

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Dr. Jonathan Schneider  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Westside Middle School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 580 Lafayette Highway  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Rocky Face State GA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 30740-9411

County Whitfield County

Telephone (706) 673-2611 Fax (706) 673-5349

Web site/URL <https://www.wcsga.net/Domain/11> E-mail [jonathan.schneider@wcsga.net](mailto:jonathan.schneider@wcsga.net)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Mike Ewton E-mail [mike.ewton@wcsga.net](mailto:mike.ewton@wcsga.net)  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Whitfield County Schools Tel. (706) 217-6780

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Bill Worley  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

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

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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**Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.**

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 13 Elementary schools (includes K-8)  
6 Middle/Junior high schools  
5 High schools  
0 K-12 schools
- 24 TOTAL

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

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

- ☐ Urban (city or town)  
☐ Suburban  
☒ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	0
K	0
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	0
5	0
6	146
7	123
8	122
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	391

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0.5 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0.3 % Asian
  - 1.9 % Black or African American
  - 14.9 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 76.8 % White
  - 5.6 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 16%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

We have seen an increasing number of families decide to homeschool their children since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	18
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	44
(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, 2021	391
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.16
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	16

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %

9 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 61 %

Total number students who qualify: 238

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 19 %  
Total number of students served 73

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>5</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>26</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>35</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>1</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 5 %  
Total number of students served: 20

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 3

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	16
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	94%	93%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2022.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

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

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

We envision a responsive school that is focused on students and is valued and respected by the community. Our mission is to increase student learning by providing students and staff with meaningful, challenging, and engaging educational experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XYoIg-3J2Byta-VZRtInAC9nG6EV3Yxd1GDGMT86YVs/edit#heading=h.r730pa7lt5xc>

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

## PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

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The current Westside Middle School (WMS) was formed in the Fall of 1975 when Northwest Whitfield High School replaced the former Westside High School. The towns of Rocky Face and Tunnel Hill in Northwest Georgia are served by WMS. The area is mostly rural, with many farms and subdivisions that dot the landscape. While there are always families that move into the Westside community each year, most are long-time generational residents of the area. Just a few miles away there are carpet mills and other types of industries that are the main economic drivers for the region. Many work in these industries, while others are heavily involved in agriculture. The types of jobs available create a wide range of socioeconomic diversity in the community, resulting in WMS being a Title 1 school.

The Westside community is close-knit and truly values the success of their students and school. They are supportive, and can be seen attending teacher conferences and events. Families want their children to develop into good people, and to be active and accountable in order to become life-long learners and productive citizens. It is for this reason that students are heavily involved in athletics and fine arts opportunities. They work hard academically, while developing and exhibiting positive character traits throughout the building each day. Parents, teachers, and administrators work together to make the best decisions possible for their children. The WMS community is a place where people want to be as evidenced by the generations of families who continue to live and work in the area, which includes many former students who come back and currently teach at the school. The love and pride for the school and community can be best summed up by the phrase “Westside is the Best-side”.

Teachers encourage and challenge all learners to develop to their full potential. All staff members strive to establish positive relationships with students in order to help them have success. Educators work to incorporate the latest research-based instructional strategies, while being attentive to learning needs. The Westside Scholars Wall displays boys and girls who have made all A’s throughout middle school, which serves as a motivator for all learners to work hard and achieve their best. Advanced classes offer high achieving scholars with the rigor needed to dive deep into learning concepts. When students need more support, math and reading intervention classes are offered, after-school math tutoring is available, and the Multi Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is utilized. There are many literacy activities supported school-wide including a Book Club that meets during lunch. Adolescents create lasting friendships because they are involved in athletics, band, drama, service clubs (BETA), Quiz Bowl and more. Eighth grade students have the opportunity to develop leadership skills as a part of the leadership program. Teachers connect the curriculum to the real world by taking learners on educational field trips to locations such as Rock City, Ruby Falls, the Tennessee Aquarium, the Medal of Honor Museum, or the local Holocaust Museum. Students have also had opportunities to take their learning to the next level by touring Georgia and Washington D.C. They actively participate in cultural experiences like African dancing or traditional music through the Oscar N. Jonas (ON Jonas) program several times per year. These are just some of the examples of how students are provided with opportunities to fully learn, grow, and develop within a positive school learning environment.

Creative initiatives have been implemented in order to support children and the community overall. The Olweus program and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system expectations are vital to the success of a safe learning environment. The PBIS expectations include: be respectful, responsible, accountable, and safe. These programs are influential in driving the high standards expected of students, as well as support the motto/belief of “what you do matters”.

