

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Tonya Rozell

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

Official School Name Liberty Park Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 17035 Liberty Parkway

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Vestavia Hills AL 35242-7539  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Shelby County

Telephone (205) 402-5450

Fax

Web site/URL

https://www.vestavia.k12.al.us/Libe  
rtParkMiddle

E-mail rozellt@vestavia.k12.al.us

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. Todd Freeman

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail freemant@vestavia.k12.al.us

District Name Vestavia Hills City Schools Tel. (205) 402-5100

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. David Powell

(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**

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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. 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.)
2. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2018 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.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2012 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
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.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

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

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban
  - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	86	70	156
7	93	92	185
8	72	82	154
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	251	244	495

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 7 % Asian
  - 4 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 83 % White
  - 1 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 7%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	17
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	20
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	37
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	514
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2%  
8 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Nepali, Arabic, Russian, German, Spanish, French, Gujarati, Tamil, Chinese, Other Language, Hindi, Vietnamese, Urdu, Japanese, Ukrainian, Farsi, Sinhalese, Mandarin Chinese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 9%  
Total number students who qualify: 46

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %  
40 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>5</u> Autism                  | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>18</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</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: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<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.	26
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	20
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
Student support personnel e.g., guidance 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 19:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	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 2017.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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%

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.

We ensure students learn without limits in a nurturing environment, encouraging creativity, appreciation for diversity, and with opportunities to explore paths to a bold future.

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

This section is not applicable to Liberty Park Middle School.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Unless you are visiting a resident in one of the Liberty Park subdivisions or attending school at either Liberty Park Middle School or Liberty Park Elementary School which is adjacent to the middle school, you would not know the schools were there. Unlike many middle schools in Alabama which are surrounded by city centers and areas of business and commerce, Liberty Park Middle School is situated on 4,000 acres of meticulously preserved natural woodlands, lakes, manicured parks, walking trails and sidewalks. On a typical school day, students arrive by way of carpool, by walking or riding their bikes, or as some parents prefer, by driving a golf cart along one of the many sidewalks to drop their kids off at the crosswalk entrance to the school.

Liberty Park Middle School, built in 2008, is a public middle school in the Vestavia Hills City School system serving the northeastern area of Vestavia including the Liberty Park subdivision and the community of Cahaba Heights near the Cahaba River. Liberty Park Middle School (LPMS) currently serves 498 students in grades 6, 7, and 8. Our colors are red and blue, and the school mascot is the Lancer.

Liberty Park Middle School is the newest of the Vestavia Hills City School district's secondary schools. Since opening its doors in 2008, there has been a community and district expectation that LPMS would also be recognized for educational excellence similar to the district's other well-established middle school and high school. It is this tradition of excellence that has brought young professionals and families from diverse backgrounds to enroll their children in LPMS. In the areas of curriculum and extracurricular activities, LPMS has all that a large public school offers but with a small, private school atmosphere.

Around 7:15 a.m., students begin to trickle into school and walk toward the lunchroom to eat a healthy breakfast while others make their way to the gym where they sit with their classmates and wait for the dismissal bell to signal the start of another school day. Students entering the building are welcomed by the principal and assistant principal who greet students with a "good morning" or a fist bump and "have a great day." The routine to start the day begins with a student officer from the student government association saying the Pledge of Allegiance, prompting the moment of silence, and saying the "Thought for the Day." The "Thought for the Day" is a short aphorism or famous quote that promotes kindness, leadership, hard work, responsibility, integrity or teamwork. For example, students, faculty, staff, or parents who are in the school might hear, "The door of opportunity won't open unless you do some pushing." At LPMS, we are committed to developing character as well as academics.

