

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Jefferson County International Baccalaureate School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 805 7th Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Pleasant Grove State AL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 35127-1601

County Jefferson County

Telephone (205) 379-5280 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL <https://www.jefcoed.com/jcibpc> E-mail [llightsey@jefcoed.com](mailto:llightsey@jefcoed.com)

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.

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

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Walter Gonsoulin E-mail [wgonsoulin@jefcoed.com](mailto:wgonsoulin@jefcoed.com)  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Jefferson County Tel. (205) 379-2000

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.

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

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Carita Venable  
(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.

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

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

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

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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

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

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

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

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

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

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

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

☐ Urban (city or town)  
☒ Suburban  
☐ Rural

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

Grade	# of Students
PreK	0
K	0
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	0
5	0
6	94
7	110
8	100
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	304

\*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
  - 0.1 % Asian
  - 44 % Black or African American
  - 10 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 44 % White
  - 1.9 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 2%

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, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	7
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	304
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

Spanish, Farsi, Russian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %  
1 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 45 %

Total number students who qualify: 137

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 3 %  
Total number of students served 8

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

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

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 6 %  
Total number of students served: 18

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 4

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

12. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 25:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	97%	95%	96%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

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

Yes    No X

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

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

The mission of JCIB is to cultivate intellectually curious, internationally-minded individuals who possess the skills, knowledge, and creativity to positively impact lives through compassion and tolerance in an ever-changing world.

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

<https://www.jefcoed.com//site/default.aspx?PageID=4908>

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

Jefferson County International Baccalaureate is a 6th-8th grade magnet school in Jefferson County, AL. The maximum capacity for the school is 360 students and students must apply to attend. A holistic rubric is utilized to identify multiple sources of evidence and information to gauge applicant's knowledge, skills, and personal attributes. Once a student is admitted, students automatically remain enrolled through the end of eighth grade. Students apply during December through February for the upcoming school year. Applicants are selected based on the holistic rubric score depending on how many spaces are available. The majority of new students each year are sixth graders, as most students choose to return.

## PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

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The Jefferson County International Baccalaureate (JCIB) Middle School is a magnet school that serves approximately 320 students from diverse backgrounds, both racially and socioeconomically from Jefferson and surrounding counties. Since students come to us from over 50 different schools, it is important that we work to establish a caring and positive school climate to aid in the adjustment to the middle school years in an entirely new setting with few established friend groups. We begin this culture work by introducing interested students and families to the school's philosophy through community meetings and informational sessions that provide them with an understanding of our approaches to teaching, learning and level of academic rigor. This information helps families and students determine if their educational goals align with the JCIB philosophy. At the core of our philosophy is the IB Learner Profile. We endeavor to support student growth as knowledgeable, inquiring, thinking, communicating, caring, principled, open-minded, balanced, risk-taking, and reflective learners. We believe, when developed over time, these ten traits lead to our students becoming thoughtful, international-minded, and productive citizens of the world. The IB Learner Profile traits are intentionally developed through various avenues, such as units of study, extracurricular activities, and embedded school systems, such as interest clubs, "house" activities, and service opportunities. The incremental development of the IB Learner Profile allows students to strive further to carry out JCIB's mission to make the world a better and more peaceful place.

JCIB offers high-quality educational opportunities through the engaging lens of student inquiry. Throughout units of study, students engage with big ideas within the content through analyzing a statement of inquiry, factual, conceptual, and debatable inquiry questions, and a contextual learning experience known as GRASPS (goal, role, audience, situation, product, standards). All units of study, whether part of the academic core or an elective course, should have a solid foundation in structured inquiry, controlled inquiry, guided inquiry and free inquiry. Our faculty and staff realize the benefits of student inquiry are the development of critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, communication skills, more engaged learning, and connecting learning to the real world.

Service is a core component of JCIB's mission and vision that helps students realize the positive social impact a single person can have on their community. Each student in each grade level completes service opportunities each year. Students have the option to complete service opportunities both locally within their community and globally. Many students partner with various nonprofits to complete service opportunities, while others may research a cause unique to their interests. Service opportunities are typically connected to curriculum goals (i.e., sustainability, human rights, etc.) and provide a more profound contextual experience for in-class learning.

