

**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 [X] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Bron Gayna Schmit

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

Official School Name Simpson Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4525 E. Jones Bridge Road

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

Peachtree Corners City      GA State      30092-1203 Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Gwinnett

Telephone (770) 417-2400

Fax (770) 417-2406

Web site/URL http://www.simpsonsuperstars.org

E-mail bron\_gayna\_schmit@gwinnett.k12.ga.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\*Mr. J. Alvin Wilbanks

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

E-mail alvlin\_wilbanks@gwinnett.k12.ga.us

District Name Gwinnett County Schools Tel. (678) 301-6000

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 MS. Carole Boyce

(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):
- 80 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 29 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 22 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 131 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
<b>PreK</b>	44	17	61
<b>K</b>	93	70	163
<b>1</b>	75	95	170
<b>2</b>	102	65	167
<b>3</b>	80	79	159
<b>4</b>	63	66	129
<b>5</b>	71	74	145
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	528	466	994

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 11 % Asian
  - 9 % Black or African American
  - 10 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 62 % White
  - 8 % 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	42
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	24
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	66
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	946
(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: 5%  
47 Total number ELL

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

Chinese, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11%  
 Total number students who qualify: 111

8. Students receiving special education services: 21 %  
213 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>66</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                 | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness           | <u>15</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>48</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>24</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>6</u> Emotional Disturbance    | <u>36</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment       | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>7</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: 14
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	4
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	37
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	36
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	32
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 25:1

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	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
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. 2012

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

Simpson Elementary School, in partnership with parents and community, will challenge students to reach their full academic and behavioral potential.

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

Students who live in the school's attendance zone are eligible to attend Simpson. We also accept employee, child care hardship and medical transfer requests.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Simpson Elementary School, named for long-time teacher and child advocate, Miss Ludie Simpson, will celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2018-2019. Simpson, which opened in 1993, sits along the banks of the Chattahoochee River within an established community. It is truly a neighborhood school with a “small town” atmosphere, situated within the fast-paced world of suburban Atlanta. Since its beginning, Simpson has been recognized as the flagship school of Gwinnett County Public Schools.

Gwinnett County Public School System is the largest school district in Georgia with 180,000 students. In order to provide our school system's families a smaller, more personal atmosphere, our 139 schools are divided into clusters of schools. Each cluster bears the name of its high school. Simpson is one of eleven schools in the Norcross Cluster. Our cluster consists of six elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, one alternative middle/high school and one county-approved charter school for the performing arts. Within our cluster of schools, there is great diversity of cultures. Free and reduced lunch percentages range from the lowest to the highest in our county.

Simpson currently houses 994 students in grades preK-5. The mission of our school specifically focuses on increasing student achievement in a safe and nurturing environment. Our mission statement - "Simpson Elementary School, in partnership with parents and community, will challenge students to reach their full academic and behavioral potential" - calls us to action as we work with a student population in which approximately fifteen percent of our students have special needs and twenty percent are identified as gifted learners. Simpson has sixteen self-contained Special Education classes that support a wide range of students with special needs, as well as a large population of gifted identified and high achieving students. Staff members plan collaboratively to 1) ensure instruction correlates to state and county standards, 2) develop differentiated daily instruction/activities for students, and 3) create common assessments to inform instruction. Our focus every day is on teaching and learning (with an emphasis on learning) to maximize student success.

Our community of stakeholders is proud that Simpson ranks high among elementary schools in our county, state, and nation. Simpson has annually earned the highest level award (Platinum) in the category of Student Achievement and/or Greatest Gains on the Georgia Single Statewide Accountability System (SSAS). In 2017, Simpson was the only Gwinnett school to receive the Platinum Award in both categories - Highest Performing Schools (earning a three-year average student achievement score in at least the 93rd percentile in the state) and Greatest Gains schools (earning a three-year average student progress score in at least the 93rd percentile in the state).

In 2010, we were honored to be named a Georgia School of Excellence, followed by the distinction of being named a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 2012. The National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Award sets our school apart, in a school system that has won the Broad prize in both 2010 and 2014, as the only elementary school in our county to hold this title. It is refreshing in a world of unrest and discontent to find a neighborhood elementary school where parents hold their school in high regard, support the programs and staff completely, and expect excellence at all times.