The mission statement at LPMS is "Learning Without Limits", and this motto is at the core of new class offerings which started in 2017-18. Under the course description heading "Lancer Opportunities," students may choose from a menu of hobbies, interests, and talents. This is in addition to the standard, extra-curricular options offered in middle school. In a school district that is known for its academic tradition of excellence since the early 1970's, we strive to help students develop not only academically but in all aspects of their lives. A tenet of the LPMS "Strategic Plan" is "LPMS will expose students to an array of opportunities to discover their unique gifts." Unlike clubs which meet only a few times a semester, it was decided that time would be allotted in the 2017-18 master schedule for Lancer Opportunity classes to meet every day for 30 minutes. Any day of the school week during the Lancer period, students are engaged in math team, scholar's bowl, coding, robotics, chess, creative writing, digital photography, film/drama, speech/debate, STEM/environmental, advanced art, dance, or jazz band. One of our 6th grade science teachers is also the coding teacher during Lancer period. She sent out a school wide invitation to visit with her coding students during lunch. Her students were showcasing their coding creations which included animation, memes, and interactive programs. As students shared their individual projects with fellow classmates and teachers, any adult, tech guru listening in on the conversation would have been impressed at our middle schoolers who were using technical jargon to explain their projects. One female student described the "research, variations, analysis, wireframe" and other steps she used to build her app. Who knows if a career in coding or other technical field is in the future for these students, but in the meantime, this middle school opportunity is allowing students to hone in on pathways toward achieving their aspirations.

In looking forward to the 2018-19 school year, our school's mantra will be an acronym for LPMS: L- Lead your Learning, P- Practice Pride, M- Make Mindful Choices, and S- Serve Selflessly. Our teachers, staff, and students believe that this motto embraces the true spirit of a Lancer.



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

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

In order to fully implement the mission of Learning Without Limits, Liberty Park Middle School's curriculum and engagement strategies are guided by the following principles: create a dynamic of learning and teaching that provokes questioning and honors academic risk taking and customize and create global learning environments to facilitate learning without constraints.

The core curriculum of reading/English language arts consists of a diverse spectrum of literature, including short stories, novels, nonfiction texts, drama, poetry/prose, and media. Through these mediums, students learn story elements, author's techniques, reading strategies, and the fundamentals of structured writing. Furthermore, through composition, students acquire the foundational skills to arrange ideas to persuade, describe, and inform as well as engage in logical critique, which helps students to gain deeper understanding of content and ideas. The curriculum also demands increased application of developing literacy skills. Students examine text structure, develop vocabulary knowledge through context, analyze literary elements, and also, compare and contrast increasing levels of complex texts.

Some engagement strategies reading/English language arts teachers use to help advance academic achievement are problem and project based learning, differentiation methods (typically based on pre-test scores), choice assignments/reading (Tic Tac Toe Boards/Menus), technology used to enhance instruction and student collaboration, and flexible grouping. The strategy of offering our students choice and pathways toward their learning is seen in the variety of hands-on activities such as mind maps, analyzation of concepts through creative means, and student choice assignments.

The core curriculum area of math for LPMS students focuses on the pre-algebra/algebra skills from 6th to 8th grade. Pre-algebra/algebra skills include proportional relationships, understanding operations and expressions, solving geometric problems, and drawing inferences. LPMS teachers utilize an array of engagement strategies to help advance academic achievement. Specifically, math teachers incorporate real world problem-solving to give authenticity to students. Students solve problems that will benefit them later in life. Project-based learning encourages student engagement. Collaborating together provides students with real-life skills needed to be successful. Our student-centered classrooms allow students freedom to solve open-ended tasks.

Students acquire the math standards and foundational skills as outlined in the core curriculum through daily lessons and activities. At the beginning of each year, teachers focus on the foundational skills that promote student success throughout the remainder of the year. Because students are assessed while learning each skill, mastery of the math standards and foundational skills before moving on to the next skill or concept, promotes a deeper grasp of how one skill builds upon another. Students are familiar with the standards and the purpose behind each one.

The science department at LPMS incorporates the eight science and engineering practices and cross-cutting concepts. The science department uses the online STEMscopes curriculum and FOSS, which incorporates the 5E+I/A inquiry-based model to promote student learning, ownership, and effectively differentiate instruction. Science teachers also use various online resources that support learning the standards with an argument driven focus.