The love of reading literacy initiative includes Rocket reading, a time that is set aside to read freely one morning per week, as well as audiobooks that have been purchased to encourage readers of all levels to get interested in reading. There are literacy nights, family nights at book fairs, and podcasting opportunities available. Some of these podcasts have been entered in local competitions and have received recognition for creativity.

Opportunities are provided for learners and staff members to support and engage with the Westside community. Each year there is a Veteran’s Day celebration, along with a time set aside for children and their



families to make Christmas cards for troops overseas. The BETA club members bring in toys and create boxes for children who are receiving treatment at a local hospital. Students also support the fight against child abuse by purchasing pin-wheels that are displayed for the community to view.

Teachers always strive to make learning fun and engaging. There are 1:1 classroom sets of chromebooks along with Viewsonic boards to make learning an interactive experience. Hands-on projects also allow students to demonstrate their creativity such as when social studies educators plan cultural food celebrations, math teachers allow learners to design and make roller coasters, science instructors plan egg drops, or when language teachers do book speed dating. These are just some of the many creative ideas, programs, and initiatives that make up the fabric of WMS, and sustain a positive learning environment for students and staff.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum at Westside Middle School (WMS) is based on the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE). Teachers do not teach from a set ELA curriculum, but have autonomy to plan standards-based lessons using the district curriculum map. The five primary domains of Reading for Literature, Reading for Information, Writing, Speaking/Listening, and Language drive the instructional practices and assessments for each grade-level. Helping students comprehend more challenging texts with analyses, inferences, and claims using relevant evidence is also a school-wide focus. Educators collaborate and vertically plan instruction that supports continual year-to-year growth by introducing similar standards that increase in complexity, which prepares learners for high school.

The ELA staff utilize multiple strategies and best practices to ensure each lesson provides opportunities for students to read, write, listen, and speak. They focus on increasing Lexile reading levels by differentiating texts, providing remediation, and increasing rigor to help children grow in their reading abilities. Online resources such as Scholastic Scope, NewsELA, CommonLit, and Epic are incorporated as part of the overall instruction in order to provide appropriately leveled texts for learners. Teachers use a variety of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and graphic novels from classroom libraries and the media center collection to support instruction. The media specialist works with educators and students to design learning experiences based on interest and informational topics that they would like to explore. Additionally, ELA teachers regularly embed Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies into lessons including chunking, scaffolding, QAR-question/answer/response, jigsaw, and turn & talk to support all learners. Conferencing is an additional tool used by instructors that allows them to give students important feedback, build relationships, as well as gain valuable information related to individual learning needs. Web-based programs such as Membean, MiWrite, Flocabulary, BrainPop, and IXL are incorporated as supplemental resources in addressing standards-based objectives. The Restate, Answer, Cite evidence, and Explain (RACE) strategy to support writing instruction is also utilized by all grades.

Analyzing student assessment data is essential for teachers to make adjustments to pacing, planning, and instructional practices. A variety of formative assessments are used throughout each unit including class discussions, tickets out the door, weekly quizzes, and game-based reviews such as Gimkit. The Measure of Academic Progress and Reading Inventory are administered three times a year to determine growth, identify strengths, as well as areas for improvement. In addition to the end of year state-mandated Georgia Milestones test, other summative assessments are used including district designed benchmarks, projects, and essays.

The ELA teachers are passionate about reading, and promote a love of books in all they do. They spend ten to fifteen minutes each day having learners read, whether that be in the classroom or the outside courtyard. The first ten minutes of each Tuesday is designated for Rocket Reading time, which consists of all staff and students starting their day by reading a book of choice. Literacy is also encouraged through spirit days such as wearing camouflage on “Hide Behind a Good Book” day. These are just a few examples of how their dedication has helped to further the school-wide focus on literacy. Promoting a love of reading is just as crucial as the GSE because it fosters a love of learning and further strengthens the foundation for academic success and an overall confidence for each and every student.

#### **1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The math teachers at Westside Middle School (WMS) follow the course of study set forth in the Georgia Standards of Excellence. These educators do not use a set math curriculum, but instead work together to plan lessons both as a grade-level and vertically using research-based instructional practices that follow the district pacing guide. They typically begin class with a review of the content previously taught, and then begin introducing new material in a whole group setting. Learners then practice by working independently

or in small groups depending on the task. Teachers use a variety of instructional methods including self discovery, the use of interactive notebooks, responsive teaching, mathematical modeling, framework tasks, number talks, and technology-enhanced platforms. Students also sharpen their problem solving skills while participating in hands-on activities such as escape rooms, Fear Factor, glow-day, and Twister.