The holistic development of students at JCIB is vital to their short and long-term success. The Learner Profile traits, previously mentioned, contribute to student development. An additional area of development are the IB Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills. All units of study contain ATL skills embedded throughout. The International Baccalaureate identifies five categories pertinent to a child's overall holistic development. These categories are thinking, research, communication, self-management and social skills. The categories are further broken down into ten skill clusters and unpacked and developed through specific learning opportunities. ATLs are taught incrementally and at developmentally appropriate levels. Our teachers utilize various ATL planning tools when determining the level at which students should be proficient at specific ATL skill indicators.

The leadership of JCIB believes that curriculum is more palatable when it transcends one content area and crosses over into multiple subject areas. Each grade level has at least one interdisciplinary unit per year, so all students are exposed to cross-curricular learning opportunities—faculty attempt to develop interdisciplinary learning opportunities that add depth to the investigated topic. These learning opportunities include reflection as a critical component to student and faculty growth. Through the use of their interactive notebooks and design cycle, students and teachers, through unit reflections, determine what worked well and what needs adjustment. Through this embedded reflective process, JCIB manages to avoid academic and professional stagnation while continuing to push educational boundaries.



As a school which recruits students from a wide geographic area rather than a neighborhood, we must provide opportunities for parents and stakeholders to engage with the school. We offer a variety of options for both current and prospective families to learn about the culture, climate, and achievements of the school; however, JCIB's Inquiry Night seeks to demonstrate to all parents and stakeholders that our true strength is allowing students the academic and creative space to pursue their love of learning through inquiry-based projects. Inquiry Night is an opportunity for students to display and present their most prized work of the year to their peers, families, and prospective families. Inquiry Night demonstrates that when students are given the creative freedom to demonstrate mastery, the learning opportunities have no limits.

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

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

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

As an authorized IB World school, the IB Approaches to Teaching (ATT) serve as the bedrock of the JCIB instructional model and underpin all instructional practices. The ATT have been created in a way to help our students develop critical thinking skills, learn independently, and engage with their world. The six approaches are teaching based on inquiry, teaching focused on conceptual understanding, teaching developed in local and global contexts, teaching focused on effective collaboration and teamwork, teaching differentiated to meet the needs of all learners, and teaching informed by assessment (formative and summative).

JCIB ELA teachers use the Alabama State Course of Study standards and the MYP Language and Literature Subject Guide to guide for teaching and learning. A heavy emphasis is placed on the sharing of ideas with supporting evidence in small and larger group settings. As part of the unit planning process, teachers create inquiry questions (factual, conceptual, and debatable) to unpack the broad concepts that serve as the foundation for unit content. By scaffolding these inquiries, our students increasingly question others' messages and points of view and enhance their ability to express and justify their own. They are eager and filled with curiosity on a more analytical level and their world of reading expands to include more holistic and profound subject matter.

The IB encourages the use of environmental, social, moral, economic, political and cultural issues to promote problem solving, opinion-forming and ethical reasoning skills. Reading sources span all subject areas and cultures as students begin to recognize the interconnectedness of their world. Their texts also become sources for research. Students in the middle grades begin to discern the validity and credibility of information, as well as the importance of employing that discernment in today's world. Students also learn the importance of citing their sources to acknowledge the work of other academics and to build their own credibility as researchers and writers. Teachers use and model the rubrics from *Teach Writing Well* by Ruth Culham to support the development of writing skills. Students use these rubrics to self-assess and as a guide when providing peer feedback.

Our teachers closely monitor student learning through traditional means such as conferencing, questioning and observing; additionally, we strive to create engaging and exciting learning environments utilizing a variety of technology-based formative assessments, including Nearpod, Quizizz, Kahoot!, and ActivelyLearn. These formative assessments are all used to gauge student understanding and guide teaching and learning processes. Teachers use the GRASPS model to create summative assessment tasks for the end of each unit of study which exposes student to a variety of assessment tasks. Assessment tasks may include research essays, open-ended responses, performance tasks, and student-created original works. Teachers track student progress and provide feedback using the MYP Language and Literature criteria: analysing, organizing, producing text, and using language. These criteria can be used for both formative and summative assessments tasks, which creates synergy in assessment practices and creates meaningful dialogue between teacher and students.