In science classes, some engagement strategies teachers use to help advance academic achievement involve wait time, connections to real world applications, kinesthetic activities, student-created laboratory experiments, argument driven inquiry (ADI), reading comprehension skills, argumentative writing in science, Claim, Evidence Reasoning (CER) accessing prior knowledge, and hooks.

LPMS science teachers use cross-curricular standards, twenty-first century skills, non-fiction reading in science, literacy and communications skills, and math connections to teach the science core curriculum and standards. Also, students acquire the learning standards and foundational skills with the use of learning

targets, cooperative learning, team teaching, evaluating scientific evidence, and engagement in data-driven discussions about scientific concepts through peer review.

Lastly, in the curriculum area of social studies/history/civics learning, LPMS 6th grade students learn major events, figures, and movements in U.S. history from the late 1800s until the present. This includes explaining major changes in foreign and domestic policies, as well as the cultural changes in the U.S. through the time period. The 7th grade curriculum includes geography and civics. In geography, students study map skills, population and economic patterns, and cultural attributes of countries and regions around the world. Civics describes the roots of United States democracy, details the three branches of government, and emphasizes the importance of civic responsibility. In 8th grade, students learn World History from the prehistoric age to the Renaissance. This includes studying technological developments and the impact of influential cultures such as Egypt, Rome, and Greece.

Some engagement strategies LPMS teachers use to help advance academic achievement are as follows: bellringers with real-world applications of content and critical thinking activities such as escape rooms, debates, and essay writing. Also, immersion lessons including historical and/or cultural music, food, and entertainment are taught. Other activities include project-based learning with student-led inquiry, technology-driven activities, including online collaboration with peers, creating authentic products and podcasting.

At the beginning of the year, teachers meet to focus on the social studies/civics core curriculum content, scope and sequence as well as the learning targets and strategies to promote foundational skills. All standards in the Alabama state course of study are followed and incorporated into lesson plans. Within the courses, content is chronological and flows comprehensively from one skill to another. Activities that promote foundational skills become more complex through grade levels.

Social studies/civics learning targets aligned to course standards are presented to students for each lesson and are written on the board each day. Throughout the course of study, students build foundational skills which apply to all levels of the content. These include the following: informational text analysis (main ideas, evidence, inferences, summarizing), sourcing and identifying bias in text, argumentative strategies, corroborating and comparing/contrasting two or more viewpoints, map skills (projection, scales, legends, longitude and latitude, etc.), reading comprehension, close reading and annotation and contextualization of informational text.

LPMS's core curriculum supports college and career readiness. With the use of fiction and informational texts, students will be able to argue a point, justify reasoning, evaluate for a purpose, infer, predict, draw conclusions, problem solve, as well as use metacognition skills that will help establish students as lifelong learners. Specifically, in science courses ADI and CER gives students the opportunity to develop skills to write, speak, and listen just as those working in science fields do. Also, the reading strategies taught and practiced increase comprehension skills regardless of career or academic level. An example of this is a student annotating text, which can help break down the task of understanding anything from workforce instruction manuals to higher-level academia reading.

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

Liberty Park Middle School offers additional curriculum areas that include the arts (visual and performing), physical education, foreign languages, and technology, library/media. These curriculum areas support our mission of Learning Without Limits and these principles: provide multiple opportunities for students to choose pathways toward achieving their aspirations and expose students to an array of opportunities to discover their unique gifts. 100% of LPMS students are enrolled in elective courses which meet every day in 50 minutes periods.

Art is offered to 6th, 7th and 8th graders who are interested in advancing their knowledge in the visual arts. 6th graders may select an elective called Unified Arts or Exploratory which consists of 4, nine week rotations in art, foreign language (Spanish, French, German), coding, and Family and Consumer Science, FACS. In the 6th grade course, students are introduced to the fundamentals of art by creating original works

of art using a variety of media. Students learn basic art vocabulary, techniques for drawing, painting, printmaking, ceramics, and sculpture, as well as basic concepts for building a strong composition. Art history, aesthetics, criticism and career opportunities are explored. In the 7th-8th grade art courses, the classes feature a mix of crafts, 3D art projects and traditional 2D art media. The curriculum focuses on art making, art history, aesthetics, and art criticism. Art students who want to take their art skills to the next level have the option to take Advanced Art during our 30 minute Lancer Opportunity period. In February 2018, one of our Advanced Art students received the highest honor by the Alabama State Superintendent.