Technology is utilized to enhance math instruction, which increases engagement and makes learning more interactive. Some online platforms that supplement instruction or that are used for remediation include Desmos, IXL, Moby Max, Geogebra, ByteLearn, Mountain Math, Padlet, Kahoot, Quizzes, Blooket, and Google Suite applications. Teachers also use Edulastic as a resource to evaluate student work by standard and/or topic, showing what has been mastered and what should be retaught for clarification. Edulastic prepares learners for the end of year state assessment because it familiarizes them with the wording and format, and also gives them practice with the online Desmos calculator. These resources allow teachers to meet students where they are to differentiate lessons and provide assistance in order to help them grow their mathematical and reasoning abilities. The use of technology also allows learners to receive immediate feedback on their work, which is an advantage in today's fast-paced world.

Math educators gauge student progress by using formative and summative assessment strategies. This allows them to determine learning needs and gaps, and to plan remedial lessons/activities if necessary. Classroom discussions, learning tasks, and error analysis are some examples of how teachers assess the overall comprehension of the standards-based content. As they analyze data, educators are able to tier assignments and make small groups to tailor instruction in order to meet individual student goals. The Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) is utilized to evaluate learners on their grade-level content knowledge, but also on their growth throughout the current school year. Teachers use MAP data, district benchmarks, and other classroom assessments to identify those that need additional support. Using federal Title 1 funds, free after-school math tutoring is offered to all students who want extra help. WMS also offers a math intervention program in each grade-level that is taught as an elective class. Teachers use all of these instructional strategies, tools, and program offerings to ensure that learners are prepared for the end of year Georgia Milestones test. The instruction, resources, and assessment results allow them to make the most informed decisions about their students to ensure they attain and grow beyond grade-level proficiency.

#### **1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Teachers have flexibility in covering the Georgia Standards of Excellence science curriculum. The content focus for each grade level varies immensely between Earth, Life, and Physical Science. Even with different content objectives, the instructional strategies and practices are similar to support a cohesive learning transition from grade to grade. New material is introduced using a variety of delivery models that keep students engaged. Sheltered instructional strategies are used to differentiate and provide learners with opportunities to speak, listen, read, and write using the language of science. Instructors also use digital tools such as BrainPop, Generation Genius, Gimkit, and Kahoot to provide the children with fun practice and to demonstrate their level of understanding. Additionally, hands-on activities involving models, inquiry labs, simulations, and group projects help learners make connections to the standards-based content. For example, sixth grade students classified various rocks by type, tested minerals for identification, and hunted for fossils. Seventh grade learners squeezed particles through a mock digestive system to learn how the human body works, and eighth grade students explored physical science concepts by creating egg drop contraptions and testing them out. Science teachers use these and other real-world learning opportunities to support the use of critical thinking skills in order for students to develop a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the content.

Educators use formative and summative assessment activities to measure student comprehension. These assessments take many forms such as a quiz or unit test, a choice board, or even a lab report. The data gleaned from assessments are used to determine their overall understanding so that teachers can reflect, plan, and reteach key concepts. Eighth graders take the Georgia Milestones End of Grade Science assessment to measure their knowledge gained throughout the year. Teachers work together to plan engaging lessons and activities that lead to successful learning outcomes for all students.

#### **1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Westside Middle School (WMS) social studies (SS) teachers use the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) to guide instruction. They collaborate together to design engaging lessons, activities, and assessments that are aligned with the GSE, while following the pace of the district curriculum map.

Although each grade level has a different content focus, SS teachers deliver instruction in a way that best fits the learning profiles of their students. A variety of teaching methods are used such as direct instruction, reciprocal teaching, classroom discussions, and hands-on activities that help engage the children as they master the standards-based content. SS educators provide opportunities for learners to go deeper into concepts through class projects, presentations, and role-playing activities. Some examples of these are when sixth graders learned about WWII by completing a Holocaust survivor activity, as well as created t-shirt designs to protest the Berlin Wall during the Cold War era. Seventh grade students participated in a Shark Tank project to demonstrate their understanding of economic systems, and made tribal masks as they learned about African cultures. Eighth graders wrote their own constitution as they re-enacted the Constitutional Convention, as well as created a Civil War newspaper to detail the historical timeline of events. Students receive current event updates via CNN-10 each day, and also use online resources such as iCivics, Flocabulary, and Georgia Public Broadcasting to support learning outcomes.

