

A dedicated academic arts magnet school, Forest Heights Academy actively integrates the arts into every aspect of instruction. With a certified arts faculty comprised of professional teaching artists leading bi-weekly arts instruction in state-of-the-art studio settings for all 440 elementary students, Forest Heights focuses on using the arts to compliment, supplement and stimulate classroom instruction.

Quarterly and weekly collaborative planning meetings between classroom teachers, the arts faculty and ancillary teachers including the Creative Writing teacher, the Physical Education coach and the school Librarian facilitate cross-curriculum instruction coordinated to the day. This type of regular, in-depth collaboration allows a second grader to read a story in the classroom in the morning for vocabulary, context clues and plot using pantomime to illustrate action; hear the story read aloud by Coach on the basketball court after lunch, listening for action verbs to cue the next leg of the relay race; then brainstorm set design for Scene One with set as context clues for the audience in the Black Box classroom, before creating dialogue to convey the plot of the start of the story that afternoon.

Classes transition to the art building by grade level every day for their Arts Block. Daily Arts Blocks consist of two half hour art lessons, with classes rotating evenly between dance, drama, visual art and choral music, adding instrumental music as a weekly elective for Second through Fifth Grades. The E. B. R. Parish School Board converted Forest Heights to an academic arts magnet school in 2004, constructing an arts building at that time that includes a fully equipped dance studio, visual arts studio, choral music studio, instrumental music studio and Black Box Theatre. The pre-existing auditorium in the main school building was also equipped with theatre quality spotlight, lighting and sound systems that include mixing boards now operated by students during all school performances.

Art Clubs, including a technical theatre club, supplement regular bi-weekly arts instruction for select students, meeting once weekly before school for 45 minutes. Elective to students in Third through Fifth Grades, art clubs perform at community events such as the annual Debose Festival, E. B. R. Magnet Mania, All-Parish Strings Camp and Music Camp. Collectively, they also present a Holiday Showcase in December as well as a Spring Showcase annually with day time performances for the student body and evening performances for the community. Talented Arts Instruction provided by the Gifted and Talented Department of E. B. R. P. School System further supplements advanced arts instruction for exceptional students. These Talented Arts Instructors visit the school bi-weekly and pull select students screened by the Louisiana State Department of Education to receive additional arts instruction that coordinates with current classroom and art studio lessons.

In addition, this year Forest Heights is one of 8 schools selected to participate in Louisiana's I. C. I. initiative, a four-year arts integrated pilot program. The Imagination, Creativity and innovation (I.C.I.) initiative supports schools with a mission of nurturing creativity in every learner through an integrated arts education. Schools that are a part of this initiative inspire the

entire community towards increased student engagement by committing to child-centered experiential, arts integrated teaching and learning. This program has

provided Forest Heights with full faculty professional development, strategic planning focused on arts integration, and an artist residency focused on further integrating theatre with language arts in the classroom. Additional grant programs such as the General Mills/Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre nutrition program that served Third Graders in 2009-2010 and the Kindermorgan Foundation grant program that brought the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra to the F. H. A. campus this year for performances and a hands-on Instrument Petting regularly continue to develop the school's academic instruction, arts education and program administration.

Every school year in Kindergarten through Fourth Grade, each grade level presents a Mini-Musical (a 30-45 minute long performance) on the main stage for the student body and community. During production preparation, regular Arts Block rotations are discontinued as students divide according to specialty, into art crew, chorus, band, running/tech crew and cast with arts faculty and ancillary teachers leading groups through the production process. Collaboration with grade level teachers lets performances develop from the core curriculum while elements of production are brought into classroom lessons. This year, the Third Grade created an adaptation of *Charlie Brown Christmas* set in the French Quarter of New Orleans, tying into their year-long Louisiana history curriculum and supplemented with music lessons on jazz and art lessons on Louisiana architecture.

Fifth Graders annually present a large-scale well known musical with six performances for other area schools and the community. A school-wide workshop on arts integration, collaboration and performance, Pre-Kindergarten through Second Grade students dance in the production while the entire student body compose topic-relevant written works, study scene work, musical scores and choreography, research the historic background of the play, and create visual art to decorate the classrooms and hallways for the run of the show. Community sponsors, parent volunteers and local press help make each year's Spring Musical fun, memorable, educational and possible.

### **Arts Classes**

**Dance:** Taught in a fully-equipped dance studio bi-weekly to all students K-5th during regular school hours. Pre-Kindergarten students receive dance instruction in the dance studio once a week during regular school hours. Dance Club members receive additional dance instruction before school 1-2 days a week. During grade-level productions, select students receive daily choreography instruction in preparation for performance for 3-9 weeks in the dance studio and on the main stage.