In the Performing Arts, students at LPMS may select from choir or band as their elective. The choral department is made up of students in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. In the context of the choral ensemble, the students become musically independent in the areas of reading music, sight-singing, aural skills, choral blend, composition, performance etiquette and appreciation of choral music literature through theory study and performance. Each choir participates in various performances throughout the year including a winter concert, spring concert, school assemblies and one adjudicated state level performance assessment.

The band department at LPMS is comprised of students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. We have 4 performing groups including beginning band, symphonic band, jazz band, and percussion ensemble. All of these performance based groups focus on the basic fundamentals of playing a musical instrument including tone production, sight-reading, technique, music theory, and performance etiquette. In addition to daily rehearsals using method books and supplemental exercises, each group prepares and performs the finest traditional and contemporary wind ensemble, jazz ensemble, and percussion ensemble literature. All groups perform two formal concerts per year as well as participate in community events and school assemblies as needed. The symphonic band also performs for the annual adjudicated district performance assessment and other competitions throughout the Southeast.

Physical Education at LPMS is designed to offer students opportunities to engage in a wide range of physical activities that both help them acquire necessary skills and promote a lifelong passion for physical activity. All students are required to take PE. Students study various methods of maintaining healthy lifestyles with an emphasis on health related fitness, nutrition, skill development and large group activities. The physical education instructional environment allows the middle school student to experience various types of physical activity while learning about the benefits and importance of remaining physically active throughout his or her lifetime. Skills are taught using a variety of modified sports, games, cooperative challenges and other physical activities.

At LPMS we have 2 different levels of foreign language--Exploratory and Level 1 for Spanish. We offer Exploratory at the 6th grade level as a part of the Unified Arts rotation. Students in the 9 week Exploratory course, learn basic, Spanish vocabulary, geography, and culture. It gives students a "taste" of a Level 1 course. New languages added to LPMS in 2017-18 are French and German. To create interest and increase enrollment in these language courses, the Unified Arts rotation has become instrumental in exposing students to French and German as well as Spanish. The Spanish, French, and German Level 1 courses for 7th and 8th graders are structured like the Level 1 courses at the high school. The only difference is LPMS language courses span over 2 years, 7th-8th grade, and the high school course is only 1 year. We use the same high school curriculum, textbooks, and materials. Level 1 consists of learning geography, culture, and mostly language. At the end of Level 1, students should be able to use simple sentences in the present tense around the vocabulary and topics they learned. At the conclusion of Level 1, students take a placement test to advance to Level 2, which they can start their freshman year of high school. Level 1 at LPMS does not count toward high school credit but offers students the chance to build their skills before starting the 9th grade.

Technology integration provides students in grades 6-8 with interactive classroom experiences and foundational skills essential for college and career readiness. Teachers have several device options when designing lessons: 2 stationary iMac labs, classroom Chromebook carts, 1 mobile iPad lab, and 1 mobile MacBook Pro lab with 30 devices. The specific technology focus is to teach applicable computer concepts and skills and seamlessly embed and integrate technology into core curriculum lessons. Digital portfolios and lessons using standards from Common Sense Media are incorporated routinely at all grade levels.

The LPMS Library/Media Center provides a variety of resources for student use including the following: fiction and non-fiction books, magazines, computer databases, Internet access, scanners, copiers, and newspapers. Students are encouraged to utilize the media center for both conducting research and pleasure reading. Students visit the library with a core scheduled class or by receiving a pass from their teacher before or after school and between classes. Our library media specialist offers several unique opportunities for students. To start the school year, students are invited to a “Welcome Back” Library Orientation. Also, on Thursdays she offers a monthly “Brown Bag with Barnes & Noble” series. Students eat lunch in the library and hear book talks on new books. The books are available for purchase through the library in following weeks. Furthermore, teachers benefit from this year’s additions to the media center. A large Poster Printer and a Makerspace, which includes a 3D printer, materials for iMovie and animation projects are now available for teacher use and for designing engaging lessons.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

In order to meet the diverse and individual needs of students and achieve instructional goals, teachers at Liberty Park Middle School use a variety of instructional methods, interventions, and assessments.