Our exemplary staff has established high expectations for both academic performance and positive behavior. Our school culture embraces seven Simpson norms - honesty, respect, responsibility, cooperation, kindness, perseverance and courage. These norms are reinforced and rewarded daily with "Star Slips", so students enjoy a school environment that breeds happiness and success. Staff members recognize a student, group of students or whole classes exhibiting one or more Simpson norms on a regular basis by giving them a Yellow Star Slip with the norm(s) highlighted and the staff member's signature. Assistant principals give lavender Star Slips for the same display of norm(s) and the Principal bestows a pink Star Slip. Students excitedly look forward to receiving a Star Slip and taking it home to show their parents. Class Star Slips are proudly displayed on classroom doors.

Our teaching staff is a remarkable blend of seasoned educators and recent graduates who bring a wealth of curriculum knowledge, expertise in research-based instructional strategies, technology skills, wisdom,

enthusiasm and high energy to our school. All classroom teachers are gifted endorsed. Our support staff takes pride in a clean school, nutritious breakfasts and lunches, and a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Visitors to our school often comment there is a special feel when they step inside our doors. The principal refers to each staff member as a sparkling jewel. She keeps a crystal bowl filled with various colored "jewels" on display in her office. When interviewing an applicant, she refers to this bowl of jewels when talking about the sparkling attributes each staff member brings to our organization.

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

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

The Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) are the standards for academic excellence for all students in Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS). The AKS are the compilation of the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) and the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). The goal for all our students is mastery of the AKS which, in turn, ensures mastery of the Georgia standards. The alignment of AKS with county-developed standardized assessments ensures GCPS students are well-prepared to excel on state assessments such as the Georgia Milestones Assessments.

Simpson Elementary has chosen a balanced instructional literacy and numeracy framework based on Readers, Writers and Mathematics Workshop methods which include lessons that are modeled, shared, guided and independent. Teachers are expected to use the format of mini lesson, guided practice and independent practice in their daily instruction. The five-fifteen minute mini lesson at the beginning of daily instruction in reading and math provides the teacher with an opportunity to introduce or reinforce content to the whole class. Guided instructional groups allow the teacher to support small groups of students at students' instructional levels based on assessments and observations. Explicit teaching occurs during this time. During independent work, teachers incorporate individualized instructional strategies to accommodate each child's level of instruction. As teachers bring each workshop to a close, students summarize and demonstrate knowledge of their new understanding. In recent years, we have used Lucy Calkins' Units of Study as a guide for writing instruction.

In primary grades, students learn to read with a teaching focus on letters, sounds, and words. Mastery comes when a student reads with accuracy, expression and understanding. As students move into the upper elementary grades, our focus extends from "learning to read" to "reading to learn content". Challenging material offers an opportunity for students to deepen their awareness of the demands of text, and the need for students to read to communicate conceptual understandings. As students exit elementary school, our goal is for each one to have the knowledge, tools and desire to become lifelong readers.

Educators at Simpson are committed to teaching mathematics for understanding. The AKS in grades kindergarten through fifth are based around six goals for all students: 1) becoming a mathematical problem solver, 2) learning to reason mathematically, 3) learning to communicate mathematically, 4) learning to make connections, 5) learning to use mathematics in their daily lives, and 6) becoming proficient with appropriate computational tools and techniques. By using physical models, "hand-on" activities and technology, students participate in concrete experiences that provide them opportunities to solve problems and demonstrate understanding.

Incorporating literacy into all subject areas is a high priority at Simpson. Teachers encourage students to select appropriate grade level reading choices to enhance Science and Social Studies content. Participating in science experiments and role playing historical events such as Immigration from Europe to the United States, allow students to apply content knowledge in fun and memorable ways.

Simpson houses five PreK classes that serve students who have special needs. Three and four-year olds who have diagnosed cognitive, emotional, behavioral and other handicapping conditions are provided instructional and assistive technology support via their Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs). These preschool opportunities provide students with disabilities the opportunity to receive early intervention in preparation for school success.

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

Students at Simpson participate in other curriculum areas: Art, Music, Physical Education, Spanish, Technology, Counseling and Media on a weekly rotational basis. Each area has its own AKS. Students employ higher order thinking skills in all areas as they gain a deeper appreciation for and understanding of each content area.

In Art, students are challenged to make personal connections with the art and artists they study. They learn how to critique a work of art by analyzing the basic elements of line, shape, form, color and texture found in a piece. They also learn to form judgments about a work of art based on their own feelings and interpretations. Students often write reflections about their own artwork which helps them internalize their learning and prepare them to share their new knowledge at home with their families. Each spring, a number of our students' artwork is displayed at our county art exhibit - Tapestry Arts Festival.

