

U.S. Department of Education
2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Academy For Classical Education
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 5665 New Forsyth Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Macon State GA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 31210-5770

County Bibb

Telephone (478) 238-5757 Fax (470) 201-1285

Web site/URL https://www.acemacon.org E-mail laura.perkins@acemacon.org

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* Mrs. Laura Perkins E-mail laura.perkins@acemacon.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name State Charter Tel. (478) 238-5757

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. Thomas "Witt" Gaither
(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, write N/A in the space.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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 2020 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 includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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 as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	74	67	141
1	59	82	141
2	66	78	144
3	83	63	146
4	74	74	148
5	66	79	145
6	68	79	147
7	60	75	135
8	70	75	145
9	74	68	142
10	73	65	138
11	61	57	118
12 or higher	40	40	80
Total Students	868	902	1770

*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 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 9 % Asian
 - 15 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 70 % White
 - 2 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 1%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	10
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	20
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	1708
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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

Spanish, French, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, German, Arabic, Korean, Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindu, Kaanada, Italian, Urdu, Filipino, Pashto, Portugese, Thai

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %

58 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 14 %

Total number students who qualify: 248

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %

55 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>9</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>1</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>4</u> Developmental Delay | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>30</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>3</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	108
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	20
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. 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 16:1

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

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	95%	88%	84%
High school graduation rate	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **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 2019.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	66
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	86%
Enrolled in a community college	5%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	1%
Found employment	5%
Joined the military or other public service	3%
Other	0%

14. 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.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

The mission of the Academy for classical Education is to build the foundation of knowledge and critical thinking skills necessary for children to become independent learners for life.

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

Parents must apply to participate using a public lottery. ACE uses an independent lottery program called “School Mint.” At a specified time each year, the lottery application is opened for all parents living in the Macon/Bibb County area as well as all of the counties surrounding the Macon/Bibb County area. In mid-March, a public lottery is held and School Mint generates a list of students selected for any available seats in each grade level. The names of students remaining, move onto a wait-list. Parents are notified within 24-48 hours and are provided the full enrollment packet. Parents then have 72 hours to accept or decline the offer. Parents then log onto their School Mint account and complete the registration process. All enrollment packets are due in the enrollment office by midnight on March 31st.

The wait-list remains in effect up until the next lottery is held. Scholars are selected from the wait-list throughout the year if open seats occur.

PART III - SUMMARY

The Academy for Classical Education (ACE) is a public charter school approved by the Georgia State Charter Schools Commission. ACE is located in central Georgia, in Macon-Bibb County. Macon/Bibb is described as an urban community and has a public school system that serves approximately 23,237 students with an average earned cost per pupil of \$11,699. The Macon/Bibb area also has twenty private schools. These schools serve approximately 4,556 students. We serve 1,770 students with an average earned cost per pupil of \$10,050.

Prior to 2014, two retired educators heard the concerns raised by parents and students for a school where teachers could teach and students would learn. Thus, the idea for ACE came to be and was presented to the community as an academic institution that would establish high academic expectations for a rigorous, “no excuses” curriculum that would prepare students to become independent learners for life, and set the expectation that students would learn in a civil and safe environment.

The Academy for Classical Education opened in the fall of 2014 with 760 students and another 1,300 on the waitlist and that trend has continued to the current year when ACE opened with 1,765 students and another 1,000 on the waitlist. Many parents believe in the public system and the charter concept appealed to their desire to embrace a public education in a setting that was not driven by federal mandates and discipline problems.

Solid instruction and hard work on the part of the teachers and students reaped dividends after the first year when test scores were predominantly higher than the local district and the state. In the 2019 school year, ACE scored an average of 30 points higher in reading and math as compared to the local system and 20 points higher than the state in reading and math. Junior High (middle school) and High School scores were even more dramatic with ACE scoring an average of 30-40 points higher than the local schools and in one case, Economics, scored 70 points higher than the local district. Scores were approximately 20 points higher than the state for this same testing period. In rankings, ACE was ranked in the top 1% of high schools in the state of Georgia for the 2019 school year and finished the year with a 100% graduation rate. The Junior High was ranked in the top 7% of middle schools in the state and the Grammar School (elementary) was ranked in the top 9% of elementary schools in the state. These results came to be not because of test preparation, but rather by creating a culture where teachers could teach and students would learn.