Differentiated instruction and tiered processes factor largely in our teacher’s approaches to lesson planning and instruction. At LPMS all students are screened to determine academic strengths and skill deficits. The screening data and pre-test scores are used to individualize instruction. For example, based on teacher guidance and knowledge of Lexile data, students in language arts classes are allowed to choose their books for a genre study. Furthermore, instruction is differentiated by content, process and product, and teachers often pre-test to see what students already know or do not know then create lessons.

LPMS teachers design instruction based on these guiding characteristics of differentiated instruction: anticipate and respond to the variety of students’ needs, modify the content and the process-- how we teach the content, and the product--allow students to demonstrate their learning. Keeping these principles in mind, unit plans incorporate problem-based scenarios. These open-ended assignments are designed for the purpose of applying real world skills, and the product choices are based on multiple intelligences.

Also, students have technology-based support in all classrooms which enhances their classroom experience and allows for all learning styles. In LPMS science classes for example, class sets of Chromebooks allow teachers and students to access the STEMscopes digital resources. Since our teachers use the STEMscopes 5E Acceleration and Intervention modules, true differentiated instruction occurs. This STEM learning environment allows teachers to teach, intervene, and accelerate their diverse students. The 5E modules promote student inquiry and real-world understanding of science, engineering, technology, and mathematics through hands-on and digital experiences.

At LPMS additional instructional methods and interventions are used to ensure high levels of student learning and achievement for students performing below and above grade level. Core curriculum teachers deliver tiered instruction to all students. By administering the Scantron Performance Series assessments in reading, math, and science 3 times an academic school year, fall, winter, and spring, teachers are able to use the data to differentiate instruction and provide appropriate interventions. Specifically, teachers create specific Google Classrooms with alternate assignments for high and low learners. Intervention methods that teachers utilize are as follows: giving students the choice of listening to audiobooks or reading the book, allowing students to use the read/write chrome extensions (talk type and voice note) to help complete assignments, create and use menus like tic tac toe boards to give students choice, and use Scantron data regarding students’ Lexile measurements to assist students in selecting appropriate reading materials. When it is determined that instruction specifically designed for Tier 1 and Tier 2 students is no longer effective in helping students make achievement gains, the student is then referred to our problem-solving team (PST) for consideration for more intense academic intervention.

At LPMS, we have a full-time Interventionist. The interventionist teacher’s primary role is to organize assessment data, manage Response to Intervention (RTI) paperwork, schedule PST meetings, and provide academic support for students at the Tier 3 level. Using the Scantron data and other data points such as work samples, Scholastic’s Read 180 or Math 180 screening assessments, or the SPIRE- Intensive Reading

Intervention assessment for non-readers and struggling readers, the intervention teacher and PST team then prescribes individual recommendations. For example, students reading below grade level, as shown by two or more data points, are screened to provide more information and placed in either SPIRE, for a phonemic deficiency, or Read 180 for reading challenges in comprehension. Progress monitoring is periodically given within the reading intervention program, and combined with other data, guides the problem-solving team in recommending further testing or to phase out intervention measures with continued monitoring. To ensure that students do not fall more than two grade levels behind in math and reading, our interventionist closely monitors the time frame interventions have been in place, and after 60 days, there is an option to refer students for special education testing and services if deemed eligible.

Students performing above grade level are identified by teachers using Scantron data and at least one other data point as well as classroom observations. Differentiation strategies are put into place to ensure above grade level students' needs are met. If needed, parents, teachers, counselors and administrators can refer a child to be screened and evaluated for gifted education services. At LPMS, students who are identified as gifted, are scheduled into 6th grade gifted Science, 7th gifted Language Arts, and 8th grade Algebra I. In the area of math, 6th and 7th grade gifted students meeting the criteria are scheduled into the Algebra I class rather than the math courses offered in those grade levels.

