

Westside Elementary School

(595 Students in Grades K-4)

Mission Statement

In partnership with families and community, Westside Elementary School reflects a collective commitment to empower each child to attain:

- *A strong academic foundation through diverse and challenging instruction in a safe and nurturing environment*
- *Positive self-confidence, respect, responsibility, and compassion*
- *The ability to make healthy physical and nutritional lifestyle choices*
- *A functional use of existing and emerging technology*
- *A desire to become life-long learners.*

Accreditation and Academics

Westside Elementary School is fully accredited by the Arkansas Department of Education and the North Central Association. The school has been recognized for six years as a *Reading Renaissance Model School*. Westside has been awarded *Master School* status for four years by the organization and was the first elementary school in the state to receive such a designation. This recognition was through the Advantage Learning Corporation, the company that developed the Accelerated Reader program. This program is widely used throughout the United States as a program that helps put into practice the reading skills being learned by students. Literacy instruction is further enhanced by our school's library media service, which is staffed with a full-time certified library media specialist. The early literacy intervention program for kindergarten and first grade students features a collaborative effort between the music, literacy intervention, and physical education teachers to provide a research-based, multi-sensory approach to help all students, especially those that do not learn in a traditional manner. This program helps students effectively reinforce their early reading skills, habits, and strategies through specific, contrived rhythmic singing, chanting, and rhythm and movement activities. A comprehensive music education program with an emphasis on performing musical/dramatic arts is offered and taught by a certified music instructor and is available to all students in the school. There is great excitement about an on-going involvement with the *Reading, Writing, and Rhythm* Foundation that has helped provide enough violins for a violin lab. Each student in grades 2, 3, and 4 learns how to play the violin and learns the rudiments of reading music and playing a musical instrument in the lab. The program's founder, country singer Chely Wright, is in frequent contact with the music department through the foundation. The program is a feature at the foundation's annual fundraiser in Nashville, Tennessee. A full-time certified art teacher gives visual arts instruction to all the students weekly as well. All students participate weekly in a structured physical/health education class to help them learn to build and enjoy healthy habits while learning of their importance in leading a healthful lifestyle. A full-time certified physical education specialist teaches these classes.

Counseling Services

Career opportunity awareness for students is available through curriculum and partnerships with the business and service community of Searcy. Character education in all facets of school is built on six pillars of character (caring, respect, fairness, trustworthiness, responsibility, and citizenship) and is taught to all children. Additionally, the staff strives to give Westside Elementary School a pleasant and productive atmosphere using a version of the FISH! Philosophy (based on a *Wall Street Journal* bestseller *FISH! Philosophy: A Different School of*

Thought). FISH stands for: **F**ixing our attitudes daily; **I**ncorporating play whenever possible; **S**haring ourselves with others; and “**H**ear here!”, or be fully attentive when others are speaking to you or teaching you. There are support groups, including socialization support, for those students that struggle to know how to get along appropriately with others, “Banana Splits,” groups for children struggling with divorce in their families, and friendship fostering groups for those wanting to be of service to others are available. Specific parenting training skills development is available upon request. Parents may come to an area in the parent involvement center where they can check out materials dealing with child health, education, and welfare.

Extra-curricular Opportunities and Activities

Coats for Kids: Westside is a collection sight for this annual project that is overseen by the local Rotary Club. Coats are donated by students and are dry-cleaned by area cleaners and distributed to children that have need.

Jump Rope for Heart: Each year the students participate in this fund-raiser for the American Heart Association in conjunction with their physical education classes. While learning how to live a healthful lifestyle, students are also learning about the importance of charitable organizations and how their research can affect all lives.

Junior Auxiliary Food Drive: Students and teachers collect food items for the Junior Auxiliary to distribute to those in need each winter season.

Student Ambassador Program: Each classroom has two students (one male and one female) that represent their classroom in making new students coming into their rooms feel welcome and comfortable with routines, schedules, and procedures at Westside. The ambassadors also serve as class and school representatives.

Santa’s Workshop: Westside is a site for this project that assists needy families during the Christmas holiday season.

School Volunteer Program: Classroom volunteers help teachers with clerical tasks by reading or working with students or helping with special projects and events. Homeroom moms coordinate classroom events and activities. Harding University and civic and community organizations provide services and volunteer tutors to work with students. Partners in Education provide resources and support for school reading, science, and student incentive programs. Current Westside Partners in Education include Entergy Corporation, First Community Bank, First Security Bancorp, Regions Bank, Simmons First Bank, and White County Medical Center. The Westside Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO) is a highly active organization that helps support the many activities and programs at the school.