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

JCIB math teachers use the Alabama State Course of Study for standards, the MYP Mathematics subject guide for concepts and assessment criteria, and the Standards for Mathematical Practice for developing habits of thinking and problem solving that will result in our students becoming effective mathematicians. In addition, the Approaches to Teaching (ATT) are utilized to plan and guide instruction. Mathematics instruction at JCIB focuses on students' understanding of why a mathematical idea is important and how this knowledge can be applied to solving problems, thus making it useful in a variety of contexts in our world. Math instruction focuses on conceptual understanding without losing the importance of math fluency. Specifically, 6th-8th grade students study proportional reasoning, number systems and operations, algebra

and functions, data analysis, statistics and probability, and geometry and measurement. 8th grade students earn their first high school credit by taking Advanced Geometry.

Our teachers provide effective classroom practices and a schoolwide program of intervention and support through the use of a weekly 45-minute WIN (What I Need) block. During WIN, students may be asked to return to a teacher's room for small-group support or to do makeup work. This time serves as a dedicated Tier II block to meet the individual needs of students. This time also allows teachers to reinforce The Standards for Mathematical Practice to guide instruction so that students have an extra opportunity to master skills. The practices are making sense of problems and persevering in solving them, constructing arguments, and critiquing reasoning of others, modeling, using appropriate tools, attending to precision, finding and using structure, and finding and expressing regularity in repeated reasoning.

JCIB math teachers employ a balanced approach which ensures that students have the opportunity for practice and practical application of math concepts and skills while also fostering conceptual understanding. JCIB math teachers have been provided a variety of training and resources to help them meet students' needs. These include A+ College Ready Math, which provides lessons and activities that integrate research-based best practices and access to Alabama Math, Science, & Technology Initiative (AMSTI) resources and proficiency scales. Our math teachers use digital tools, such as PearDeck, Quizizz, and Desmos, to assess student learning in addition to creating opportunities for mathematical discourse through group activities, particularly through the use of manipulatives. These formative assessments are all used to gauge student understanding and guide teaching and learning processes. Unit summative assessment tasks are created using the GRASPS model. In JCIB math classrooms, assessment tasks often include physical or digital models; other assessments have included research posters and data based on a student-generated question. Math teachers track student progress and provide feedback using the MYP Mathematics criteria: knowing and understanding, investigating patterns, communicating, and applying mathematics in real-world contexts.

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

The Middle Years Programme (MYP) science curriculum helps students to explore the connections between science and everyday life. Teachers use the Alabama State Course of Study, the MYP Sciences subject guide, and the Approaches to Teaching to plan and deliver classroom instruction. At JCIB Middle School, students have access to Earth Science, Life Science, and Physical Sciences (Chemistry and Physics). Science instructors make use of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to support the delivery of science content. Our students investigate real examples of science applications and grapple with challenging topics such as politics, economics, morality, and the environment. The UN SDGs facilitate learning developed in local and global contexts, can help students identify their service interests, and ultimately support students' attainment of the goals set forth in the IB mission. In grades 6-8, MYP Design is embedded into science courses. MYP Design is a required course and design thinking most closely correlates with the scientific process. Science teachers at JCIB complete one or two design units each semester.

JCIB science teachers use an array of activities to engage students and monitor their learning, ranging from hands-on labs provided by AMSTI to digital formative assessments such as Nearpod, to group work and discourse. Summative tasks are rooted in real-world context using the GRASPS model, providing opportunities for students to investigate issues through research, observation, and experimentation. In JCIB science classrooms, assessment tasks may include physical or digital models, research, or experiments with correlating lab reports. Our teachers assess students' abilities to communicate in oral, written, and visual modes. Science teachers track student progress and provide feedback using the MYP Science criteria: knowing and understanding, inquiring and designing, processing and evaluating, and reflecting on the impacts of science.