Several measures are in place to ensure high levels of achievement at LPMS. The new academic interventionist position that was added for this year is instrumental in overseeing PST, tracking data, and providing appropriate interventions as decided by Problem-Solving Team. Counselors also track data and grades and meet with students making D's and F's. Also, after each Scantron testing period, teachers re-evaluate student performance by comparing data points, which helps them differentiate instruction for high and low learners and to measure academic growth. Lesson plans meet standards and are submitted to principal for review, and the head of curriculum and instruction at the district level meets with teachers periodically to address their concerns.

Finally, LPMS teachers hold high expectations of excellence for all students. Teachers work diligently to provide rigorous material and instruction. Teachers also remediate, reteach, and enrich all students based on the appropriate level, and our students are held accountable for all classroom expectations.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

At Liberty Park Middle, all teachers and staff share the common goal of providing a positive environment that supports students academically, socially, and emotionally. One way we engage and motivate students is with recognition cards. The purpose of the student recognition project is to reward positive student behavior and/or outstanding academic or school-related work. Each teacher has an unlimited number of “Achievement Slips,” (A-slips) they are able to award students throughout the school year. When a student receives 3 A-Slips, the homeroom teacher will issue the student a “Recognition Card.” Recognition cards may be issued to allow for the following: free seating at lunch, a pass to eat lunch on the outdoor terrace, a break in front of the concessions line, one free (teacher pre-approved) homework pass per 9 week grading period, and a chance to participate in pep rally games, skits, etc.

Another way we engage and motivate students at LPMS is awarding them with the Lancer Court of Honor. The highest honor a Liberty Park student may receive is the Lancer Court of Honor. At the end of each grading period, 12 students, 4 from each grade, will be honored at a school-wide “Lancer Court of Honor Assembly.” Students who have demonstrated outstanding citizenship and positive attitudes are eligible for this honor. Awarding students with the Lancer Court of Honor is also a way we engage families. Families of award recipients are invited to the assembly and to a reception afterwards. We believe every student at Liberty Park is capable of earning this award.

Creating a positive climate for teachers, as well as students, is a key element to the culture at LPMS. One way we support and encourage teachers is with “Take a MINTute” cards. These colorful slips of paper have this wording: Take a MINTute to write an EncourageMENT, CompliMENT, SentiMENT, ExciteMENT, or EnlightenMENT. Teachers and staff take these cards and hand-write a note to another teacher or staff member. For example, a teacher filled out a card of CompliMENT and thanks to our head custodian for helping her in her classroom. These notes are turned in to the principal who then takes a picture and posts the notes via our internal email system for all LPMS teachers and staff to view. The notes are then placed in recipient mailboxes with a peppermint attached. Teachers and staff report that getting these random, simple notes has been instrumental in bringing positivity to their day.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Education is a top priority in Vestavia Hills, and Liberty Park Middle School along with all the Vestavia Hills City Schools are supported by families and community partners. A strategic planning team recently described the school system as the “greatest asset” of the city. This type of commitment has resulted in national recognition, numerous awards and prestige. Our families and community partners share in our vision for academic excellence, and their partnership aligns with our mission of Learning without Limits.

LPMS is supported by these community partners: Vestavia Hills City Schools PTO, Vestavia Hills City Schools Foundation, Partner in Education, City of Vestavia Hill, Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce, Library in the Forest, and Help the Hills Coalition. LPMS parents appreciate the practices we have in place in order to maintain high levels of academic excellence, and also, they know that there are support systems in place to help their children with the social and emotional challenges that come with being in middle school. Specifically, groups like Help the Hills Coalition share a united mission with LPMS and that is ending the use and abuse of harmful substances among youth in Vestavia Hills. This group collaborates with LPMS, counselors, students, parents, and the community at large to raise awareness of dangerous substances, educate our students on making positive, healthy decisions, and to offer resources for parents who are seeking help for their children. Together, the Help the Hills Coalition and LPMS are working together for student success.