We recognize the impact of an involved parent or grandparent in a student’s life. In fact, ACE leadership refers to our parents as the “secret sauce” and appreciates the thousands of volunteer hours parents dedicate to being present in the school and at school activities. ACE parents work in the front office, help clean up in our dining halls, volunteer to serve as proctors for testing, help out with After-School and spend countless time volunteering for fine arts and athletics. Children who see their family involved in the school program understand the value their parent places on education.

There are several key strategies that we believe drives our academic success. One of the more important strategies is engendering in every student an understanding of their ability to grow and learn and to be accountable for their actions. Each student starts the day repeating the ACE Student Declaration declaring that they will be the best version of themselves; they will work with diligence and honor; they will respect themselves and others; and they will seek truth, goodness, and beauty in all things.

Helping students develop a sense of personal responsibility and accountability as well as the implementation of a research-based curriculum that has stood the test of time, sets the stage for success not only academically but personally. ACE faculty understand that they are not just impacting the life of a child today, but laying the foundation for a future.

A strong, time-tested curriculum, a personalized approach to education, a culture of inclusion, and a professional standard among the faculty for continuous learning, enables students, parents, and faculty to believe themselves to be the change greatly needed in education. The ability to produce results through continued growth in student population, low turnover in faculty and staff, and measurable results on standardized testing have established an academic foundation.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

The nexus of all instruction at ACE is the belief that students have unique learning patterns at different times during their school age years. We utilize the theory of the Trivium as our framework because the Trivium recognizes the stages of growth in a child, and identifies for teachers the appropriate instructional pedagogy needed for learning in that specific developmental stage.

The Trivium describes the developmental progression of a student as being divided into three stages: Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric. During the grammar phase students memorize poems, speeches, math facts, facts about nature and planets, songs, chants and rhymes. This is often referred to as filling up their academic tool belt. Understanding concepts is not the focus at this stage; memorization of facts is the focus.

By the sixth grade, students begin to utilize the facts they have memorized to think independently, analyze critically and to arrange facts to create organized thoughts. During this stage, students ask “Why?” They begin to use those tools in their tool belt to answer those “Why” questions.

In the ninth grade, students move into the rhetoric stage where they begin honing their work to produce well-thought, organized reactions to their studies. Each subject has its own degree of rhetoric and students more deeply continue researching and preparing both the written word as well as the spoken word to present their knowledge concisely and precisely. In this stage students begin to defend what they know. They talk about this knowledge; they debate; they are able to defend their knowledge. This ability to process, analyze and support provides skill sets across all content areas and beyond.

Common across core and non-core academic work is an understanding of the developmental growth of a student and the required pedagogy that goes into bringing out a student’s best effort in the work they produce. Meaningful, fulfilling, often experiential lessons are the goal for all teachers at ACE regardless of the grade level of their students. All teachers and students understand that ACE is a place where teachers can teach and students will learn.

1b. Reading/English language arts

The ACE instructional approach for Reading/English Language Arts is guided and informed by the classical model as well as the Georgia Performance Standards for Excellence. We believe that students who develop the ability to read fluently and comprehend what is read, set the stage for academic success throughout their school experience. In kindergarten, ACE teachers uses a variety of reading products to instill fluency and comprehension. Students are taught phonics and begin writing almost immediately. Reading Wonders, a commercial reading program is used in grades kindergarten through fifth grade, but the teachers rely heavily on classical novels, poetry, speeches, rhymes, etc. throughout the school year and with the summer work as well. ACE third grade students scored at the 94 percentile in Reading for the 2019 Milestones as a result of this focused work from kindergarten forward.

Direct instruction, modeling, one-on-one and small group instruction, differentiated instruction, cross-curricular teaching, and goal setting are several ways in which our teachers teach and reinforce the skills students learn from kindergarten onward. Even the youngest students are taught to review the results of their work and set goals for future work. This activity helps students learn to develop the skills of self-reflection and self-assessment needed for future work.

In addition, struggling students enjoy the attention of an additional certified teacher who works with them on specific skill deficits both in the classroom and in a pull-out model reinforcing skills and building on skills to close gaps in understanding. Identified students have available a certified special education teacher who is also in the classroom working with the students collaboratively.