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

At JCIB, the social sciences strive to lead students through explorations related to our common humanity. This is achieved with a strong focus on inquiry, investigation, and key elements of the ATT. When planning for instruction, our teachers use the Alabama State Course of Study standards and the MYP Individuals and Societies Subject Guide. In the MYP, Individuals and Societies may include Geography, History,

Economics, or Integrated Humanities; at JCIB, students study U.S. History, Ancient World History, Civics, and Geography. Teachers use the unit's inquiry questions (factual, conceptual, and debatable) to frame learning, particularly for deep understanding of broad unit concepts. Real-world examples, such as case studies, and responding to stimuli, (political cartoons, pictures, videos, etc.) are used in JCIB classrooms to help students appreciate the diversity of human culture, attitudes, and beliefs.

JCIB social science teachers gauge student understanding through discourse (debates, think-pair-share), stations, questioning and observing. Teachers use digital tools through the Google Suite for collaboration and feedback as well as digital formative assessments such as Nearpod. Summative assessment tasks - created using the GRASPS model (Goal, Role, Audience, Situation, Product/Performance/Purpose, Standards/Criteria for Success). The tasks - encourage learners to respect and understand the world around them and equip them with the necessary skills to carry out independent inquiries. Individuals and Societies assessment tasks take on a variety of formats including essays and research, models that demonstrate practical application of unit concepts, performance-based assessments, magazines, socratic seminars, or annotated timelines. The goal of these assessment tasks is to help students develop as individuals and as responsible members of local and global communities. Social science teachers track student progress and provide feedback using the MYP Individuals and Societies criteria: knowing and understanding, investigating, communicating, and thinking critically.

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

JCIB offers high-quality educational opportunities through the engaging lens of student inquiry. Throughout units of study, students engage with big ideas within the content through analyzing a statement of inquiry, factual, conceptual, and debatable inquiry questions, and a contextual learning experience known as GRASPS (goal, role, audience, situation, product, standards). All units of study, whether part of the academic core or an elective course, should have a solid foundation in structured inquiry, controlled inquiry, guided inquiry and free inquiry. Our faculty and staff realize the benefits of student inquiry are the development of critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, communication skills, more engaged learning, and connecting learning to the real world. Through inquiry, students truly become agents and facilitators of their own learning. The skills that they learn through these projects transcend the academic setting and prepare them for success beyond the classroom.

Service is a core component of JCIB's mission and vision that helps students realize the positive social impact a single person can have on their community. Each student in each grade level completes service opportunities each year. Students have the option to complete service opportunities both locally within their community and globally. Many students partner with various nonprofits to complete service opportunities, while others may research a cause unique to their interests. Service opportunities are typically connected to curriculum goals (i.e., sustainability, human rights, etc.) and provide a more profound contextual experience for in-class learning.

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

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

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

The Middle Years Programme is holistic in nature; in grades 6-8, students must take courses in eight subject groups. This ensures that students learn another language and have exposure to the arts. At JCIB, we offer visual and performing arts (band and choir). In visual arts courses, students create in a variety of mediums, ranging from drawing to clay. Opportunities for band include concert band, jazz, band, and pep band while choir draws on multicultural repertoire. The arts programs at JCIB receive multiple awards and students from the performing ensembles qualify for district and state-level competitions.

While adhering to the ALCOS standards, these classes also employ the inquiry-based approach, which provides students the opportunity to reflect on their understanding and development. These students are assessed in four areas: investigating, developing, creating/performing, and evaluating. Students build a depth of understanding and content knowledge that ultimately aids with their ability to evaluate performances. All students at JCIB keep a process journal, where they can track development over time, record a body of work, and/or finish the programme with a portfolio.

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

Our program at JCIB focuses on students being engaged in a multitude of physical education activities to foster a desire to be active for a lifetime. These activities include traditional sports such as volleyball, but also entail global or non-traditional experiences including lacrosse, badminton, individual fitness, and team building. The goal is for students to discover activities they will want to enjoy outside the structure of school, whether that is in an organized setting or in their own backyard with their family. This whole child approach is something we believe is extremely beneficial as students develop social skills, time management, managing stress, and communicating effectively with others.

All students through 8th grade in the state of Alabama must have daily physical education instruction. In the MYP, all subject groups are given equal weight and employ the same curricular approaches. Physical and Health Education (PHE) delivers the ALCOS standards using the MYP framework for planning and instruction, including performance assessments and inquiry projects. The MYP assessment criteria require that students plan for and subsequently reflect on their performance. PHE supports students' ATL development and provides opportunities for students to practice communication, social, self-management, research, and thinking skills.