Teachers use formative and summative assessments throughout each unit to gauge progress. They use ticket out the door strategies to serve as a springboard for future lessons or as a check-in to identify where students have misconceptions. Learners take unit tests that detail how well they comprehend what was taught, and to help SS educators determine what areas of weakness are present, what concepts need to be remediated, or when to provide further enrichment. In eighth grade, learning is measured by the Georgia Milestones End of Grade Social Studies test. Teachers design innovative lessons and activities that allow students to master and demonstrate a deeper understanding of the SS curriculum.

#### **1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:**

Westside Middle School's (WMS) counselor and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) teacher work together to design engaging lessons that encourage students to think critically about their future plans, including whether to attend technical college, a four-year university, or immediately enter the workforce. The STEM program reflects essential and relevant performance standards in all content areas that support college and career readiness. The Building Resourceful Individuals to Develop Georgia's Economy (BRIDGE) Act was created to start the conversation with students regarding their future plans for postsecondary education or entering the workforce. The implementation of the BRIDGE Act provides learners with career counseling to choose a focused plan of study for their future.

These STEM career classes promote the knowledge, skills, and awareness that children need in order to make key decisions about high school pathways, career exploration, and workforce opportunities. Sixth and eighth grade students also attend Junior Achievement's BizTown and Finance Park where they learn about entrepreneurship, how businesses operate, and how to make wise, lifelong financial decisions.

WMS also has a student leadership team that is composed of eighth graders who have gone through an application process for admission. Throughout the year, they work on social service projects, such as a canned food drive, volunteer with the Tim Tebow Foundation for Night to Shine, read to elementary children at feeder schools, and engage in various other projects around campus. In addition, structured learning opportunities are provided for leadership students within the community by partnering with local industries to have more in-depth conversations surrounding college and career readiness. The leadership team also utilizes the Congressional Medal of Honor Society curriculum which teaches them about the tenets of bravery, courage, sacrifice, and integrity. These career and leadership opportunities help children make more informed decisions for their future.

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

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

## **2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)**

Westside Middle School (WMS) provides fine arts opportunities such as drama, visual arts, band for all grade levels, as well as chorus for seventh and eighth graders. A drama club is also offered after school that allows learners to put on performances such as Newsies, Legally Blonde and others. These programs allow students to demonstrate their creativity by working together toward a finished product. They learn about painting, perspective and shading in drawing, how to create paper mache, and how to work with clay in their visual arts classes. In drama, they learn how to express themselves, how to write a skit, and how to create a puppet show for an audience. Band members begin by learning how to read and play music on an instrument of choice, as well as how to work together to prepare for school performances and competitions. Chorus has allowed students to learn and sing different styles and genres of music. Through the fine arts programs, creative thinking, the exploration of different cultures and perspectives, the development of critical thinking skills, and collaboration with others has helped students develop teamwork and social skills that will benefit them in all areas of school and life.

## **2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

Westside Middle School (WMS) offers health and physical education (PE) classes that focus on providing children with knowledge to support active and healthy lifestyles each day. Students learn a variety of information in order to be more informed about the choices they make regarding their overall fitness and well-being. In health class, they learn about the effects of alcohol and drug use, disease prevention, growth and development, health careers, motor skills, and physical fitness. They are also made aware of environmental, personal, mental, and community health-related issues. Students enjoy participating in a variety of activities, games, and sports where they learn the concepts and principles of fitness, motor skills, movement patterns, tactics, and strategies which contribute to a physically literate and active lifestyle. Weight lifting is also offered to learners who are interested. The students are taught proper lifting techniques and are provided a workout regimen each day. All children in PE and weight training participate in the Fitnessgram every year. This assessment measures the aerobic capacity, muscular strength, endurance, flexibility, and body composition of each adolescent. Reading and writing activities are also incorporated into PE lessons in order to support school literacy goals. Teachers strive to promote the overall health and physical development of WMS students by providing meaningful learning experiences each day.

## **2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)**

## **2d. Technology/library/media**

The media specialist (MS) at Westside Middle School supports technology, literacy initiatives, and the love of reading school-wide. Technology integration is vital to the preparation of students for the transition to high school and eventually as productive citizens of society. As a 1:1 school, the MS supports staff with technology issues, along with the curation of online resources for instructional use. Opportunities are provided for students to grow through digital citizenship lessons embedded within engaging activities such as breakout rooms.

