School Nominee Presentation Form

ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATIONS

School and District's Certifications

The signatures of the school principal and district superintendent (or equivalents) on the next page certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of their knowledge. *In no case is a private school required to make any certification with regard to the public school district in which it is located.*

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades early learning to 12.
2. The school has been evaluated and selected from among schools within the Nominating Authority's jurisdiction, based on high achievement in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
3. Neither the nominated public school nor its public school district is refusing the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district wide compliance review. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is not subject to the jurisdiction of OCR. The nominated DoDEA schools, however, are subject to and in compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements to comply with Federal civil rights laws.
4. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the public school district concluding that the nominated public school or the public school 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 to remedy the violation.
5. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
6. 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 public school or public school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or public school district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.
7. The school meets all applicable federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.
8. The school or its district has in place and is willing to provide a link to or a copy of a non-discrimination policy, upon request. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a nomination and/or rescind an award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools

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

Official School Name: West Side Christian School
(As it should appear on an award)

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space*

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

An Kurosu Date: 02/05/2024
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent: An Kurosu
(Specify: Ms., Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in official records)

District Name: N/A

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

[signature] Date: 02/05/2024

(Superintendent's Signature)

Nominating Authority's Certifications

The signature by the Nominating Authority on this page certifies that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of the Authority's knowledge.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades Pre-K-12.
2. The school is one of those overseen by the Nominating Authority which is highest achieving in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
3. The school meets all applicable federal civil rights and federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

Name of Nominating Agency: Michigan Department of Education

Name of Nominating Authority: Dr. Michael F. Rice, State Superintendent

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

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify to the best of my knowledge that the school meets the provisions above.

Michael F. Rice, Ph.D. Digitally signed by Michael F. Rice, Ph.D. Date: 2024.02.09 14:52:10 -05'00' Date: 2/9/24

(Nominating Authority's Signature)

SUBMISSION

The nomination package, including the signed certifications, narrative summary, documentation of evaluation in the three Pillars, and photos should be submitted online according to the instructions in the Nominee Submission Procedure.

OMB Control Number: 1860-0509

Expiration Date: October 31, 2026

Public Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1860-0509. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 37 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit P.L. 107-110, Sec. 501, Innovative Programs and Parental Choice Provisions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-4536 or email ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1860-0509. Note: Please do not return the completed ED-Green Ribbon Schools application to this address.

Michigan Application for District Sustainability Award

Application Category

Choose One ☐ Early Learning Center x School ☐ District

District Information

District Name: West Side Christian School

Superintendent Contact Information

Name: An Kurosu (Head of Schools)

E-mail Address: akurosu@wschristian.org Phone: 616-453-3925 x101

Applicant Contact Information

Name: Janet Staal Title: Director of Outdoor Education

E-mail Address: jstaal@wschristian.org Phone: 616-453-3925 x231

Application Team

List the titles of the team members who provided information and support for the completion of this application.

An Kurosu, Head of Schools
Janet Staal, Director of Nature-based/ Outdoor Education
Brandon Klomp, Facilities Manager
Andrew Vanderwal, Physical Education Teacher
Denise Nassif-Hernandez, Lead Hot Lunch
Krystin Kamps, Dean of Instruction and Students
Sue Folkerts, Transportation Coordinator
Meikea Herrera, 6th Grade Math and Science Teacher
Lauren Sturrus, 6th Grade Language Arts and Social Studies Teacher
Rachel Becher, 7th and 8th Grade Science Teacher
Amira Selvius 5th Grade Math and Science Teacher
Kim Kryger, 4th Grade Teacher
Hannah Litwiller, Kindergarten Teacher
Peyton Mars, Kindergarten Teacher
Teresa Kooyer, Nature-based Preschool Teacher
Nolan Paauw, 7th-grade student student leader
Mekenna Olson, 8th-grade student leader
Liam Caterino, 4th-grade student leader
Steele VanDriel, 4th-grade student leader
Josilyn Kortman, 4th-grade student leader

School/Center Information

Contact Information

Official School/Center Name: West Side Christian School
Website: wscsgr.org

Address:
955 Westend St. NW
Grand Rapids | Michigan | 49504
City | **State** | **ZIP Code**