Our Music program enriches children's lives by exposing them to basic music theory and a variety of musical genres. Students learn to play Orff instruments and recorders and to appreciate and enjoy listening and moving to music. The majority of our fifth graders join the chorus. Students sing the National Anthem at one of our high school's fall football games, serenade shoppers at Barnes & Noble on a December evening, sing the National Anthem at an Atlanta Braves baseball game in the spring and eagerly anticipate participating in the annual musical.

Our Physical Education program stresses the importance of maintaining a healthy body by eating balanced meals/snacks and exercising on a regular basis. Students enjoy participating in physical activities and competitive programs like Starburst (Field Days) and Jump Rope for Heart. Our PE teacher encourages all children to participate in games and activities without judgment of physical size and/or aptitude.

Simpson offers Spanish to all students in kindergarten - Grade 5. Our school community is stable; thus, many of our students receive Spanish instruction for six consecutive years. Children are expected to understand basic Spanish, be aware of customs of countries whose people speak Spanish and to value differences among cultures. Our Spanish program provides a strong language bridge to our middle school's foreign language program.

Simpson students enjoy Technology Special as part of their weekly "specials" rotation. Our Technology teacher uses the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards as a framework to provide an innovative learning environment. These standards address the preparation of our students for digital age learning. In the fall of 2018, our Technology Special will morph into a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) lab for upper grade students.

Our Media Specialist supports students in each grade level by offering classes in literacy, appreciation of books and research skills. Our two counselors provide classroom instruction on age appropriate topics such as "Stranger Danger" and peer pressure. They also offer small group sessions on topics such as anger management, divorce and making friends. Our counselors are available for parenting classes, individual parent/child conferences and other types of support as needed.

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

Simpson's curriculum, instructional design and assessment practices are in alignment with those of Gwinnett County Public Schools, and are used to guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning. Teachers and support staff follow the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) as our curriculum. Teachers use the county developed instructional calendars and resources to guide weekly and long term lesson planning. Weekly lesson plans are expected to contain the appropriate learning standards, teaching strategies, activities, differentiation plans and assessment for each subject area.

The instructional leadership at Simpson Elementary consists of two English/Language Arts (ELA) coaches, one mathematics coach and one technology coach. These staff members, teamed with our three assistant principals, provide guidance and support to teachers as they differentiate instruction for both above, on, and below grade level learners. They also support students who are moving through the Response to Intervention (RTI) tiered process.

Teachers administer pretests before teaching a unit to identify students who have already mastered the material. After students take a county District Assessment online, a teacher analyzes the data, and can easily identify students who have mastered or not mastered the tested objectives. As a result of Pre- and posttest

data, teachers plan enrichment/remediation activities/on grade level assignments for students. Additionally, students' needs can be met through the use of educational programs that are online. We are a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) school so students have use of home/school devices and computer labs at school. Teachers select activities that require students to apply their technology skills.

Administrators and teachers continuously analyze data from a range of data sources including comparison and trend data about student learning and instruction and program evaluations. School leaders facilitate school wide data meetings, one-on-one meetings with teachers, and grade level reviews of assessment data. Administrators also monitor grade books and conduct walkthroughs and brief/formative observations to monitor evidence of student learning.

Our Instructional Coaches work with teachers twice weekly to discuss collaborative assessments and ways to formally and informally assess students both formatively and summatively. These assessments are discussed at length at grade level meetings, with all teachers giving input and instructional coaches providing guidance in terms of alignment to standards and developmental expectations.

In addition to our Instructional Coaches, our English as a Second Language lead teacher works with specific classroom teachers to “progress monitor” and guide those students who are served through the EL program. Simpson currently has six classroom teachers who are EL endorsed, and provide individual and specific support to our EL identified students.

Our five Speech and Language Pathologists collaborate daily with classroom teachers to identify and monitor student needs in the area of speech and language.

The Response to Intervention (RTI) process begins when a student is not responding successfully in common, formative or summative assessments. Weeks of data collection, meetings between the assistant principal, teacher and instructional coaches, and conferences with parents take place over a two-three month period of time. When all avenues for additional intervention have been exhausted, a possible referral for special education testing can be offered.

For our advanced learners, we offer differentiated instruction through our gifted endorsed teachers – which includes all our general education homeroom teachers. Students receive more challenging and rigorous tasks, such as opportunities in problem-based learning that are closely aligned to our Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) in the subject area in which they excel. Our Gifted Education lead teacher supports all staff members as they provide this specialized level of instruction.