The media center collection reflects a bookstore model where students are encouraged to “shop.” Audiobooks have been added, which has increased checkout rates for many reluctant readers. New books are purchased based on curriculum connections and student interests. The students especially love reading about Anne Frank, the Titanic, and horses. Westside has incorporated a book club, which will take a field trip to the Holocaust Museum at the end of the year.

The MS supports school-wide literacy through book fairs, family nights, a drama/art collaboration to write scripts and create puppets, and the “read with a friend” initiative. A literacy field day culminates each year with rotations such as a book cake walk, first line matchups, and book bingo. Each year the MS works to

raise funds to ensure that students go home each summer with at least one new book in their hands. The MS plays a vital role in promoting the love of reading throughout the school.

**2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share**

**3. Academic Supports**

**3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Westside Middle School (WMS) teachers utilize tier one research-based instructional strategies to help students that are performing below grade level. Students receive double the minutes of instruction in English language arts and math when compared to their science and social studies classes in order to ensure those foundational skills are addressed. Teachers analyze classroom work, assessments, Measure of Academic Progress, and Reading Inventory data to identify which students need support. A digital data wall is used to track the learning progress of all students throughout the year. Teachers and administrators meet with struggling students to provide an opportunity for them to voice their strengths and areas for growth. This allows the learning team to acknowledge non-academic issues that may also impact performance because scores alone do not drive the decision making at WMS.

Students are then placed into a math or reading support class that is offered as an elective, and/or counseling is offered as needed. In support classes, teachers identify skill deficits and learning gaps and work with students in small groups or individually in order to help them make progress toward their learning goals. The math support teacher uses online programs to provide remediation, preview upcoming curriculum, and review the standards and skills being worked on in their regular math classes. After-school tutoring in math is also offered twice per week for any student that needs extra help. The reading support teacher uses the Fast ForWord program to identify deficits and provide individual help for students working toward increasing their overall reading ability. These students are progress monitored using the Aimsweb program, which is part of the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) process to ensure that they receive the differentiated instructional support needed to be successful. As part of the MTSS, teachers and administrators work with parents through student support teams (SST) to identify other interventions that may also help. The process is fluid and adjustments are made on an individual basis for students who make academic progress toward grade-level proficiency.

**3b. Students performing above grade level:**

The teachers of Westside Middle School (WMS) want to ensure that students of all ability levels are able to have success. They seek to create a culture of engagement by designing impactful instruction, developing positive relationships, and meeting adolescents where they are academically, as well as by providing extended-learning opportunities through advanced content classes and the gifted program. High performing scholars who are not identified as gifted must meet certain requirements each year in order to participate in these academically challenging classes. These advanced learners, as well as gifted students receive rigorous and differentiated instruction within a compacted curriculum that focuses on enrichment to further their understanding of concepts across all core content areas. Teachers create tiered assignments, offer self-directed activities, and utilize project-based options to enrich curricular objectives and academic outcomes. Examples of these include problem-solving tasks based on open-ended situations, exploratory labs, and student-based inquiry in order to delve further into the standards-based content. WMS teachers also utilize online programs such as Moby Max to extend learning opportunities.

Students must meet the established requirements necessary in order to be identified as gifted. They are held to a higher standard of achievement, as all As and Bs must be maintained in their core classes in order to remain in the program. Teachers monitor their performance regularly to ensure they maintain this level of performance and reach their full potential. The students that are highly-motivated and demonstrate abilities that surpass expectations beyond what these classes provide can also utilize an online program called Georgia Virtual School (GVS). The courses through GVS provide a new perspective as learners are

challenged to a higher-level of academic rigor in order to earn high school credit. These programs and practices provide more opportunities for engaging with the curriculum at a deeper-level in order to prepare for future high school, college, and career success.

### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

Westside Middle School (WMS) offers a range of special education services to meet the needs of struggling learners. These are determined through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) committee process in order to ensure students can be successful in the least restrictive environment. The types of assistance provided includes collaborative, resource, supportive, consultative, and speech services. Co-teachers meet weekly to discuss data, academic progress, and to make instructional plans that include strategies to help with engagement in the collaborative setting. Resource classes provide a small group setting that moves at a pace commiserate with learning needs, while still covering all grade-level curricula. A self-contained resource environment is available for those with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities. Supportive services are provided through small group study skills classes that further assist students in connecting with the overall curriculum in order to reach individual academic goals. Special education teachers also meet with those who receive consultative assistance during the week to check on their progress and provide help if needed. A speech language pathologist works with students who struggle with language, voice, and fluency disorders.

The Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) in reading, language arts, and math is given three times each school year, along with the Reading Inventory which provides a Lexile measurement for reading comprehension. This data, along with achievement results from programs such as IXL and FastForWord is used to assist in diagnosing gaps and areas of weakness. Educators use this data to adjust interventions and skill-building activities, as well as to set goals and address areas in which additional support is needed. This also enables teachers to provide the necessary rigor and scaffolding to ensure comprehension and academic success overall. Students are encouraged to try difficult tasks and are celebrated when they persevere to reach their learning goals.

### **3d. English Language Learners:**

Westside Middle School (WMS) tailors instruction, assessments, and interventions to meet the needs of our population of English Learners (EL). Students entering the country must take the WIDA screener to determine whether English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services are needed. The ESOL teacher uses the WIDA consortium standards to advance language development among diverse students. Most educators at WMS are Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) certified. This SIOP training spans three years and focuses on using sheltered instructional strategies to design and deliver lessons that address academic and linguistic needs. There is also an Intensive English Academy offered for learners with little to no English speaking background.

The ESOL teacher uses the push-in delivery model with ELs to develop their individual language proficiency levels. The types of support provided to learners includes working with definitions and pictures of vocabulary words, sentence stems, making connections to prior knowledge, note-taking strategies, scaffolding, and instructional chunking. There are also programs in place to enhance language development. Lexia PowerUp is a computer-based intervention program that adapts instruction to the specific needs of each student. The activities in PowerUp focus on developing reading skills in three areas: word study, grammar, and comprehension. Membean is an online resource used to focus on building vocabulary in context that will help develop more complex comprehension skills, therefore helping them attain higher English proficiency levels.

WMS uses the WIDA Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) English Language Learners 2.0 test to measure progress toward proficiency. Using ACCESS, along with the Measure of Academic Progress and Reading Inventory data, accommodations are determined on an individual basis to provide equity in the classroom for learning and assessments. The ESOL teacher works closely with all content educators to ensure EL students have the support needed to be successful overall.

**3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:**



## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

Westside Middle School (WMS) staff members strive to provide an environment that promotes the development of the whole child. The Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports system (PBIS) drives the overall expectations for each day. Teachers also utilize weekly Olweus advisement lessons that encourage them to make good choices and to build worthwhile relationships with others. Staff members make every effort to get to know students, and want them to feel loved and safe while at school. With that said, learners also understand that teachers have high expectations for them academically and behaviorally. They are taught and reminded of the school motto which is “what you do matters”. These expectations and programs have helped establish a positive and safe learning environment that students thrive in.

The relationships that are built both inside and outside the classroom is the main catalyst for the positive climate and culture. WMS teachers lead the fine arts and athletic programs, which promotes more relationship-building opportunities and more involvement in extracurricular activities. Teachers also attend these events in order to show their support. They utilize the check-in/check-out system regularly with adolescents that need an advocate. Students are recognized school-wide through personal birthday and PBIS award announcements, at pep rallies and ceremonies for individual and team accomplishments, which all promote a positive experience.

Teachers encourage a growth mindset, and strive to make learning fun by utilizing a variety of instructional strategies. They make real world/personal connections to authentic educational experiences in order to offer validity to what is taught. They leverage social media in their lessons, integrate pop culture when relevant, tie in current events, and provide choice in the process and product of assignments. WMS teachers create supportive environments where learners are encouraged to utilize their strengths in order to maximize their potential. The staff work hard to create a positive climate that promotes the academic, social, and emotional development of each child as they transition from grade to grade, and eventually into high school and beyond. This includes educating about different career opportunities through the STEM program, as well as providing interest surveys through YouScience in order to help them know what type of careers match their strengths and interests. This culminates in eighth grade when they tour the high school and career academy to discover the career pathways available. Students are able to take the knowledge gained and begin focusing on their future college or career path. The WMS experience allows students to learn and develop in a supportive environment that prioritizes their overall well-being and future.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Westside Middle School (WMS) students need support from teachers, family, and the community as they continue to grow and develop throughout their middle school experience. The staff work to strengthen parental involvement and community relationships because they are essential in preparing learners for success in life. The parent council meets regularly with the principal to gain insight and provide feedback in order to help with school-wide initiatives. Teachers want to build relationships and have open communication with families, which is why information is sent home and posted digitally for stakeholders through mediums such as newsletters, Facebook, Remind texts, or phone calls. Families are also encouraged to be a part of their child’s learning experience through events such as a Literacy or STEM night, which are periodically offered in order to increase the partnership between stakeholders.

