

## **WESTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL**

*Committed to Learn... Committed to Lead*

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Office of the Principal

To All Westside High School Stakeholders,

I am writing on behalf of Westside High School to inform you of our intent to re-apply for a waiver under ACT 1240 regarding teacher load. As a valued stakeholder in the education community, we believe it is essential to keep you informed about our efforts to enhance the educational experience for our students. ACT 1240, designed to provide flexibility in educational regulations, allows schools to apply for waivers in specific areas to better meet the unique needs of their student body and ensure quality education. In light of our commitment to delivering the best possible education to our students, last year, Westside High School modified our typical block schedule that has been used in years past. That change was made to positively impact our students' educational experience and promote innovation in our teaching methods.

Westside High School is dedicated to providing the highest quality education for our students while ensuring that every student has access to effective teaching. In alignment with these goals, we will be petitioning the Arkansas State Board of Education to use the slightly modified block schedule that includes a designated "Fast Friday." This initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and aims to enhance student learning, encourage innovation, and increase equitable access to effective teaching for all students.

During the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years, our block schedule consisted of A days on Monday and Wednesday, B days on Tuesday and Thursday, and a "Fast Friday" where all classes met for 45 minutes. Additionally, a 30-minute block of homeroom/advisory/intervention/enrichment time was allocated from 9:30 am - 10:00 am on Monday-Thursday. This structure was strategically designed to accommodate targeted interventions for students requiring extra support and enrichment activities for those who have demonstrated proficiency. After monitoring our processes during the course of the 2023-2024 school year, the only minor change to the schedule for the 2024-2025 school year was to have three days where the intervention/enrichment time is available for students as opposed to only two days. We have continued that change for this year after success last year. These days will continue to be on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

At the original time of our request at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, we recognized that a small number of our teachers could possibly exceed the Arkansas Department of Education's (ADE) 150-student cap set on our "Fast Friday" schedule, although they would have remained within the 30 students per class limit that is also set by the DESE. In light of those observations, the Westside School Board once again approved a resolution that allows me to seek a waiver renewal from the ADE in order to rectify that issue at the September 23rd board meeting. The key aspects of that resolution included:

1. **Rationale and Problem Addressed:** The waiver acknowledges the importance of "Fast Friday" and the associated homeroom/advisory/intervention/enrichment time. This time allows for targeted interventions and enrichment activities that cater to the diverse needs of our students. The waiver recognizes the special circumstances of co-teaching Special Education classes and the broader benefits of the schedule.
2. **Services Provided:** The schedule structure ensures that all classes receive equitable instructional time. During "Fast Friday," students engage in reviewing Common Formative Assessments and receive additional support or enrichment based on their individual needs. Core teachers (Math, Science, English, Social Studies) will provide targeted interventions for those students who need additional help, while non-core teachers offer a variety of enrichment opportunities for students who have met proficiency in the essential skill or standard being taught.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The effectiveness of this schedule will be continuously monitored and evaluated. Westside High School Department Teams will meet weekly to assess learning targets and student data, while building and district-level goals will be discussed in monthly meetings involving principals, assistant principals, and the district-level Professional Learning Community (PLC) team. Updates on successes and recommendations for improvements will be provided to the superintendent. Formative, summative, and future state-mandated testing data will guide ongoing adjustments in our plan.

Westside High School is committed to making ongoing assessments and adjustments to optimize student learning opportunities, innovation, and equitable access to effective teaching for all of our students. This waiver renewal will offer us the flexibility to do just that. We believe that these initiatives will play a pivotal role in ensuring the academic growth and success of our students. Your support and understanding as valued stakeholders is crucial as we move forward with the PLC processes that will lead to improved student growth and achievement.

If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our students!

Alicia Dean  
Principal, Westside High School