Because of the structure and organization of the curriculum, students cycle through large bodies of literature throughout their years at ACE learning to read, analyze, annotate, and recognize textual evidence. From kindergarten to the twelfth grade, students work to be prepared to participate in Advanced Placement classes and/or Dual Enrollment classes at the local colleges. The continuous vertical teaming of the teachers enables our teachers to access classical literature at all levels and teachers work to tier and differentiate the instruction so that struggling learners have equal opportunities to understand and master the standards just as more accelerated learners.

Assessments are used daily and in a variety of ways to measure students' prior knowledge, progress towards mastery, and application of the concepts taught. Standardized benchmarking is done three times yearly providing progress monitoring and individualized remediation in areas of weakness or acceleration. In the ELA classroom, assessment is often very organic. At the beginning of a new unit, students are assessed on prior knowledge through discussion and responses to introductory activities and videos. This allows the teacher to shape instruction to fill in the gaps and often allows for more activity-based learning as the students work towards a deeper understanding of the concept. Both formal and informal assessments continue - either through observation during learning modules or class discussion in Socratic Seminars, as well as quizzes designed to inform and guide both the teacher and the student.

1c. Mathematics

The ACE instructional approach for mathematics is guided and informed by the classical model as well as the Georgia Performance Standards for Excellence. Math teachers use the Saxon math curriculum from kindergarten through geometry and finds that the consistent use of the curriculum from early years onward provides students with a sense of competency as well as mastery in math. Georgia Milestones test scores have shown from 3rd grade forward, consistent strength in the math as compared to the results of local public school students and scores from the overall state. The cumulative approach to the Saxon curriculum allows students to master concepts. The spiral approach allows students to revisit skills many times as the skills become embedded in the students' minds.

All math classes have a consistent format and in spite of having different teachers, the Saxon curriculum is organized in the same way from year to year. Homework and assessments remain similar from kindergarten to geometry. Teachers use the same methodology to review homework and students tally problems missed so that teachers can quickly adjust the lesson to account for student needs.

The test analysis form allows students to track their performance on math concepts again providing an opportunity for all students to reflect and self-assess. Teachers also maintain a classroom analysis form on all tests and quizzes and this allows for teachers to keep a running documentation of areas of weakness or strength so that instruction can be adjusted. Math assessments include cumulative tests after every five lessons, cumulative benchmarks after every thirty lessons, a midterm and a final at the end of every semester. Feedback for the student and the parent is timely and frequent.

Teachers teaching upper division math courses like Algebra II, Pre-Calculus, Calculus, AP Calculus, and AP Statistics follow the same format using repetition of skills and test analysis to inform and guide instructions. Teachers often find creative ways to make math come alive for their ACE students such as competitions on Pi Day, weekly math competitions, and the annual calculus parody, the marrying of the "derivative" and the "integral" referring to them as the wedding between "Deriva" and "Intergroom."

A wonderful aspect of our model is that students who are mathematically talented, can be accelerated. We frequently have sixth grade students taking Algebra I and seventh grade students taking Algebra II. Students who are mathematically accelerated look forward to the more advanced math classes available including Advanced Placement Calculus, Advanced Placement Statistics, and Dual Enrollment math classes at local colleges. All math teachers encourage students to participate in math competitions, math think-tanks and involve them in many activities involving math that are both fun and challenging. Strong math students are prepared to be very successful in the study of physics and look forward to taking the information they have learned in math and applying it to the sciences and beyond.

1d. Science

The ACE instructional approach for science is guided and informed by the classical model as well as the Georgia Performance Standards for Excellence. Beginning in kindergarten, teachers are able to use science phenomena in their instruction. Teachers present observable facts in order to help their students develop questions related to a topic. This groundwork enables students to observe and connect information regarding what they are studying, and guides their learning as the information is presented. Students are driven by a curiosity about the world, inspired by the predictions of a model, theory, or findings from previous investigations, or they can be stimulated by the need to solve a problem. Scientific questions are distinguished from other types of questions in that the answers lie in explanations supported by empirical evidence, including evidence gathered by others or through investigation.