Our methodical and focused system of improvement efforts is integrated and results-oriented. All schools in our county participate in Gwinnett County's Results Based Evaluation System (RBES) which is a comprehensive evaluation system of both district and local school achievement results. Using levelers such as Free/Reduced lunch status or Cognitive Abilities Test scores, each school in the district is evaluated using a weighted school assessment (WSA). Achieving and exceeding benchmark scores is the expectation and is considered indicative of world class performance. Other evaluated programs on the WSA include initiatives to improve student achievement, customer satisfaction and school management.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Simpson's school culture is centered on seven norms: honesty, responsibility, kindness, respect, cooperation, perseverance and courage. These norms are the foundational pieces of our school leadership program and guide the development of each teacher's management plan to develop outstanding student leaders. Our students recite our school motto daily on the morning news program - "A leader does the right thing even when no one is watching." This is the definition of integrity.

Upper grade students who have a deep and enthusiastic love of reading participate in our Readers Rally group, math enthusiasts enjoy Wittzle Pro, and problem solvers are engrossed in Robotics and Odyssey of the Mind. Along with teacher leaders, the talents of these students are highlighted at county, state, national and international tournaments. Coveted trophies are proudly displayed in our school trophy case.

In 2017-2018, Simpson teachers created our first Lego robotics team. Students were captivated as they created and designed a problem facing our earth. Our team selected the topic of eliminating the wild fires in California. The robotics team won first place in our county competition after only three months in existence!

Similar to robotics, students engage in problem solving activities in Odyssey of the Mind. We have just received the news that one of our teams scored the highest in all four categories at the state level and is going to the international competition in late May!

Annually, our staff perception surveys indicate a large number of staff members are proud to be part of the Simpson school family. Over 98% of staff feel safe and secure at school. They feel supported by administrators with student behavior. They believe they are treated fairly and with respect.

Similar to the student "Star Slip" recognition program for students, the administrators created a similar plan for staff members. All staff are eligible to receive a "Star Buck" from an administrator as a way to say "thank you" for going above and beyond expectations. Staff members collect "Star Bucks" and can cash them in for prizes including office supplies, instructional resources, administrative class coverage or a gift card. Our outstanding PTA provides Staff Appreciation Week each spring. This "themed" week includes staff breakfasts, lunches, appetizers, dessert days, gifts, flowers and notes from parents and students. Our staff thanks our parent community effusively for making us feel special and appreciated.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

We actively seek and support family and community involvement in our school. A "team approach" ensures all key stakeholders understand our school's history, data, processes and procedures. The following components serve as cornerstones: 1) targeted communication with parents about instruction and assessments, 2) open and ongoing communication about all aspects of school life, 3) active parent/family involvement, and 4) business and community involvement.

We believe there is never too much communication between home and school! Simpson offers traditional Curriculum Nights, semester progress reports, and required parent/teacher conferences twice yearly. Additionally, we use eCLASS which is Gwinnett County's digital Content, Learning, Assessment and Support System that provides our school district an integrated learning management system to enhance student engagement and the learning process. The eCLASS platform provides students and teachers with the digital tools they need to expand the walls of the classroom, foster collaboration, and nurture creativity. Parents can view their child's current grades, class newsletters, homework, instructional resources twenty-four hours a day on the eCLASS platform.

While our school and PTA websites and the weekly school e-newsletter share information about the many aspects of Simpson school life, eCLASS landing pages provide parents with current personalized class

information and students with homework assignments and easy access to communication with their teacher.

Our PTA is visibly active at Simpson every day and supports our students/staff by providing outstanding Arts in Education programs, Fall Family Festival, Cans, Coats and Car Seats, Toy and One Hundred Ways to Give Drives. Parent volunteers serve as Art Moms, Media Volunteers, Field Day assistants and Drama Mamas for the spring musical. Our active All Pro Dads monthly breakfasts bring fathers into our school, encourage them in their roles as fathers, and offer opportunities for them to be involved in school life. We seek business and community involvement to also support our students and programs. Business partners are recognized throughout the year via advertisements and Spirit Nights. A highlight in the spring of 2017 was the community's efforts in raising \$55,000 to build a specially-designed playground for our preK children with special needs. Local news media followed the creation of the playground from conception to reality.

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

Professional learning communities and vertical instructional teams have been designed for grade levels and groups with specific expertise to have the opportunity to meet regularly to collaborate. In recent years, the quality and intensity of collaborative planning has deepened among team members. Staff members have learned to appreciate differences and work toward consensus in developing our instruction programs.

Our literacy, math, and technology coaches work with grade levels twice weekly to deconstruct academic standards and provide training to ensure teachers are addressing all parts of each standard. During these weekly planning sessions, coaches and teachers create nine-week lesson plans using instructional calendars provided by the county's instructional division. Once the nine-week instructional calendar has been developed, coaches continue to work with teachers to develop weekly lesson plans, adjust instruction or review resources for upcoming lessons. The technology coach highlights software activities/programs to support instruction. Teachers are also provided a full release day quarterly to review instructional calendars, meet with instructional coaches and develop instructional frameworks for the upcoming quarter.