WMS is fortunate to have many community partners that are vital to student and staff success. These partnerships include Junior Achievement, United Way, Nabors to Neighbors Foundation, North Georgia Electric, The Creative Arts Guild, the Oscar N. Jonas (ON Jonas) Memorial Foundation and others. Highland Rivers is another partner that provides counseling and therapy using a licensed therapist through their APEX program. The therapist meets with students at the school, which makes receiving these necessary mental health services convenient for them and their families. Recently, the Georgia United Credit Union awarded WMS with their School Crasher grant to completely remodel the media center and counseling office areas so that they are more inviting and functional for student and staff use. Reading is

also supported through partnerships such as the summer read and feed project which not only provides free meals for families, but also supplies free books for them as well. The Whitfield Education Foundation has been instrumental in providing teachers with innovative grants so that they can take learning to the next level. These grants have been used for a variety of initiatives including to repair instruments, purchase literary resources, and lab materials to make science more engaging and fun. These partnerships aid in connecting students and families to resources that are needed in order to promote the overall development, well-being, and quality of their educational experience. Westside is grateful for these community partnerships that allow for the support of each student in ways the school alone could not provide.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Westside Middle School (WMS) aspires to create a professional culture where every staff member feels valued and supported. Leaders make every effort to protect teachers' instructional and planning time. There is a professional learning room where anyone can come not only to collaborate, but also to make coffee, grab a snack, or even rest in one of the massage chairs. Administrators seek different ways to let everyone know that they are appreciated such as providing a duty-free lunch, a tailgate cookout, or even a visit from the happy cart. Most importantly, each staff member is offered a smile, a sincere thank you, or a note of acknowledgement for the many things that they do. These examples go a long way in building a professional climate at WMS.

New educators receive a mentor to assist them as they develop into seasoned veterans. Grade-level teachers have common planning times where they meet to plan field trips, curate resources, and collaborate about the best instructional practices, as well as to discuss things such as positive behavior reward ideas. While content teachers collaborate together on engaging lessons and activities, they also tailor instructional plans based on the individual needs of students. ELA, math, and special education co-teachers meet weekly to ensure that everyone is on the same page with what is being taught, what learners need, and what instructional model they feel is applicable. This allows everyone to be supported in their roles and to ensure unity in instruction and assessment. Building these relationships has been key to ensuring that each person has a team in which they feel safe to discuss their successes and struggles.

The instructional coach (IC) provides coaching/modeling within classrooms, as well as professional development (PD) for teachers. The IC supports teachers by providing them with literacy strategies that can help students tackle content level reading and writing such as how to read a primary source, how to write a multiple paragraph essay, or even how to solve a multi-step word problem. The IC also works with educators to increase the depth of knowledge activities and differentiation in all classes. The ability to dig deep into professional discussions allows for the leverage of more knowledge which ultimately is beneficial for students and is crucial to their learning outcomes. The WMS staff works together, has a growth mindset, and consistently looks for ways to show how much they care by holding the work each person does in high regard.

### **4. School Leadership:**

The administrative team of Westside Middle School (WMS) consists of the principal and assistant principal (AP) who strive to serve and address the needs of students, staff, and the school community. They believe in collaborating with teachers regarding student concerns, as well as have an open door policy for stakeholders. The administrators believe in being visible, and developing positive relationships with students and staff in order to best meet their needs. Each administrator has specific roles and responsibilities, but both always jump in no matter the circumstance.

The principal serves as instructional leader, but believes it is a collaborative effort between the Instructional Coach (IC) and other content leaders in the school. The principal believes that empowering others to lead is important to the overall success of the school. The input received from these leaders helps tailor professional development to the needs of the staff, and to determine what instructional resources are needed to support student achievement. They work closely with teachers to analyze student data in order to identify concerns and provide support where needed. The principal also manages the overall school schedule, finances, personnel, student discipline, FTE, and anything else that the school needs. The AP has the primary

responsibility of dealing with student behavior issues, and serves as the 504 and multi-tiered support systems coordinator (MTSS), as well as testing coordinator for the school. Both administrators believe in being responsive with school-based needs in order to support a positive climate and cohesive learning environment for all stakeholders.