In the classroom, student questions guide instruction as students “figure out” the phenomenon presented. The questions help as students construct explanations enabling students to be able to think critically. Students gather information using hands-on scientific tests and keep constant records of their findings. In addition, they learn how to analyze what they know and how to apply that to what they don't know. This further builds within the student the ability to analyze and reflect.

Science teachers at ACE teach mastery through a progression linked to the natural aptitudes of children. Knowledge and meaning are objective and universal. Explicit instruction is important but in science, problem-based learning tends to lend itself to more learning with meaning especially through the different learning styles.

ACE science teachers use formative and summative assessment to guide learning and instruction. Formative assessments such as exit tickets, think-pair-share, graffiti walls, and many more are done routinely to validate and inform both the student's learning and the teacher's teaching. Summative assessments typically given at the end of the unit or project is done for that same purpose.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

The ACE instructional approach for social studies is guided and informed by the classical education model as well as the Georgia Performance Standards for Excellence; however, it is in social studies, that students find the backbone of a classical education. From creating a time line in the earliest grades to understanding how to use primary sources, the study of history strengthens and supports learning as a wholistic experience.

At ACE, this study begins in the first days of kindergarten when students begin memorizing the timeline of the world singing and chanting to connect and embed the information in their memory. The Story of the World by Susan Wise Bauer, a curriculum that traces and connects history from its earliest days to present, is introduced. The experiential design model is used as students move into upper grades where they immerse themselves in the study of Indians from all tribes by simulating living experiences, clothing, food and behaviors of Indian tribes from the early ages. They enjoy learning about languages, interactions between and among tribes, social customs, celebration finery, arts and foods. They become Patriots as they study the Revolutionary War, engrossing themselves in the experiences of the day. Social customs are studied and replicated, period clothing is created and worn, experiences of Patriots and Loyalists are debated ending in a festive evening at a local historical home. Every grade level pays great attention to providing students with an experiential opportunity because research shows that what they do, they will remember.

Later students enjoy gaining an understanding and an appreciation for the governmental structure of the United States in their civics class. High school courses emphasize rigor and students are encouraged to take Advanced Placement courses and/or Dual Enrollment courses. As a keystone of the classical approach to education, many of the social studies elective courses enable students to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of the world in which they live.

Our social studies teachers use formative, low-stakes assessments such as exit activities, brief quizzes, and observation to gather information on where students are and where to go next in daily instruction. Grade level and department teams meet weekly to discuss content and pedagogy. Data gathered enables the social

studies teachers to accelerate pacing for the whole class or scaffold for those students who are struggling.

Summative assessments, such as literary analysis essays or end-of-unit science exams, allow the teachers to measure the growth of individual and whole-group learning.

1f. For secondary schools:

Everything students do at ACE is in preparation for the next level. The key elements of an ACE education are the foundation students develop, the ability to analyze and utilize the information they are learning, and the ability to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in order to better prepare for their future.

Understanding that success requires sustained effort and preparation is an important life-skill that will serve them well beyond high school. Early on, our students learn that hard work reaps dividends and this is seen in the classroom, the arts, and athletics. Our students are taught to persist through hard times in experience after experience. Failure is never seen as the end of something but rather an opportunity to reflect, self-assess, and formulate a new plan. Now that ACE has students who have participated in Dual Enrollment classes and who have matriculated on to college, the military or the world of work, the refrain from all is that they were prepared because they knew how to work hard and to persist.

We believe the ability to read for comprehension, express ideas both written and oral, understand the dynamics of government and a civil society, utilize mathematics in a logical manner, and through the study of science, understand cause and effect, enable ACE students to be both college and career ready.

In addition, ACE has several opportunities for students to participate in career technology classes such as Sport's Marketing, Audio & Video Technology, Graphic Design, and business which further allows students to develop marketable skills to move into apprenticeship opportunities if desired. ACE seeks to prepare all of its students to become independent learners for life.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

One of the qualities of a classical education is its ability to provide a wholistic educational experience for students. We believe that students must be exposed at an early age, to the humanities, athletic preparation and competition, and technology. In kindergarten, all students have rotations through visual arts, performing arts and general music, violin, dramatic arts, technology, Latin, and athletics. This continues throughout their grammar school years.

Students in junior high have these same classes available but in addition can continue their study of Latin, can pursue French, take part in a museum-type class entitled the Well-Trained Mind, Civics, as well as career-technical classes like Business and Computer Science and in the upcoming year will be able to take American Sign Language as well.