We value partnerships like the one we have with the LPMS PTO who has supported school improvement initiatives like the “Stop the Bleed” training. This year, a father of one of our 8th grade students sent the principal an email stating that he served as the Chief of the Trauma Services at the University of Alabama

at Birmingham Hospital (UAB), and as a parent of a student attending LPMS, he had a “personal interest” in bringing the “Stop the Bleed” campaign to LPMS to provide bleeding control training along with the necessary tools, a Stop the Bleed kit. In areas such as our school where the training and kits may potentially be needed in the case of an active shooter situation or catastrophic injury due to tornado destruction which is common in the Southeast, the UAB Trauma Service Team offered this training free of charge to our teachers and staff, and our PTO generously purchased 45 Stop the Bleed kits for our school. Having gone through the training session, one LPMS teacher said, “I really did appreciate the opportunity to get this training and a kit for my classroom. We have always, at some level, been trained on what to do if someone enters the building/classroom, but I have never been taught what to do once a significant accident or catastrophe has occurred. This training helped me to learn how to really help an injured person and do my part to potentially save lives.”

Other ways our school partners with families is through the many events that take place on our campus throughout the school year. As a way to welcome parents to the start of a new school year, we host “Parent Open House” the first week after school starts. Parents are provided with a copy of their child’s schedule, and by following the schedule, they get to meet each teacher who will be educating their child for the year. Teachers host parents by introducing themselves and conveying information that will help parents navigate middle school alongside their child. Throughout the year, parents also attend the Holiday Choir and Band Concert, a PTO Bowling fundraiser, and school sponsored curriculum nights. In the spring, parents are asked to complete an anonymous survey where they can share feedback on how effectively we as a school partner with them in educating and meeting their child’s academic, social, and emotional needs.

### **3. Professional Development:**

At Liberty Park Middle School, administrators, counselors, and teachers are committed to continuous learning and embracing our mission of Learning Without Limits. Our philosophy centers around a definition for professional learning as stated in Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning: “Professional learning is the means by which educators acquire or enhance the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs necessary to create high levels of learning for all students. We know that professional learning can take many forms and draws on the perspectives, talents, and contribution of K-12 educators, higher education personnel, and individuals who serve in various other roles.”

Because we believe that some of the best professional development evolves out of our own perspectives and talents and not out of mandatory (one size fits all professional development), LPMS teachers apply for “Design It Yourself” (DIY) Summer Learning professional development. Teams of teachers fill out an application with their DIY proposals. The professional learning proposal has to have the following criteria before it will be approved for teacher credit: fulfills the mission, goals, and beliefs of Vestavia Hills City Schools, aligns with content standards and curriculum, enhances student engagement and learning, increases and improves teacher knowledge and practice, promotes collaboration across a grade, a subject, a school, and/or the district, and demonstrates well-conceived planning.

Our 8th grade Language Arts teachers collaborated and applied for a 2018 DIY summer learning session. For their professional development, they have requested time and funding in order to design and implement an advanced English curriculum. These teachers have been challenged with the idea that an advanced curriculum should be more than moving faster, and they will be working to design a syllabus, learning targets, assessments, and activities that support this idea. Advanced English at LPMS is not currently offered, so this 2018 summer planning to focus on the mission of Learning Without Limits is very important. Teachers will also be designing a choice work unit that will allow advanced students to take their self-driven learning to a new level. This is one of several teacher designed DIY professional development ideas.

Because it is an expectation that teachers will use differentiation in their lessons and for academic strategies to increase student learning, teachers are allotted time each 9 weeks for participation in a Professional Learning Community (PLC). In their PLC’s teachers are provided with assessment data such as Scantron Reading, Math, and Science, and they are trained on how to analyze student gains and gaps in skills. Each PLC is given the time and resources to align the curriculum with student needs based on this valuable data.

The PLC time offers teacher leaders the opportunity to share successful practices with their peers.

LPMS embraces and values every individual in our school as a learner.