**Drama:** Taught in a fully-equipped Black Box theatre bi-weekly to all students K-5th during regular school hours. Pre-Kindergarten students receive theatre instruction in the Black Box theatre once a week during regular school hours. Drama Club members receive additional dramatic instruction before school once a week, and Black Box Technical Crew receive front/back of the house technical instruction once a week before school. During grade-level productions, select students receive daily direction and technical instruction in preparation for performance for 3-9 weeks in the Black Box theatre and on the main stage. Talented Drama Instruction is taught twice weekly for 45

minutes on the main stage to select, pre-screened students by a visiting Talented Drama Instructor provided by Gifted and Talented Services.

**Visual Arts:** Taught in a fully-equipped visual arts studio bi-weekly to all students K-5th during regular school hours. Pre-Kindergarten students receive visual arts instruction in the visual arts once a week during regular school hours. Visual Arts Club members receive additional visual arts instruction before school 1-2 days a week. During grade-level productions, select students receive daily set and pro design and construction instruction in preparation for performance for 3-9 weeks in the visual arts studio and on the main stage. Talented Visual Arts Instruction is taught twice weekly for 45 minutes in the workroom of the art building to select, pre-screened students by a visiting Talented Visual Arts Instructor provided by Gifted and Talented Services.

**Choral Music:** Taught in a fully-equipped choral studio bi-weekly to all students K-5th during regular school hours. Pre-Kindergarten students receive choral/general music instruction in the choral studio once a week during regular school hours. Choir and Orff Ensemble members receive additional choral and percussive instruction before school 1-2 days a week. During grade-level productions, select students receive daily choral and/or percussion instruction in preparation for performance for 3-9 weeks in the choral studio and on the main stage. Talented Choral Instruction is taught twice weekly for 45 minutes on the main stage to select, pre-screened students by a visiting Talented Choral Instructor provided by Gifted and Talented Services.

**Instrumental Music:** Taught during regular school hours in a fully-equipped studio, weekly to select 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grade students who elect into classes with parent permission. Classes include string ensemble, band, and piano (Beginner and Intermediate). Honor Band, Honor Strings Orchestra and Honor Piano members receive additional instrumental instruction before school once a week. During grade-level productions, select students receive daily instrumental instruction in preparation for performance for 3-9 weeks in the instrumental music studio and in the auditorium.

**Total numbers of Arts Teachers in the School**

Discipline	Full Time Teachers	Part Time Teachers
Dance	1	
Music	1 (+1 bi-weekly)	
Theatre	1 (+1 bi-weekly)	
Visual Art	1 (+1 bi-weekly)	

Forest Heights employs creative approaches to learning through a variety of methods, including quarterly and weekly collaborative planning between the arts faculty, ancillary faculty and classroom teachers. Regular, in-depth collaboration allows arts faculty to target specific content areas where students are showing a need for re-enforcement according to classroom teachers. It also provides an opportunity for classroom teachers and arts faculty to develop activities and lesson components that carry specific arts techniques from the arts studio into the classroom. Unification of language is another essential benefit of weekly collaborative planning, ensuring all instructors use the same correct terminology, whether speaking of scientific subject content or musical notation.

Forest Heights also uses the arts to help differentiate instruction and foster creative learning both in the arts studios and in the classroom, allowing students to choose from a variety of arts disciplines to complete select projects in core subjects. Tailored to meet individual student learning styles and needs, arts integration is proving to be an excellent asset to classroom teachers as they lead students through difficult concepts within the curriculum. Employing simple arts integration activities such as readers' theatre, pantomime, dialogue delivery improvisation and storyboard illustration developed with the arts faculty during collaborative planning sessions, classroom teachers are able to teach core curriculum concepts more quickly and more effectively as they reach students across all learning styles. This year, Fifth Grade science students wrote and performed rap songs explaining the parts of an atom in small groups, creating visual aids to wear during their performance. Similarly, Fourth Grade students composed, illustrated and performed (according to skill level and specialty) original works of poetry on language arts, science and social studies in a cross-curriculum project that culminated in a contemporary poetry coffee house Mini-Musical grade level production.

Determined to provide the student body with state-of-the-art learning experiences, Forest Heights has worked hard to equip its campus with proven educational technology and train its faculty in its uses. With ActiveBoards in almost every classroom, including most of the art studios, teachers develop multi-media lessons that creatively engage students and allow for easier arts integration. Collaborating with arts faculty to find videos, images, performances, and art work that corresponds to classroom lessons, teachers make them available on the ActiveBoard for student interaction in both the classroom and the art studio. Forest Heights also often holds video conferences with institutions like the Smithsonian, the Metropolitan Opera House and other elementary performing arts schools across the country to engage Forest Heights' students at every grade level in personal interactive educational experiences around the world. Teachers collaborate with the school Librarian to schedule relevant video conferences, and coordinate corresponding local field trips whenever possible.