Students entering high school continue their studies in all of these areas and can add yoga and team sports, piano, orchestra, chorus, band, journalism, advanced languages, audio and video technology, and graphic design. Electives in many of the core academic areas such as forensic science, environmental science, the Holocaust, US history in film and writer's workshop also speak to the intellectual curiosity of ACE students. Further, many ACE juniors and seniors avail themselves of classes at the local colleges and take anywhere from one to all of their classes on a local college campus.

Every classroom is equipped with technology starting with the amplification system that all teachers use, to the interactive panels, to student Chromebooks. While we have a great love of traditional books and embeds teaching research skills through the use of books, we understand the importance of technology. An important tool that we utilize is a learner management system called Desire2Learn through Brightspace. From kindergarten to twelfth grade, teachers, students and parents utilize D2L daily. Teachers post all lessons on their page and students and parents are able to access work at any time of the day or night. Initial planning in 2014 recognized a need for a system such as this in the event of a weather situation that might

require students to be out of school for an extended period of time. Utilizing this platform initially and daily enables teachers, students, and parents to be comfortable with an online platform well in advance of an emergency.

ACE also has a thriving extracurricular program that energizes and engages its student body in physical activities. Parents can involve their children early on in pee-wee football, cheerleading, and soccer. Students in junior high and senior high can participate in a variety of competitive sports teams. Students growing and working together over the years develop a bond and a trust in one another that translates into successful competition. During the 2019 spring season our Varsity Girls Soccer team earned a Georgia High School State Championship in its first year of competition and our Varsity Girls Cross Country team did the same the following fall. Our Health and PE program celebrate personal fitness and health, and offers a before-school class in physical wellness designed to meet the needs of students whose schedules will not accommodate a physical education class.

The arts are equally well-represented at ACE. The fine arts program encompasses visual arts, orchestra, chorus, band and drama and at some point in a student's time at ACE, they are enrolled in a Fine Arts class. ACE chorus, band, orchestra, and drama have all been recognized for their successful performances at competitions ranging from the yearly All State Competitions to marching competitions for band, Music Honor Programs, and Region One-Act Competitions for drama. Local and state art shows routinely recognize the art program for the exceptional artistic ability of its students and these efforts have afforded several students the opportunity to attend SCAD, a prestigious art university.

Additionally, ACE students are involved in Jr. and Sr. Beta activities, the National Honor Society, 4-H, Science Olympiad, Math competitions at every level, Academic Bowl, and a multitude of other clubs and organizations.

All of these programs provide modeled instruction for students to develop habits of sound mind and body reinforcing and supporting the ability of ACE students to problem solve, think critically, work as a team, and persevere through obstacles.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

At ACE, students are given clear expectations that serve as their pathway to success. Because of these high expectations and the strong structure of the curriculum, teachers are able to teach, and the students are able to learn. Students find safety in this structure and are able to leverage it to maximize their success. Students feel safe in reaching out to their peers or their teachers for support. Students whose academic skills are below grade level are identified as early as kindergarten and provided immediate support through both collaborative work with teachers within the classroom as well as small group or individualized pull-out. Students are subsequently tracked so that ongoing data collection can occur enabling teachers to adjust support as needed. Students who continue to require additional support as they move into the next grade are provided supports based on the data collected and reduced or amplified depending on need.

Our teachers have worked to close many of the existing achievement gaps by providing specific and targeted instruction to those students in need. Students who continue to perform below grade level after receiving tiered support are referred for evaluation to identify possible special education intervention which is also provided using the same collaborative or pull-out model with more specialized instruction.

All academic teachers in grades kindergarten through second, are required to obtain their reading endorsement by the end of their second year of employment because we believe in the importance of all teachers in these early grades having a thorough, research-based understanding of the necessary reading strategies for beginning readers. Early reading intervention has proven to be pivotal in working with our students with academic deficits.

3b. Students performing above grade level

One of the objectives that ACE identified in 2014 was how to meet the needs of students who were academically advanced. It was determined that depending on the age of the student and the academic areas of strength, students would be met at their mastery level. Students as young as kindergarten who require more advanced reading or math opportunities would be placed in a first or second grade reading or math group. Students on the K-4 level performing above grade level in all areas would be evaluated for placement in the next grade level if the need occurs.