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

At JCIB, students study world languages in all years of the programme. Language learning is a required element of the curriculum which fosters international mindedness and aligns with the holistic nature of the programme that strives to create well-rounded learners. Being international minded requires that a person see value in interacting with people from different cultures and backgrounds in order to develop deeper cultural understanding and empathy, as well as appreciation for different perspectives and ways of life.

In grade 6, our students are exposed to 9 weeks each of German, French and Spanish. During this initial exposure to the foreign language, students begin learning the language, but also the culture of the language. After this initial exposure, students choose the language they will pursue full-time beginning in the 7th grade. JCIB students will earn their first high school foreign language credit in 8th grade.

Foreign language courses adhere to the inquiry framework and situate learning in real-world contexts that aid learners to gain cultural awareness and understanding. Language acquisition at JCIB assesses learners' listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills both in the mother tongue and in the target language.

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

Students at JCIB have the opportunity to engage with technology in both curricular and extracurricular settings. They can take computer science courses in grades 6-8 that utilize Project Lead the Way (PLTW) - these courses include Innovators and Makers, which focuses on computational thinking, and App Creators, which supports students' creativity and collaboration skills. Additionally, all students may participate with the Robotics team and/or belong to the Technology Student Association (TSA).

The library at JCIB has a multi-faceted role. The librarian provides support for the access and use of digital tools and spearheads the digital citizenship program. Additionally, the library is used to develop the MYP Core and mission - highlighting citizenship and directing students to resources and texts that support international mindedness.

Media is used by teachers to support and extend learning and by the students as demonstrations of their understanding. Responsibly selecting, using, and creating with a variety of media sources is part of the Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills framework used by teachers in all subject groups and years of the programme. Students may also choose ATL skills related to media in their service reflections or as a basis of the inquiry process used for MYP projects.

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

Design is part of the MYP required curriculum; this course is embedded into science courses in grades 6-8 before becoming a standalone course in the last two years of the programme. MYP Design is real-world problem-solving in action, focusing on process over product, and asking students to use an iterative approach to develop products and solutions by reflecting and realizing that there is always room to refine ideas. This course helps us to develop both creative and critical thinkers who demonstrate strong self-management skills and resilience.

In 2022, we hosted the inaugural JCIB Inquiry Night, where students from all course,s present inquiry projects through a short TED-style talk then answer any questions about their projects posed by attendees. This event highlights bedrock principles of the MYP framework, particularly teaching and learning focused on inquiry, fostering conceptual understanding, and developed in both local and global contexts. We invite both current stakeholders and prospective students to inquiry night because it embodies the community of learning at JCIB.

## **3. Academic Supports**

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

We begin by ensuring that classroom instruction for all students includes instructional strategies that are engaging, promote collaboration, involve peer-to-peer discourse, build connections to prior learning/knowledge, and include real world connections for learning. Teachers have been trained and provided resources for research-based practices. These are embedded into daily classroom instruction and reinforce differentiation. Classroom differentiation can focus on the content, process, product, or any combination thereof. Support in class may include flexible grouping or small group instruction that reteaches or scaffolds the content. Teachers have also been trained to utilize formative assessment to direct their instruction and aid in decisions concerning the need for reteaching and grouping of students with similar challenging areas. All of these strategies are utilized with every student in a classroom and form what is called Tier I instruction. Quality Tier I instruction minimizes the percentage of students who face academic struggles.

In order to support struggling students, we examine and track multiple data points and look for intersecting data points to ensure that any and all students in need of support are identified for multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). State assessment data from the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) is cross referenced with iReady formative data and classroom performance. Teachers use these data points to discuss and identify students in grade-level data meetings. These identified students are then pulled for small group instruction with other students facing similar skill deficits. This small grouping may take place in the classroom setting or during WIN. We utilize a 45-minute WIN (What I Need) block once a week. During WIN, students may be asked to return to a teacher,s room for small-group support or to makeup work.