Principal/Director Contact Information

Name: An Kurosu
E-mail Address: AKurosu@wschristian.org Phone: 616 453-3925

School/Center Information

Grade Levels: x Early Childhood Learning x Elementary
(Check all that apply) x Middle School ☐ High School

School/Center Grade Configuration: PreK - 8th Grade

School Type ☐ Public x Private

How would you describe your school/center? x Urban ☐ Suburban ☐ Rural

Total Enrolled in District: 429 **Total Enrolled in School/Center:** 429

Please provide percentages of students in each subgroup below based on 2023-2024 data:

Economically Disadvantaged: 0
English Learner: 6
Students with Disabilities: 38
Migrant: 0
Foster: 0
Homeless: 0

Summary Narrative: An Overview of Your Work Encompassing All Three Pillars

Use one substantive paragraph to provide an overview narrative (350 word maximum) of your efforts to make progress towards the **ED-GRS Three Pillars** by reducing environmental impacts and costs (Pillar 1), improving student and staff health and wellness (Pillar 2), and providing effective environmental and sustainability education (Pillar 3). This overarching summary should highlight the best of your work in every ED-GRS Pillar and Element. Focus in on any unique and innovative practices and partnerships. This information will appear in Highlights document posted in Performance section of the USED Green Schools website.

West Side Christian School (WSCS) is a pioneering force in environmental and sustainability education, integrating hands-on, project-based, and problem-based learning into its curriculum. Since 2017, the Director of Nature-based/Outdoor Education has played a pivotal role collaborating with staff, students and community members to infuse ecological principles and sustainability concepts across subjects, fostering a deep understanding of the natural world's interconnectedness.

One of WSCS's initiatives involves students leading stewardship projects, exemplified by their successful implementation of a school-wide composting initiative. Recognized with the Earth Day Environmental Service Award, this initiative not only addresses the school's waste problem but also integrates sustainability into the educational goals of all students.

WSCS actively reduces its carbon footprint through energy-efficient measures, including high-efficiency lighting, LED lights, and water conservation. The Creation Care/Green Team, led by student leaders and volunteers, spearheads initiatives covering waste management, paper and plastic recycling, composting, and participation in programs like TerraCycle®.

Outdoor learning takes center stage at WSCS, with intentional time in a forested nature preserve and schoolyard spaces. Featuring an outdoor classroom, native planting areas, vernal pools, a swamp, and an organic vegetable garden, these spaces facilitate experiential learning about the natural environment, preparing students to be conscientious stewards of the planet.

The school garden is a standout feature, engaging students in planting, cultivating, and harvesting fruits and vegetables. Integrated into the school's lunch program, it enhances nutritional content, instilling healthy eating habits. Collaborating with the City of Grand Rapids and Blandford Nature Center Farm, WSCS is constructing a greenhouse to extend the growing season, promoting food production and health education opportunities.

WSCS's commitment extends to transforming food services with a health-focused team, offering nutritious options and incorporating garden produce into meals. Physical activity is emphasized through recess and after-school running clubs, fostering community and teamwork. Collaborations with Blandford Nature Center, mental health initiatives, and family engagement programs further underscore WSCS's holistic commitment to the well-being of students, families, and staff. The school's dedication to a comprehensive, healthy learning environment prepares individuals for a future where sustainability, well-being, and environmental consciousness are integral.

Pillar I: Reduced Environmental Impact and Costs

Describe how your early learning center, school, or district has made progress in reducing environmental impacts and costs under each of the elements below. In cases where the answer applies to the whole district, please indicate this, and describe what your school does above and beyond your district's efforts. **Each element description should be 300 - 600 words** and incorporate relevant metrics to demonstrate progress when possible.

Element IA: Energy

Describe how your early learning center, school, or district has reduced or eliminated greenhouse gas emissions, using an energy audit or emissions inventory and reduction plan, cost-effective energy efficiency improvements, conservation measures, and/or on-site renewable energy and/or purchase of green power.

West Side Christian School has taken proactive measures to reduce its carbon footprint and promote sustainability through an advisory team approach made up of school leadership, staff, teachers, parents, and students. The school initiated an energy audit several years ago, providing a foundational assessment to identify areas for improvement. High-efficiency lighting has been installed in all classrooms, with recent additions of LED lights in key areas like the gym, exterior spaces, the bus garage, new offices, and the media center which resulted in a 75% reduction in energy consumption. To enhance energy efficiency further, light motion sensors were strategically installed in various storage rooms and bathrooms. The team is working toward the goal of adding additional motion light sensors in expanded areas in the next two years.