As a performing arts magnet school, Forest Heights offers a number of opportunities for parental involvement in the arts. As each grade level from Kindergarten through Fifth Grade moves through their musical production process, parents play key roles, providing carpentry, costuming, hair and make-up instruction to student technical crews, extra hands backstage in dressing rooms, in the art studio with the art crew and in the house as supportive audience members. Sharing Sessions, when students showcase arts and classroom lesson from the Nine Weeks for the community on the main stage, and other student performances are always well attended, and the Spring Musical sells out weeks in advance despite six performances.

As specific classroom units are covered, parents with relevant expertise or talents are invited to come and share with students, leading demonstrations or hands-on activities or performing. Among other parent-lead activities this year, Kindergartener Lauryn William's father is visiting Forest Heights with a team of fellow employees from the local Lowes Hardware store, teaching the Kindergarten students to safely use simple tools to construct props and set needed for a stage adaptation of their Reading story. Additionally, family members regularly visit the F.H.A. campus to perform dramatic readings of classics from children's literature in the library and in the classroom. Dr. Suess's Birthday, Real Men Read Day, and National Poetry Month are all celebrated at Forest Heights with family members sharing storytelling with students of all ages.

Fortunate to have an active parent base interested in arts within the community, family members regularly serve as chaperones on field trips to performances by the Baton Rouge Ballet, the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, and The L.S.U. Opera Company. Family members also serve as chaperones for field trips to student performances in the community such as the annual Debose Festival, Magnet Mania, Strings Camp, Band Camp and Music Camp. In addition, parents provide all of the labor for the Fall Arts Festival, an annual outdoor event organized by the arts faculty for the student body. A fun, educational, arts integrated event, this festival provides most of the funding for arts programming that year.

Forest Heights' families also ensure their children experience art in the community outside of school-organized activities, taking advantage of audition, competition and performance opportunities in dance, choir, visual art and theatre within the local community. Forest Heights' families support their children in their artistic interests, providing transportation and responsible long-term performance commitments with a number of arts organizations including the Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre, The Baton Rouge Children's Choir and Junior Chorus, The Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge, a variety of local theatres like the Manship Theatre and New Venture Theatre.

Through regular collaborative planning between classroom teachers and arts faculty, students at Forest Heights are able to experience aspects of different cultures discussed in the core curriculum via the arts. As Fifth Graders learn in the classroom about the different tribes of pre-Columbian North America, they design and build their own model structures of various tribes' habitats with design and construction instruction from the Visual Arts Teacher in the art studio. Those same students create totem pole dances based on historic totem structure in the dance studio under the direction of the Dance Teacher. Fourth Graders studying the creation of a democratic American government by settlers, form the three branches of government as a grade level in the auditorium for other grades using costumes and props developed in Drama class while making historically appropriate speeches written with the Creative Writing Teacher and rehearsed in the Black Box. Lower grades also have similar learning experiences, with hands-on arts instruction teaching students specific elements of other cultures in addition to elements of an art form. First Graders learn folk dances from around the world in the dance studio that reflect the different countries learned about in the classroom.

In the choral music studio, students at every grade level are exposed to the native instruments, musical sounds and songs of world regions, including Russian, French, Native American, Japanese, African, Cajun and Caribbean regions. Equipped with a huge collection of native instruments from around the globe, the choral music studio lets students learn kinetically, using alternate senses to stimulate the mind. Second Graders learned an ancient Japanese Game song accompanied by traditional Japanese percussion instruments with the Choral Music Instructor during the weeks Japanese culture was discussed in the classroom. The Drama Instructor further developed students' understanding of Japanese culture, adapting the regional folk tale from the classroom Language Reader to the Black Box stage in drama class.

In dance class, Third Graders learn colonial folk dances such as the Virginia Reel and Cajun dances that compliment their Louisiana Cajuns unit in Social Studies. Kindergarteners learn a Mardi Gras dance to accompany their Mardi Gras unit, while creating individual parade floats in the art studio for a school-wide parade during the week of Mardi Gras. In fact, Forest Heights incorporates global holiday traditions into all arts and classroom instruction as seasons arrive.

Recognizing the success of integrating the arts into cultural and historical curriculum lessons, Forest Heights makes a deliberate effort to collaboratively plan activities that will allow students to develop their understanding and appreciation of different cultures in a fun, engaging and educational manner. Video conferences supplement lessons on different cultures, allowing students access to museums and fellow students around the world.

With an arts faculty comprised of professional teaching artists, Forest Heights students and faculty have access to a wide range of arts organizations, events and resources through the arts faculty's contacts within the arts community. Taking advantage of professional contacts, the F.H.A. arts faculty regularly arranges for visiting arts dignitaries and performance groups to perform for the student body and lead demonstration workshops whenever possible.

