	85	90
Exceeds Standards	85	60	59	63	55
Number of students tested	152	161	160	137	119
Percent of total students tested	96	96	99	97	97
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	5	6	5	4
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	1	1	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	92	81	80	74	91
Exceeds Standards	77	42	42	46	36
Number of students tested	53	58	50	47	44
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	90	75	97	69	86
Exceeds Standards	73	34	44	45	31
Number of students tested	30	29	37	29	29
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards		13	58	60	67
Exceeds Standards		13	33	40	42
Number of students tested		14	13	15	12
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>6.</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b>					
Data is not reported for subgroups that had less than 5% in the group.					

12AL1

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 4 Test: Alabama Reading and Math Test

Edition/Publication Year:  
2004

Publisher: Alabama State Department of Education and Harcourt  
Publishing

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	100	92	95	94	94
Exceeds Standards	82	70	70	73	67
Number of students tested	152	161	160	137	119
Percent of total students tested	96	97	99	97	97
Number of students alternatively assessed	4	5	6	5	4
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	1	1	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	99	85	94	85	88
Exceeds Standards	74	52	56	52	52
Number of students tested	53	58	50	47	44
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	97	84	98	86	90
Exceeds Standards	65	57	67	48	53
Number of students tested	30	31	37	29	30
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards		40	83	66	84
Exceeds Standards		7	25	33	42
Number of students tested		14	13	15	12
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>6.</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested					
<b>NOTES:</b>					
No data was reported for subgroups with less than 5% tested.					

# STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics      Grade: Weighted Average

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Testing Month					
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	95	88	84	83	85
Exceeds Standards	83	61	52	55	53
Number of students tested	310	318	309	283	265
Percent of total students tested	97	96	98	98	97
Number of students alternatively assessed	8	9	14	10	10
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	1	1	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	90	83	78	74	81
Exceeds Standards	74	44	35	36	32
Number of students tested	113	110	103	94	86
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	89	78	85	72	76
Exceeds Standards	73	38	32	39	27
Number of students tested	58	62	71	67	55
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	91	27	47	57	71
Exceeds Standards	64	11	29	35	28
Number of students tested	11	23	35	31	28
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
<b>6.</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
<b>NOTES:</b>					

12AL1

# STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading      Grade: Weighted Average

	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Testing Month					
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	100	94	91	92	95
Exceeds Standards	75	71	64	63	65
Number of students tested	310	318	309	283	265
Percent of total students tested	97	97	98	98	96
Number of students alternatively assessed	8	9	14	10	10
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	1	1	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	99	89	86	88	88
Exceeds Standards	60	57	46	44	51
Number of students tested	111	110	104	94	86
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	96	87	88	91	89
Exceeds Standards	55	60	53	42	46
Number of students tested	58	64	70	67	56
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards	100	56	69	73	82
Exceeds Standards	45	16	30	31	32
Number of students tested	11	24	35	31	28
<b>5. English Language Learner Students</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
<b>6.</b>					
Meets and Exceeds Standards					
Exceeds Standards					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
<b>NOTES:</b>					

12AL1