An external partnership with Think! Energy from Consumers Energy enhances students' understanding of energy's lifecycle, from resource development to efficient consumption. The National Energy Foundation conducts presentations, turning students into energy experts both at home and school. The Take Action Kit distributed during these sessions equips students and families with tools for easy home energy efficiency improvements, empowering them to contribute to energy savings, reduce bills, and protect the environment.

To reinforce energy conservation habits, our Student Creation Care leaders are developing a tool kit for each classroom, involving practices such as turning off lights when not in use, pulling blinds and shades to reduce heat loss at the end of the day, and powering down computers and technology during breaks and at the day's end. These initiatives collectively reflect West Side Christian School's commitment to sustainable practices and the ongoing effort to create an environmentally responsible and energy-efficient educational environment.

Element IB: Water

Describe how your early learning center, school, or district has improved water quality, efficiency, and conservation.

Through innovative initiatives, collaborative partnerships, and hands-on experiences, WSCS is paving the way for improved water quality, efficiency, and conservation. The school's strategic vision demonstrates a dedication to fostering a sense of environmental responsibility is evident through diverse projects that include onsite rain gardens, native plant landscaping, water quality monitoring, building improvements, and a concerted effort to reduce the negative impact of stormwater runoff.

As part of the school's stewardship plan, the goal is to reduce water use throughout our building. During a recent bathroom renovation, 14 new water-efficiency toilets and 8 faucet aerators were installed that reduce the flow of water. These building improvements reduce our water from 2019 to date by conserving yearly approximately 140,000 gallons of water, according to the EPA. In the past five years, that is an estimated 700,000 gallons of conserved water.

One noteworthy venture involves the active participation of 6th-grade students alongside the Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW) in exploring the Indian Mill Creek Watershed. This collaboration has continued to grow and develop over the past four years. Armed with scientific curiosity, young minds engaged in water quality tests, using the creek as their classroom. Through collaborative efforts, the students collected valuable data, assessing chemical parameters, documenting stream bank erosion, measuring water flow and velocity, and identifying macroinvertebrates that serve as indicators of water health. This experience not only honed their scientific skills but also empowered them to contribute meaningfully to the preservation of their local watershed. The partnership with LGROW ensures that these efforts extend beyond the classroom, as the collected data collaborates with ongoing initiatives to promote the health of the Indian Mill Creek Watershed. The ripple effect of this endeavor reached beyond the school, creating greater community awareness about water health.

WSCS's commitment to sustainability extends to its nature-based preschool and kindergarten classes, where an immersive Earth Day unit takes center stage. The schoolyard clean-up hikes undertaken by various grade levels not only instill a sense of responsibility in the students but also contribute to local water quality improvement. As students add rocks to mitigate sediment erosion in nearby water sources, they become active participants in enhancing the environmental health of their community.

West Side Christian School proudly celebrates its students' impactful rain garden project, a student-led initiative aimed at curbing stormwater runoff and reducing sediment surges in the adjacent watershed. Thanks to a grant awarded by the Groundswell Stewardship Initiative and other community partners (Plaster Creek Stewards, Rebecca Marquardt Landscape Architect), this interdisciplinary learning endeavor not only showcases students' environmental stewardship but also contributes significantly to local water quality improvement. Moreover, various grade levels have adopted storm drains, actively participating in their maintenance to further enhance nearby water quality. Looking beyond the school grounds, these initiatives are poised for expansion through

collaborative efforts with community partners. West Side Christian School is dedicated to not only nurturing environmental consciousness within its student body but also extending its influence to educate families and the wider community, fostering a shared commitment to sustainability and watershed health.

West Side Christian School's journey towards improved water quality and conservation is a testament to its holistic approach to education and environmental improvement to the building and grounds facility management. As these initiatives continue to flourish, WSCS stands as a beacon of inspiration, demonstrating that educational institutions can play a pivotal role in nurturing a sustainable and environmentally responsible future.