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

JCIB students crave intellectual challenges. The very nature of an IB education meets the needs of these advanced students through a rigorous approach that uses inquiry, critical thinking, and problem solving to prepare students emotionally and intellectually for the future. Our teachers extend student learning in various ways during the typical school day. Differentiation strategies are used to enrich/extend learning by simply rephrasing a question that leads a student to further explore a topic and elevate learning. Inquiry based learning is also an excellent vehicle for advanced learners. Students are able to further explore and

investigate the standards being taught in the classroom at a deeper level through further investigation. Teachers often allow students to collaborate on increasingly rigorous tasks related to the unit of study. This opportunity to extend learning allows advanced students to experience the benefits of active, contextual and student owned learning that leads to a deeper learning experience.

Agency is a key tenet of the MYP and of the International Baccalaureate programme as a whole. Many teachers offer a choice in demonstrations of understanding for summative assessments. This allows students in need of extension the opportunity to choose a rigorous task. Ensuring that we serve and sufficiently challenge students performing above grade level has been an ongoing discussion among administrators and faculty within the school. In future years, we hope to employ a model in which students who demonstrate mastery at the beginning of a unit of study can propose an alternate pathway for learning. This would not only give the student an opportunity to truly be an independent learner but also potentially provide for learning at a deeper level.

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

Students with disabilities needs are addressed through an IEP or 504 plan. Each of these plans are created to meet the specific needs of each individual student. We recognize that every student has unique learning needs; therefore, teachers design lessons that address these needs. Some ways of reaching all learners can be through differentiated instruction, incorporating multimedia into lessons for visual or auditory learners, visual aids, and being sensitive to the different learning styles. Our teachers are adept at accommodating how material is presented, organized, and accomplished to better meet student needs. Accommodations can include extra time, preferential seating, visual aids, peer support, and note-taking assistance.

Our IEP and 504 students are mainstreamed into the general education classes with autism, attention-hyperactivity disorder, speech and language, and behavior needs being the most common exceptionalities. Students are rarely pulled from the general education classrooms, but there are times when an IEP assessment is needed, or a student needs a calm environment in order to reset emotionally. Our school counselor often assists students with prioritizing and organizing their workload and helping them process the emotions that come with feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

Our teachers are aware of the importance of meeting needs in such a way that student self-esteem and motivation are not negatively affected. We are committed to ensuring that our students who face learning challenges receive the same quality education as their peers.

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

As a Jefferson County public school, we are aligned with WIDA English Language Development Standards. Through the framework teachers strive to provide instruction and assessment for multilingual learners. This framework is anchored in equity of opportunity and access, integration of content and languages, collaboration among stakeholders, and a purposeful approach to language development.

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

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

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

The International Baccalaureate Programme identifies ten traits that students will embody by the time they graduate. These traits are caring, communicator, knowledgeable, reflective, balanced, inquirer, thinker, principled, open-minded, and risk-taker. JCIB uses these traits to guide decision making, program implementation, and culture building. It is emphasized that we not only strive to increase student knowledge, but to create an environment where they are developed into well-rounded, global citizens. These concepts are taught and reinforced through the sixth grade IB Orientation class, counselor classroom guidance lessons, and the daily announcement of our unbe-leaf-able student, who is recommended by a teacher for exuding a particular IB trait.

JCIB prides itself on implementing an inquiry based model that encourages and facilitates student exploration beyond the standards outlined by the state department of education. It is not uncommon to walk through the building on any given day and see students writing on windows or desks, completing scavenger hunts, or sprawling out across the classroom floors with peers performing experiments or creating visuals that illustrate the concepts being covered. By creating an environment conducive to questioning, students are not limited to the knowledge in the texts. They, and their teachers, capitalize on opportunities to research answers to burning questions and share their findings. This not only increases student engagement with the material, but it also leaves room for students to establish connections between the content and their prior knowledge and interests. Final products are showcased on classroom walls, in hallways, and in promotional materials.

Outside of the classroom, JCIB celebrates. As a school with an incredibly diverse population, we not only celebrate culture and heritage, but we celebrate growth. Our students come from all over the district, from all ethnicities, and from all socioeconomic statuses. We recognize holidays and traditions from different cultures and belief systems and encourage students to deepen their understanding of peers who are different from them. Students are randomly assigned “houses” that they remain connected with throughout their time at JCIB to foster a community that spans across grade levels. In addition to respecting culture and creating community, we acknowledge and account for circumstances. Because some of our students commute up to an hour to and from school, we host clubs and school activities during the school day to accommodate transportation needs. Clubs are created to appeal to students' interests and allow them to create communities amongst their peers and across grade levels.