All academic teachers in grades 2-12 are required to obtain their gifted endorsement by the end of their second year of employment. We believe the teaching strategies that work well for gifted and advanced students, work for all students. ACE uses the grouping model for gifted/advanced content students so that these students receive a more rigorous, fast-paced curriculum every day surrounded by peers who are of the same ability. This model provides opportunities for the students to be pushed further and challenged beyond the state standards. Gifted students at ACE don't sit in a class idly while their peers attempt to catch up; rather, they are advanced ahead so that their academic abilities are challenged.

The social/emotional side of the student is equally important and may not always be equivalent to the academic side. A strong counseling program is in place at all three levels of the school to support and guide students as they grow.

Students in sixth through twelfth grade who are particularly strong in academic areas, are screened and placed into gifted classes if they meet the criteria, or are advanced to a course meeting their academic needs and/or abilities. Frequently sixth grade students are placed in Algebra I and students from grades seven and eight have been placed in upper level math, science, and even upper level English classes as needed.

3c. Special education

ACE believes that the classical education model works for all students. Parents have expressed often that while the curriculum is challenging, the support for ACE students with disabilities is strong and consistent. Along with knowing their child will receive dedicated support, parents choose to have their child with us because they know their child is free from harm and exploitation. Not only are students educated in a safe environment, they are also protected from judgment and even ridicule from other students. Students receiving support through the special education program are treated by their teachers and peers like any other student.

Students requiring additional support as evidenced by the results of psychological and academic testing, are screened into special education if agreement for services is determined by the assembled IEP team. This team is made up of the classroom teachers, a special education teacher, an administrator and the parents. At ACE, special education services are provided through a push-in model so that classroom teachers and special education teachers collaborate.

ACE implements various differentiated activities to reach all students. In order to provide the optimal amount of support, instructional materials purchased are done so because of the tiered interventions they provide. Materials such as leveled readers, adaptive texts, and digital/technological support are all available at ACE to help students who struggle academically.

One of the goals ACE takes pride in achieving with the special education population is to instill in them the ability to work hard for what they want to accomplish. Students at ACE understand that regardless of any disability, they must work to the best of their ability. For the 2019 Milestones, all students tested who were served through special education, either met or exceeded their academic targets further supporting the merits of the model used.

3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

ACE utilizes a pull out program for our English Language Learners and intervenes at the earliest level to provide these services. Parents provide us with this information during the enrollment period so that we are prepared to provide services immediately as needed. ACE students receive daily pull out services by a highly qualified teacher who holds an ESOL certification to serve English Language Learners.

The ACE ELL program follows standards that first address Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS). Young students work with their teacher to understand fluent English through listening, choral reading, practicing of short phrases and repetition. Helping students understand common greetings, learning to ask routine questions such as “How are you? What is your name? Where do you live?” are practiced daily.

As our ELL students grow and mature and develop their English vocabulary, the ELL teacher provides more one-on-one instruction to ensure mastery of content as well as use of content. Students routinely model speech as directed by their teacher and initiate conversations between and among themselves and work to build their vocabulary including high frequency words, idioms, slang, figurative language, and more abstract terms and ideas.

ELL instruction is assessed through continuous and on-going observation of the ELL teacher, correction of errors, repetition of vocabulary, and reading. Standard benchmarks given to all students also guide the ELL teacher in their instruction of ELL students. Students performing below grade level receive services both within the classroom through our learning support program and in additional pull out as needed. All ELL students met their goals during the spring ACCESS testing for 2019.

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

ACE is a school of choice so the tone and expectations for what students will do, must be set before the student arrives for school. The ACE program is now known throughout the middle Georgia area as being a school with extremely high expectations for academics and for personal responsibility. Students and parents must understand the level of rigor and the expectation for effort, persistence, and behavior which all play into the development of academic and emotional stamina and growth.

We believe in the importance of teachers knowing their students. Lower class sizes enable the teachers to know the strengths and weaknesses of all students and to be able to address those strengths and weaknesses quickly and effectively. ACE teachers understand the role that a family plays in the life of a child and understand that working with a student often means working with the family. Because we have so many families with multiple children at ACE, the family becomes all the more important to the school dynamic.