Element IC: Waste

- Describe how your early learning center, school, or district has reduced solid and hazardous waste production through increased recycling and composting, reduced consumption, and improved management, reduction, or elimination of hazardous waste.

West Side Christian School (WSCS) demonstrates a profound commitment to environmental sustainability, undertaking initiatives to significantly reduce both solid and hazardous waste production. The elementary and middle school actively engages students in leadership roles within the facilities team, fostering the implementation of a comprehensive school-wide recycling system. Student leaders play crucial roles, conducting classroom presentations, creating campaigns, and acting as mentors. They oversee the collection and deposit of recycling bins from each classroom into the school's recycling receptacles.

Over the past seven years, WSCS's leadership and staff have consistently worked to reduce hazardous waste, aligning with the school's green vision. The institution evaluates current and new products for small and large projects, collaborating with local companies to ensure responsible waste management. Proactive measures include the safe removal of inappropriate chemicals, preventing future mismanagement, and promoting awareness. Electronics and batteries, considered hazardous waste, are recycled through Comprenew. Ongoing efforts to reduce materials in storage areas are evident.

A noteworthy achievement is the collaborative effort of the 2020-2021 Creation Care Team and the Student Council, successfully fundraising for school-wide uniformed recycling containers. Utilizing the Sort it Out labeling system, the school manages waste disposal effectively, building on past successes. This integrated approach emphasizes waste reduction and establishes a standardized recycling system.

In Spring 2021, students proposed a school-wide composting initiative, creating a digital presentation. Collaborating with the administration and the facility manager, they secured approval and financial support from Grand Valley State University Groundswell's grant and student council bake sale funds. The students launched the compost collection system in October 2021, using a labeling system inspired by Kent County's Reimagine Trash. Managed by motivated students during recess, daily

compost collection has been integrated into the educational goals of students in the inclusion program. The initiative earned the Earth Day Environmental Service Award from EGLE.

This initiative not only imparts functional skills but fosters independence and equips students with valuable life skills. It serves as a powerful teaching tool, deepening understanding across grade levels. The school garden received over 9 cubic yards of compost, inviting community contributions of fall pumpkins. In the first year, students estimated 525 pounds of food waste were added to the compost. With an established system, students audit recycling achievements and the compost's impact on the school garden. The students set the goal to increase community pumpkin composting efforts. With the help of a local news channel, after students wrote letters, they increased to 5,130 pounds in 2023 compared to 3,142 pounds in 2022.

For over eleven years, WSCS has actively participated in the TerraCycle® program, collecting hard-to-recycle items. In recent years, a partnership with TREX recycled plastic bags and film has not been accepted by the city of Grand Rapids. TREX has recognized and awarded the school for its active participation in keeping plastic out of landfills. By promoting waste reduction in the community, the school actively involves external stakeholders in sustainable practices.

The Creation Care Team's initiative tackled excessive waste from throw-away trays in 2022. A waste audit calculated the annual waste of 17,500 styrofoam trays, known for non-sustainability and toxicity. Mobilizing the school community achieved a significant waste reduction, notably diminishing the overflowing dumpster primarily filled with classroom waste due to trays. This collaborative effort illustrates tangible results in hazardous waste reduction. West Side Christian School's holistic approach exemplifies its dedication to a greener, healthier, and more sustainable future for its students and the broader community.

Element ID: Transportation

> Describe how your early learning center, school, or district has expanded use of alternative transportation, through active promotion of locally available, energy-efficient options and implementation of alternative transportation supportive projects and policies.

West Side Christian School has not only embraced a steadfast commitment to expanding the use of alternative transportation but has also actively advocated for locally available, energy-efficient options.

We have implemented power stops so that our school buses are not stopping at as many stops, saving on fuel costs and emissions.

The school has been at the forefront of implementing projects and policies that support sustainable commuting. A notable illustration of this dedication is the enthusiastic participation in National Bike Month, with a specific emphasis on National Bike to School Day, an annual event occurring on or around May 6. The school leverages this occasion to promote biking as a healthy and safe alternative for commuting, aligning with the national initiative to inspire the next generation to adopt biking for

their daily travel needs. West Side Christian School consistently places itself on the Bike to School map, actively engaging in national efforts to promote sustainable transportation. Over the past two years, an impressive 30% of West Side Christian School students have actively participated in the Bike to School event. The collaborative efforts of student leaders and staff reflect a commitment to continuous improvement, as the school consistently evaluates and seeks ways to enhance its participation year after year.