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

“Servant Leadership” is the core philosophy of the leaders at Liberty Park Middle School. As LPMS administrators, a guiding principle of this servant leadership philosophy is to “model the behavior we want to see in others.” To start the school year, the principal displayed this mantra on a slide and explained how this philosophy would be the filter for school wide expectations and professionalism for administrators, teachers, staff, and students. As part of faculty meetings and weekly communication in the principal’s newsletter called “The Principal’s Pen,” reminders of what this leadership style looks like at LPMS is clearly defined. If it is a school-wide expectation that our hallways, classrooms, and lunchroom be clean, clutter free environments, then our students and teachers will see that expectation modeled by the principal or assistant principal as we daily pick up trash rather than walking away and waiting for someone else to pick it up. This is modeled when we help our student cleanup crews wipe down lunchroom tables or sweep the floor. “Leadership is not a rank or position. Leadership is a service to be given.” - Simon Sinek

School leaders routinely evaluate and coach teachers and staff on their practices. Since servant leadership is our core philosophy and we endorse modeling the behaviors we want to see in others, we are open and welcoming to input and constructive criticism as well. The principal is fond of a German proverb that embodies this spirit of servant leadership: “The wise person has long ears and a short tongue.” By being active listeners, we model the behavior we want to see in others by encouraging teachers, parents, and students to provide feedback when improvements are required or when change is needed to facilitate our mission of Learning Without Limits. This year our teachers asked for a meeting to discuss several issues related to our rotating schedule and course offerings. After this meeting, the principal created a Google Survey Form which encapsulated teacher suggested schedule tweaks. Teachers were also encouraged to provide input for academic and elective courses they were interested in teaching. The schedule changes and course offerings are necessary if we are going to continue to grow programs while being mindful of student achievement. The outcome from this initial meeting and follow up survey was faculty “buy in” for a new schedule starting in 2018-19. Even though it would have been easier on the administration and counselors to make an executive decision about a new schedule, it would not have been the model for the behavior we endorse. Our willingness to listen yielded greater results, and teachers felt like they were heard by their leaders.

LPMS is a school that has a unified, well-functioning team of school leaders, and we strive to be servant leaders.



## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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At Liberty Park Middle School, the single practice that has been the most instrumental to our school's success is teamwork. "Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results" – Andrew Carnegie. In all aspects of school life, the teamwork mentality and approach is applied.

When it comes to academics, teamwork is the approach we take to planning, assessing, and intervening. Our common planning periods allow grade-level teachers to meet and discuss things like grade level expectations, field trips, or calendar events that impact class time. A different day of the week is set aside for teachers to meet as curriculum teams - reading/Language Arts, math, science, social studies, world languages, and fine arts. Administrators are often invited to these curriculum meetings as teacher teams focus on assessing foundational skills and when gaps with foundational skill levels slow forward progress through the curriculum. Administrators and teachers routinely collaborate on the state course of study and how to best help students attain and master course standards. In these meetings teamwork and the ability to work toward a common vision for student success is truly what separates LPMS from other middle schools.

The LPMS team approach for meeting the socio-emotional needs of students is a practice that supports our mission of Learning Without Limits. Meeting the socio-emotional needs of students is a collective responsibility and does not rest on any, one entity at LPMS which is why we utilize professional learning communities, our school counselors, teachers, and administrators to collaborate on student behavior that is negatively impacting the school experience. We are mindful of involving parents in these discussions as many behaviors we see in our students cross over into family life as well. There is great satisfaction when our team receives parent communication that the strategies we have suggested are proving successful for student outcomes.

Whenever it comes to planning for and meeting organizational objectives, teamwork is key. We have found success when the collective wisdom of the team was embraced. For example, our district has asked us to consider for the 2018-2019 school year, a new approach to intervention called Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered Model of Prevention or the name condensed is Ci3T. In meeting the district's mandates for Ci3T, our ability to work as team was crucial. Our team successfully established school-wide expectations and responsibilities for students, faculty, and parents. We were able to produce documents for district approval outlining clear, proactive and reactive behavior plans, and we created a model that rewards positive behaviors. Our team has invested in this process, and we feel proud of the work we have accomplished. Through this process, we have reflected that teamwork "was the fuel" that allowed us to attain "uncommon results" and our work will ultimately enable us to educate and provide support for the whole child-- academic, social, and behavioral.