The Principal has a leadership team that includes content, grade-level, and special education leaders, as well as the IC, media specialist, and athletic director. The content, grade-level, and special education leaders provide guidance for resources and research-based programs that would benefit the academic needs of students. The IC supports the endeavors of all teachers in the building, as well as ensures that all Title 1 requirements are met. The media specialist works with all teachers to support instructional needs through media offerings, while also being the driver for many literacy-based initiatives throughout the school. The athletic director serves to meet the needs of all school athletic programs. The administrative team meets with these leaders regularly to brainstorm ideas, discuss school initiatives, gather feedback, and complete needs assessments in order to create and support a positive learning environment for all stakeholders. The PBIS team of administrators and grade-level leads analyze behavioral data in order to address any concerns school-wide. The overall work of these leaders is invaluable to the effectiveness and success of WMS.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Socioeconomic diversity represents the largest cultural challenge at Westside Middle School (WMS). As a Title I school, the staff recognizes that each child and family situation is unique. The administrators and school counselor meet with grade-level teams to review background information, academic performance, and the social/emotional needs of their learners. This allows educators to be mindful of student situations that could impact their overall development.

Several supports are implemented to alleviate the financial burden on families. WMS has a clothes closet, hygiene products, extra supplies, and sponsors that help cover field trip costs. The school counselor organizes a food drive each year and also heads the “Sharing is Caring” Christmas project. In the Fine Arts department, items such as instruments and costumes are provided by sponsors as an additional way to ensure students are able to participate. The school council was instrumental in kick-starting the “Book Fairy” project during the book fair which allowed for the donation of funds to purchase 35 new books for children who couldn’t afford them. There is also more accessibility to books, audiobooks, and ebooks which promotes a love of reading for all learners.

Although WMS has a small percentage of culturally diverse students in comparison to others in the district, teachers strive to meet the needs of each learner and promote awareness. Important information is translated into other languages as necessary, and translators are available for phone calls and/or conferences to increase the school-to-home connection. An Intensive English Academy is also available for any newcomers to the country. All staff members watch an Office of Civil Rights video at the beginning of the year as a reminder to ensure equity and cultural awareness. Additionally, the media specialist conducts a book collection analysis yearly to ensure that a variety of cultures and backgrounds are represented in the books offered.

The staff promotes equity and awareness through relationship building in order to support students and their families. Administrators have created an environment where individuals can express concerns, present ideas, and/or celebrate successes. Teacher cohesiveness is also encouraged and celebrated by hosting tailgates before after-school events, having breakfasts, and other appreciation events. The staff support one another through a variety of ways such as covering a class, restroom breaks, uplifting words, or even making copies. When you walk through the doors of WMS, you will often hear someone say “Westside is the Best-side.” Those words are truly taken to heart by all stakeholders.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

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Westside Middle School (WMS) has taken a philosophy and turned it into a notable strategy for overall success. “What you do matters” is at the core of what students and staff believe. It initially started as the school motto when the PBIS system was incorporated, but quickly became the reference point for daily interactions both in and out of the classroom.

Academically, what teachers do matters. They are expected to be responsive to learner needs by designing engaging lesson plans, holding high expectations, and promoting positivity. What students do matters. They are expected to actively engage in the learning process, self-advocate, and apply themselves in order to be successful. What families do matters. Families are encouraged to be involved and invested, to communicate with educators, and to provide support at home.

While the academic realm drives many of the decisions made, the overall character of students and staff is equally essential. “What you do matters” is clearly visible throughout the halls of WMS. Teachers purchase books for children in need at the book fair, serve lunches in the cafeteria, drive bus routes to offset the driver shortage, show up at games and academic events, and keep snacks in their desk drawers for hungry adolescents. They give donations in times of need, including for current or former students who have lost a parent, and when families have lost their home to a fire. They go beyond traditional teaching methods to turn their classrooms into elaborate escape rooms to engage learners. They create tents out of library tables and fix s’mores while reading *Flat Stanley Goes Camping* to a resource class. Above all, Westside staff members truly love and support their Rockets.

Students demonstrate “what you do matters” by volunteering to run one on one drills with teammates who struggled on the first day of soccer practice. They help set up the technology in classrooms daily so teachers can focus on instruction. Learners embrace and support each other such as when children can be seen carrying stuffed animals around to help get them through the day. Two girls in formal sweetheart gowns at the dance stopped to clean up a spill on the gym floor rather than leaving it. These are just a few examples of the types of things you will see regularly throughout the school building. The staff embraces the premise that “what you do matters” because each person plays a vital role in ensuring the success and well-being of students in their time spent as WMS Rockets.