Another impactful measure taken by the school to promote sustainability is the modification of the traditional car pick-up line. Rather than maintaining an idle car pick-up line, the school encourages a more environmentally conscious approach. Cars are parked, engines are shut off, and caregivers gather on a designated hill, fostering a sense of community. This innovative approach not only enhances the overall school experience but also significantly reduces the environmental impact of idle cars. By eliminating unnecessary engine idling, West Side Christian School actively contributes to the reduction of air pollution and fuel consumption associated with car emissions. This holistic approach exemplifies the school's dedication to fostering a greener, healthier, and more sustainable future for its students and the broader community.

Pillar II: Improve the health and wellness of students and staff

Describe how your early learning center, school, or district has improved the health and wellness of students, faculty and staff by promoting sound health and wellness practices and integrating a campus-wide environmental health program. In cases where the answer applies to the whole district, please indicate this, and describe what your school does above and beyond your district's efforts. **Each element description should be 300 - 600 words** and incorporate relevant metrics to demonstrate progress when possible.

Element IIA: Health and Wellness Practices

> Describe how your early learning center, school, or district high standards of Whole School Whole Community, Whole Child health, including health education, nutrition, and outdoor physical activity.

West Side Christian School (WSCS) stands out for its commitment to the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model, fostering an environment that prioritizes comprehensive health, including health education, nutrition, and outdoor physical activity. The school's initiatives encompass a range of programs and partnerships that promote the well-being of students, families, and staff.

One of the standout features is the school garden, where students actively participate in planting, cultivating, and harvesting fruits and vegetables. This not only provides hands-on learning experiences in gardening but also integrates nutrition education. The produce from the garden is incorporated into the school's lunch program (when available) and Little Sprouts Child Care, enhancing the nutritional content of meals and instilling healthy eating habits. In addition, the garden surplus has been shared with the local food pantry to provide access for those experiencing food insecurity and limited access to fresh local produce. For the past three years, the school has been working with the City of Grand Rapids and consulting with Blandford Nature Center Farm to construct

a greenhouse to extend the growing season and increase food production and health education opportunities. The goal is to have the greenhouse constructed by the fall of 2024.

WSCS has made significant strides in transforming its food services. The introduction of a health food services team in 2020 marked a shift away from fast-food school lunches to a menu with increased healthful options. The integration of produce from the school garden further emphasizes the school's commitment to providing nutritious meals for students.

The commitment to physical activity is evident through various programs, such as the recess running club and after-school running club. These clubs not only encourage regular exercise but also foster a sense of community and teamwork among students. Additionally, the school organizes a community trail run 5K at a nearby nature center, promoting outdoor physical activity beyond the school grounds and involving the broader community in a collective fitness initiative.

WSCS has forged a valuable partnership with the Blandford Nature Center, offering families a half-off discounted membership. This collaboration not only encourages outdoor exploration but also supports families in connecting with nature and maintaining an active lifestyle.

Recognizing the importance of mental health, the school increased the role of the school counselor in 2023. This expansion allows for a more comprehensive approach to addressing student behavior and mental health needs, creating a supportive environment for emotional well-being.

The school has taken a holistic approach to engaging families through young family thematic play groups, providing opportunities for both indoor and outdoor play. This not only supports the social and physical development of young children but also strengthens the school-home partnership in promoting overall child health.

To promote staff well-being, the school established an after-school active group for staff members. Additionally, a yearly wellness challenge encourages staff to set and achieve fitness and healthful eating goals, fostering a culture of self-care and health consciousness among educators.

Element IIB: Environmental Health

> Describe the integrated school environmental health program of your early learning center, school, or district that considers occupant health and safety in all design, construction, renovation, operations, and maintenance of facilities and grounds, including cleaning and maintenance; mold and moisture; chemical and environmental contaminants; air quality and ventilation; and pests and pesticide.

West Side Christian School (WSCS) has implemented a robust integrated school environmental health program that prioritizes occupant health and safety in all aspects of facility management. From design and construction to daily operations and maintenance, WSCS focuses on creating a healthy and conducive environment for both students and staff.