Activities beyond the academic classes are a valued part of the school experience and engage the students both in the classroom as well as outside of it. From plays, to art exhibits, to concerts to athletic events, Fall Festival, art shows, field days, and other celebratory occasions, teachers create dynamic opportunities for Scholars to become involved in and connected to ACE.

Safety is an important element in creating a positive school culture and yearly surveys show that ACE students feel safe no matter where they are on campus and take pride in their campus. Students know their peers and teammates well, trust and respect one another and their teachers/coaches or other school personnel. They know that counselors are always available for them and their family to help when it is needed and our counselors make this known through the many classroom guidance and group guidance opportunities as well as after school programs targeting parents.

As an additional comment, as this application was being completed, schools nationwide were closed. Nonetheless, ACE moved seamlessly to online learning because the platform was both in place and had been used by teachers, students, and parents since ACE opened. More importantly, ACE faculty, staff and leadership continued to reach out to ACE families via Zoom, D2L chats, phone calls, notes to students from teachers and paraprofessionals, videos done at the school, and even a recording of daily announcements that recognized students for their work and seniors for various achievements. These announcements are posted on Facebook for students and parents to see and hear. This has worked to maintain that personalized connection that ACE has with its families and the families with ACE.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The same response for engaging students would be true for engaging ACE Families. We ask each family to donate twenty hours of their time during the school year and stress that it is their presence that is wanted whether it is during the day, for evening activities, or on the weekends. ACE has an outpouring of volunteers who work in the dining rooms daily to clean tables for the next class coming for lunch; sell ice cream during lunch; stuff Wednesday folders; oversee Scholars prior to concerts and other fine arts events; volunteer for Field Day and Fall Festival in a variety of activities; help monitor during testing; tutor Scholars throughout the school day; participate in athletic events through boosters or volunteer activities; help out in the front office; run errands for office staff and teachers; decorate the buildings and grounds for holidays, spring events, etc. and a wide spectrum of miscellaneous activities that parents do simply because they see or feel there is a need. While parents are asked to volunteer it is the frequent volunteers who have far more than their twenty hours but continue to be available because they enjoy the school and the faculty, staff, and students in the school. From parents to grandparents, volunteering is more about the relationships they are building than the time they are giving.

Family events are frequently offered throughout the year on topics ranging from the dangers of social media, helping children read with confidence, preparing students for the next grade level, as well as information

meetings dealing with college readiness and financial aid. These meets are frequently filled with family members interested in the topic offered. Surveys done throughout the school year drive the development of offerings each year.

Our community members are proud to support ACE as well and have donated electronic sign boards to keep parents aware of activities happening at ACE; have donated playground equipment for our younger scholars; participate in a variety of athletic and dramatic events on campus; serve as speakers and readers in various classes as well as serve on the ACE Governing Board. A local orthopedic clinic recently asked to showcase ACE on a video billboard located on a busy street not far from the school simply because they believe in the program and appreciate the buy-in of ACE families.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

ACE was commended by the visiting team during our accreditation two years ago, by living a life of professional growth. Our leadership understands the continuous need for teachers to have professional growth opportunities. However, the first goal of ACE is always to create an environment where teachers can teach and students will learn. Teachers worn down by constant and ever-changing professional learning ideas cannot plan for instruction effectively and leadership determined that professional learning opportunities must be strategic and well-planned.

Several methods to engage the ACE Faculty and take part in continuous learning and reflection are used throughout the year. The first method is implemented through the use of “The Augur,” a newsletter sent each morning by the principal to all faculty and staff. ACE leadership continuously reviews research and theory related to best practices and shares this through “The Augur” daily. Book studies are done, typically two each year, and each day a chapter is discussed within “The Augur” and is related to the work being done in the classrooms throughout the school.

Through the monthly Faculty Meetings, faculty look at research-based concepts and faculty members are routinely asked to share their strategies for implementation. Faculty Meeting time is also used to engage in Vertical Teaming with talking points provided for each group to direct the conversations. Teams report either orally or in writing. Our Faculty understands the importance of professional growth. Our leadership understands the importance for valuing time and keeping teachers focused on the primary objectives which are teaching and learning.