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

Inquiry Night is designed to engage parents, potential students and their parents, and curious community members with JCIB. Often paired with an exhibition of one of our talented fine arts programs, attendees get a firsthand look at the depth of the curriculum and the passion that our students and staff put into learning and creating. Hours are spent checking out student artifacts, viewing beautifully crafted artwork, enjoying choir and/or band performances, and listening to students excitedly recount their favorite lessons and take-aways. Parents, school board members, and community stake-holders walk away with a better understanding of how JCIB prepares the whole child, while students find themselves filled with pride after showcasing their talents and public speaking abilities. The student expressions are priceless once they realize they've presented to people such as the superintendent, large business owners, and local celebrities who were mixed into the crowds of their families and friends.

Another way our school promotes community engagement is through house participation. Students are sorted into houses named after the IB traits. Students remain in their assigned houses throughout their time at JCIB. With this group of peers, they create, compete, and serve as they strive to earn points for their respective houses. Competitions include trivia and athletic tournaments, while service includes school beautification projects and collecting donations for the Humane Society, Community Food Bank, and Garrett's Place, a local organization that supports foster children. Our students take pride in the difference they make and we discuss the significance of these contributions and use them to reinforce the idea that we



are a part of a global community and must do our part to support it.

Our Parent Teacher Organization is composed of business professionals and educators with many community ties. They are an email or phone call away when a need arises for JCIB students or staff. They coordinate donations, whether food or clothing, host events, support fundraisers, and bring in local businesses to serve and collaborate with our school. As the parents of our students, their promotion of the great things that happen at JCIB is significant not only for establishing community relationships, but for the continuation of our growth and development as the premiere middle school in Alabama.

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

Though academic growth is identified as the primary focus of education, JCIB recognizes that without social and emotional support, middle schoolers are incapable of reaching the high expectations set before them. Our teachers participate in in-house professional development addressing the needs of diverse populations, understanding the teenage brain, human growth and development, relationship building, and conflict resolution in addition to attending sessions on best practices and aligning their classrooms with the International Baccalaureate Programme model. These training sessions are built into the school day or weekly staff meetings and designed by licensed professionals with extensive backgrounds in mental health and education; they remind teachers that they are working with a population of human beings with underdeveloped prefrontal cortexes and fluctuating hormones, allowing them to approach individuals and situations with understanding and patience to foster the development of the whole child. Our staff, from the cafeteria and janitorial support to the principal, understand that relationships are paramount for students feeling connected and invested in school, and connection and investment are the foundational blocks needed for learning at the highest levels.

In addition to providing the knowledge and tools for teachers to support students, JCIB also recognizes the need for and provides support to the teachers, professionally and personally. Professionally, new teachers are paired with a mentor, even if they have worked at another school. The IB Programme incorporates traditional teaching, but the additional requirements are often overwhelming at first sight. Teacher mentors help with unit planning, reviewing, and modeling, and serve as sounding boards and confidants. Additional professional support is offered by the MYP coordinator, who uses data to create development opportunities by school, department, grade-level, or individual needs.

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

JCIB's administration, composed of the principal, assistant principal, and MYP coordinator, has over sixty years of combined experience; however, they are constantly seeking and taking advantage of opportunities to learn and grow as education professionals. They attend annual IB and leadership conferences, various district meetings, and read current education publications to remain abreast of the best practices for teaching and learning. Despite formal learning and years of being considered experts in their roles, the most important education they receive is informal teacher and student feedback. They use feedback to determine new avenues for distributed leadership or to guide them towards new formal learning opportunities.

JCIB's administrative team is currently split between our middle and high school campuses. To address the needs of staff, communication has been prioritized by the creation of the weekly newsletter called "The Raptor", holding virtual Monday meetings to include teachers at both campuses, the use of GroupMe, and the availability of an admin via cell phone at any time, including after hours. These efforts have resulted in positive feedback and increased communication and collaboration between the administration and teachers.