Our coaches model instruction for teachers. For example, a coach can teach a lesson in a teacher's classroom and debrief with the teacher in order to highlight key elements of a lesson. Following this type of activity, the coach will reverse roles and observe the teacher teaching a lesson, also followed by debriefing. Teachers are encouraged to observe other teachers followed by conversations which highlight key components of a lesson. Our assistant principal and technology coach facilitate S.H.I.N.E. (Simpson's Helpful Information for New Educators) which is an extensive new teacher mentoring program, addressing the needs and concerns of first, second and third year teachers.

Professional development is offered continuously by our county via online and face-to-face learning opportunities. At Simpson, we also offer 20 or more hours of professional learning annually to both certified and classified staff. Professional learning is designed based on the previous year's data and the goals of our Local School Plan for Improvement. Currently, our professional learning focuses on the architecture of a mini-lesson and increased use of our eCLASS technology platform.

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

Our organizational plan is designed to empower every staff member to experience leadership. Our administrators believe in shared governance and servant leadership. From planning to performance, we desire for every staff member to take ownership in our journey of excellence.

The leadership team at Simpson operates under a governance model that promotes and supports student performance and school effectiveness. Effective communication among all staff members creates transparency of procedures and processes. The Building Leadership Team (BLT) is comprised of the principal, three assistant principals, a representative from each grade level/team, cafeteria manager, head custodian, media specialist and instructional coaches. This team meets monthly to discuss current topics, plan future events, address concerns that involve the entire school, and to hear updates from other leaders from all areas in our school.

An agenda is provided prior to each BLT meeting so leaders can gather questions/comments about proposed topics from their team members and come prepared for the meeting. The agenda is on a Google document so leaders can use the same agenda from our BLT meeting for their monthly grade level/team meetings. Members on all grade levels/teams can provide follow up comments or questions directly on the document. Following grade level/team meetings, all administrators read/respond to comments. This streamlined approach provides 360-degree communication among all staff members.

Our PTA has an active Executive Board – two co-presidents and eight vice presidents meet monthly with the principal in attendance. This group has an agenda and discusses all PTA business including the current and future budget, reports from committees via the vice presidents, and upcoming activities/events.

Our School Council has representation from parents and business partners. The principal is always present, as well as our Board of Education member. The council selects a chair and vice chairperson at the beginning of each year. The School Council meets quarterly and serves as an advisory group to the principal. Agenda items include updates from our Board member about our community, test data and reviews of our Local School Plan for Improvement from our principal, and topics suggested by the principal and/or council members.

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

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While many practices blend together to create an excellent school, we believe the one, **OVERARCHING** practice that makes Simpson Elementary School a special learning place for children is **RELATIONSHIPS**. People are our greatest resource - the students, the staff, the parents, the community, our cluster schools, our central office, our Board of Education and our superintendent. We care deeply about each other and recognize and applaud the complexity of each person.

Visitors to Gwinnett County School System's monthly School Board meetings will observe five Board of Education members and the superintendent interact respectfully with one another. Constituents who address the Board with a question or concern receive the same courtesy. Students and staff are recognized at monthly Board of Education meetings for achieving excellence in one of our many academic/athletic programs. Principals who contact coordinators, directors, coaches and other central office personnel throughout the year are always greeted with a kind word and immediate assistance. What a blessing to work in an environment where we never get so large that we forget to tell people how important they are!

Our school community is actively involved in our school life. From sponsoring Spirit Nights to financially supporting programs/contests and special events, our business partners are vibrant members of our school life. Parents tell friends, relatives and community members the reasons they want their child to attend Simpson Elementary School. Parents appreciate all staff members going above and beyond to make each child feel special, loved and valued for his/her uniqueness. Our staff is respectful of one another. When a staff member, student or parent is carrying a heavy burden in his/her personal life, our staff reaches out on a variety of levels to offer comfort and support.

A school can be a beautifully built structure that houses many resources. A school comes alive, however, when a caring staff moves in and welcomes children into its fold. School becomes a haven for children to receive a strong educational foundation - a place where they are encouraged to become productive adults who, in turn, will offer a hand of support and genuine care to another person throughout life. We owe parents an outstanding education for their child, and we owe each child a loving environment in which he/she develops a passion for learning and the warm encouragement to become the best he/she can be!