This year, the Louisiana Poet Laureate, Darrell Bourque, performed for Fourth Graders at the culmination of their poetry coffee house Mini-Musical production, while nationally ranked slam poet worked with Fourth Grade students in the weeks leading up to the production, helping them prepare their oratory performances. The Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre invited students to attend a daytime performance of the Nutcracker, and visited the F.H.A. campus to perform on the main stage as part of the nutrition grant serving Third Graders. A partnership with the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra allows students in upper grades to attend a daytime performance of the full symphony, while bringing select members of the orchestra (the String Quintet and members of the instrument petting zoo) to perform on the main stage at Forest Heights. Field trips to the Louisiana State Museum, the Louisiana Arts and Science Museum and L.S.U. Museum of Art provide students of different grade levels exposure to professional visual art from around the world.

Additional performances are provided on the Forest Heights main stage annually by Playmakers, Louisiana's only theatre company for young audiences, during their spring tour; Of Moving Colors, a modern dance troupe based in Baton Rouge; and members of the Louisiana Storytelling Guild, who entertain Third Graders with slave tales and Cajun tales from our state's cultural history.

The active student performance schedule at Forest Heights demands strong partnerships with local press organizations, including television stations, the daily newspaper and monthly cultural magazines. The press organizations provide coverage of student performances for the community regularly, encouraging further student involvement in community arts activities and enrollment in the arts magnet programs of E.B.R. Parish. A partnership with the Independence Park Theatre allows F.H.A. Black Box technical crew student members to tour a large-scale professional theatre and learn lighting and sound board controls from theatre professionals one weekend a year.

Arts integrated student performances also require partnerships with community businesses, as props, set and costumes are created by students with the help of arts faculty. Teaming primarily with business located near the Forest Heights campus, our school is able to trade goods, services, and labor expertise for advertisements in our widely distributed Spring Musical Program.

Believing in the importance of a vital arts community available and accessed by citizens of all ages, Forest Heights works to develop young performers and patrons who possess a strong appreciation of the larger arts community in all disciplines.

## **School Population Demographics**

**Total student body: 440**

### **Racial**

African-American: 416 total (94.5%)

Asian: 1 Total (.23%)

Hispanic: 4 Total (.91%)

Caucasian: 19 Total (4.32%)

### **Food Services**

Free Lunch: 270 Total

Reduced Lunch: 66 Total

Combined 76%

### **Gender**

Female: 49.7%

Male: 50.3%

In 2010, the average School Performance Score for East Baton Rouge Parish School System elementary schools was 84 while the score for our school was 137. Since our creation in 2004, student performance has consistently increased at Forest Heights Academy, one of only three schools in E.B.R. Parish to achieve this success. Our iLeap and LEAP test scores (state mandatory standardized tests) are the highest or among the parish's highest in all subject areas, across all grade levels tested. These scores rank far above Louisiana state averages, and place Forest Heights Academy among the highest achieving public schools in our state.

Please see specific information about our School Performance Score growth in our supplemental materials.

Serving the North Baton Rouge community since its creation in 2004, Forest Heights Academy of Excellence provides predominately low income students with high quality, innovative instruction. A dedicated academic and arts magnet, Forest Heights' teachers and arts faculty collaborate regularly, developing ways of using arts integration to enhance student performance at every level, in every lesson. Forest Heights' campus includes an arts complex, dance, choral, instrumental music, visual arts studios, and Black Box theatre classroom, in addition to its main building classrooms and performing arts auditorium. All students in Pre-K through Fifth receive weekly arts instruction from certified arts specialists in studio settings that reinforces classroom curriculum while ~~developing students understanding of the various art forms. Classroom teachers~~ continue students' instruction in the different arts disciplines, using studio techniques to engage students and enhance core curriculum comprehension. The U.S. and Louisiana Department of Education, the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism and the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge are among the agencies that have recognized Forest Heights as leader in successful academic-based arts integration, awarding repeated National Blue Ribbon Awards, designation as a High Performance-High Poverty School for 3 consecutive years, and named one of the top five performing schools in the parish.

Forest Heights is one of 8 schools selected to participate in Louisiana's ICI Initiative, a four-year arts-integrated pilot program that supports schools with a mission of nurturing creativity in every learner through an integrated arts education. This program has provided Forest Heights with full-faculty professional development, strategic planning focused on arts integration, and an artist residency focused on integrating theatre with English language arts.

Last spring, the U.S. Department of Education featured our school's arts education programming in an informational video produced by the History Channel. View the video to learn more about Forest Heights by following the link: [www.ed.gov/blog/2010/10/an-education-masterpiece-in-baton-rouge](http://www.ed.gov/blog/2010/10/an-education-masterpiece-in-baton-rouge). With some of the highest test scores in the state consistently, numerous accolades from the arts community and outstanding support from the state and parish, Forest Heights continues to be a vital elementary educational institution in Louisiana.