The Jefferson County School district has embraced Marzano's High Reliability Schools framework while giving schools the flexibility to implement concepts according to their needs and dynamics. JCIB's adoption of the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model has led to an increase in distributed leadership. Teachers were allowed to select which committee to join based off of their interests in the focuses of each group. Group 1's focus is to create a safe, supportive, and collaborative culture. They plan school wide activities and teacher support and appreciation initiatives, and they identify safety concerns and brainstorm how to address them to present to the administration. Group 2's focus is effective teaching. They research

best practices and have been tasked with developing an instructional model that can be modified by teachers to address the needs of their subject areas. Group 3's focus is on the creation/use of a viable curriculum. They analyze data from formal and informal assessments and state and national standardized assessments to determine growth areas. They use this data to identify solutions, guide the implementation of the solutions, and monitor progress. They are currently making adjustments to the intervention program designed to address our students' deficits in math.

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

The JCIB student body is made up of students from different backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, cultures, and religions. Our students come to us from different towns and counties with different strengths and weaknesses; however, our goal is to cultivate a school climate that allows each individual to overcome deficits and thrive amongst their peers.

Student relationships are prioritized by all staff members, knowing that students work harder when they feel connected. Teachers and students are taught about the cultures and backgrounds of our students to gain a better understanding of differences and create a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment. Teachers take interest in the interests of students, whether it be the sports they play, the books they're reading, the music they're listening to, or the shows they're watching. These interests are incorporated into lessons to increase student engagement.

In addition to appealing to student interests, teachers use formative assessments to monitor comprehension and address deficits early on. Some students are pulled into classes with their math teachers weekly for level 2 RTI support, some are intentionally sat in pods with peers who are excelling with the particular concept being covered, and others are invited to join teachers for one on one support during lunch or before or after school. Due to the lack of access to parental transportation of most of our students, all of these supports are built into the school day or accessible after students arrive by bus.

Lastly, student clubs and house activities are scheduled into the school day to maximize participation ability. Even the brightest eleven to fourteen year olds are still middle schoolers. They are motivated to work hard, but they also enjoy unstructured time and student activities. While listening to students describe their experiences at JCIB, they will talk about the workload and high expectations, but they will also talk about the cool things they've done during school clubs, the outfits they've worn during spirit weeks, the difference they've made through service and donations, and the successes they've experienced in after school clubs. With a goal to develop the whole child, JCIB prioritizes making all opportunities accessible.

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

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Inquiry is a foundational component of the instructional model at JCIB. Throughout the programme, students are afforded opportunities to propose topics for independent free inquiry projects. Some of these occur in curricular settings, while others satisfy the Middle Years Programme core and take place primarily outside of the classroom. JCIB teachers prime students for these experiences by employing inquiry approaches in daily classroom instruction. As students move from structured inquiry toward free inquiry, there is a gradual release of both research and academic responsibility.

All units of study are rooted in inquiry-based learning opportunities. Most students enter our programme without an inquiry background. During grade 6, students develop some familiarity with the use of inquiry approaches using structured inquiry. Structured inquiry is a whole-class approach during which students deepen understanding using the same resource(s) and demonstration of understanding. As students progress through the programme, they undertake controlled and guided inquiries. In controlled inquiry, the teacher identifies topics and curates resources that students may use for a common performance task, while guided inquiry allows students to decide on their own task and resources within teacher-prescribed topics. At each level of inquiry, students are given agency that is monitored and supported by JCIB faculty; students showcase these learning experiences and projects through events such as Inquiry Night.

MYP projects utilize the free inquiry model, where the learning process is initiated and directed by the student themselves. Free inquiry is the highest level of inquiry, where students choose their topics without reference to any prescribed outcome. Free inquiry, by definition, fosters student agency. When students feel agency and efficacy related to their learning, it sets the stage for learning to take place at a deep level and to hold significant meaning for the student.

When students return to visit our campus, they speak fondly of their free inquiry experiences and tout that these helped them embody the IB mission. Similarly, our social media presence gets the best response when we post pictures and videos of free inquiry to our public profile, because students are excited and engaging when they connect to what they are sharing. Through free inquiry, students truly become agents and facilitators of their own learning. The skills that they learn through these projects transcend the academic setting and prepare them for success beyond the classroom.