ACE faculty also understand the importance of filling their tool box with information and over the years have read a variety of relevant materials from Schmoker, Marzano and Pickering as well as a host of books recommended by Susan Wise Bauer in her book *The Well-Trained Mind*.

ACE leadership values the time of professionals and make every effort to protect teachers’ planning time. Teachers utilize their planning time by working together as a team to develop thorough, intensive lessons for their students and routinely meet to discuss those lessons and refine them as well as to develop common assessments. The commitment of the teachers is driven not by a top-down directive from the leadership but rather from an internal desire to provide the best possible educational opportunities for all of our students. Leadership understands that commitment to excellence cannot be mandated but rather, must be driven from within each individual in an organization.

4. School Leadership:

ACE school leadership believes their purpose is to ensure that nothing comes between the teacher teaching and the students learning. From curriculum to student behavior to personnel and the facility, leadership is attuned to obstacles that can distract from the learning environment. Equally, leadership understands the vital need for all faculty, staff, students, and parents to feel accepted and needed as a part of the school community. Annual surveys are done to confirm the strengths and weaknesses and are parsed to improve services in all ways. Leadership seeks the opinions and ideas of all faculty, staff, parents and students on a multitude of school issues and utilizes the information to further develop and improve areas from curriculum to school culture.

ACE leadership understands the importance of painting a vision for the faculty, students, families, and the community. In the year prior to ACE opening, the vision painted, drew hundreds of members of the Macon/Bibb community to apply to either work at or attend ACE. As promised from the start, a robust and vibrant curriculum starting with summer reading and math, jumpstarted a fast-paced academic year packed with opportunities for learning on all levels. This focus on curricular rigor and a fundamental understanding by the faculty and staff of the developmental needs of students sets the stage for success throughout the school. As a result, the vision set in 2012 has been achieved and new goals and ambitions, including this nomination, are being worked toward. Now six years into seeking to be the change needed in the Bibb/Macon educational community, the teachers and students have achieved the academic success promised and are able to continue in an environment that is safe and caring driven by the desire to be a school where teachers can teach and students will learn.

The leadership of ACE is managed by the Principal, the Chief Academic Officer, and the Dean of Compliance. Each has specific roles and duties but work fluidly with one another to create and maintain an environment where teaching and learning go hand-in-hand. All three members of leadership are easily accessible by a teacher, a student, a parent or any individual who has a concern or an issue that requires intervention or simply requires a listening ear. Conversely, the ACE leadership has worked diligently with the faculty, staff, students, and parents to be proactive problem solvers and to think outside the proverbial box. Ideas are welcomed and frequently used in a variety of circumstances as the school has grown.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

It would be easy to write that the success ACE has seen thus far was due to its strong curriculum or its dedicated faculty and staff, and that would be true. It would be a correct statement to write that because of the ongoing desire for professional growth, ACE faculty continuously work to improve their level of instructional expertise. It would be an honest reflection to note that success at ACE is due in large part because the faculty never rests on what they have done but seeks to know better and do better. Our faculty and staff are united in creating an atmosphere where teachers can teach and students will learn.

However, the element that has been the foundation for our success these last six years, is the ability of all of the individuals working at ACE to build relationships with colleagues, students, families, and community members. The faculty and staff believe that everything done whether academic or otherwise, is being done for the greater good of helping a young person develop the skills that will carry them through life successfully. It is universally understood that the student seen in the classroom today is not the young man or woman they will one day become; but that a young man or woman will become the person they are meant to be, only if faculty and staff are willing to help them create a strong academic and interpersonal foundation.

Relationships do not happen overnight. They are built by the work done minute-by-minute and day-by-day. They are forged because of the constancy and continuity of structure and routine. They are energized by the joy and the laughter that learning brings and the bond that is formed between teachers and students, and students and their peers, when that learning takes place. Relationships take root in the smiles and words of praise given to a struggling student by a teacher, the sharing of a bench at recess by a peer, or the high five given to a teammate after a good play.

Schools can often become a warehouse of people moving from place to place but not making or leaving a mark. ACE desires to be different. ACE works diligently to brand its students with the belief and confidence that any task, any skill can be learned with hard work and effort and with that combined work and effort, that task and those skills will be mastered. At ACE, failure is merely one small phase in the lessons learned on the path to greatness.