To oversee and guide these efforts, WSCS established a Facility Strategic Planning team. This team plays a crucial role in setting strategic yearly improvement goals based on the EPA Sensible Steps to Healthier School Environments. By aligning with national guidelines, the school ensures a comprehensive approach to environmental health, addressing various factors that contribute to a safe and healthy learning space. The following includes specific examples of the EPA Sensible Steps accomplished:

Indoor Air Quality/Ventilation: In 2020, WSCS partnered with Rite-Way Plumbing and Heating, Inc. to elevate the ventilation systems in every classroom, addressing not only airflow but also mold & moisture, and other airborne contaminants. Recognizing the significance of enhancing enclosed space ventilation, especially amidst emerging COVID-19 concerns, this initiative underscores the school's proactive approach to occupant well-being. Annual inspections of HVAC systems ensure optimal operation, complemented by regular audits and air filter replacements for improved air quality. The school's dedication to outdoor education further highlights the importance of providing fresh air for students, encapsulating a comprehensive commitment to a healthy and conducive learning environment.

Testing Drinking Water: WSCS has upgraded its drinking water facilities by installing four filtered water bottle refill stations and replacing outdated drinking fountains. This initiative not only promotes hydration but also guarantees that students have continuous access to clean and safe drinking water. Our school adheres to state and federal drinking water standards, as it is connected to the City of Grand Rapids water source. Annual testing ensures the quality of the drinking water, and backflow prevention measures are in place. Additionally, we prioritize the regular maintenance and sanitation of water fountains and faucet screens/aerators to uphold the highest standards of water hygiene.

Reduced and Eliminated Toxic Exposure: Our commitment to a healthier school is evident through lead-free and mercury-free results from 2016 testing. We prioritize safety with digital and non-toxic thermometers for students and staff. Asbestos management is a priority, outlined in a detailed Facility Asbestos Plan, stored in an accessible place for easy reference. This plan transparently discloses asbestos locations, primarily in old flooring tiles kept undisturbed. If removal is needed, proper steps will be followed with a specialized company. The accessible school management plan aids understanding of Asbestos-Containing Materials (ACM) locations. Building operations staff review it to minimize potential disturbance, adhering to strict guidelines prohibiting any physical disturbance or abrasion.

Clean Air Outside: Our school actively advocates for policies to eliminate unnecessary school bus idling, contributing to a significant reduction in air pollution. To enhance environmental sustainability, we have been replacing older vehicles with more efficient models. The establishment of anti-idling zones extends beyond school buses to include parents' vehicles. Strategic planning places passenger pick-up and drop-off areas away from air intake supplies and classroom windows. An impactful initiative to further minimize environmental impact involves transforming the traditional car pick-up line.

Pest Management: The school's approach to pest management follows an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan. This involves storing food in sealed containers and conducting regular site assessments by a pest management company to minimize the pest population. By employing preventative measures and environmentally responsible practices, WSCS ensures that the school environment remains free from harmful pests and pesticides.

Pillar III: Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

Describe how your early learning center, school, or district improved effective environmental and sustainability education throughout the curriculum. This section should describe hands-on, place-, project-, and problem-based, authentic learning across the curriculum, not limited to one subject, such as science courses. All STEM and civics work should be described as it relates to environmental and sustainability learning and should include descriptions of any environmental or sustainability literacy standards; assessment integration; and professional development. Co-curricular opportunities such as field trips, study abroad, clubs, and service-learning may also be included. In cases where the answer applies to the whole district, please indicate this, and describe what your school does above and beyond your district's efforts. **Each element description should be 300 - 600 words** and incorporate relevant metrics to demonstrate progress when possible.

Element IIIA: Interdisciplinary Learning

Provide examples of interdisciplinary learning opportunities at your early learning center, school, or district around the key relationships between dynamic environmental, energy, and human systems.

West Side Christian School (WSCS) has become a local leader in effective environmental and sustainability education, seamlessly integrating hands-on, place-based, project-based, and problem-based learning throughout its curriculum. In 2017, the school created a staff role for a Director of Outdoor Education. This staff role serves to collaborate with grade-level teachers staff, students, parents, and community members to develop integrated ecological principles and sustainability concepts into cross-curricular subjects, fostering a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of the natural world.

In a remarkable initiative, a third-grade class at WSCS initiated the addition of a Monarch Waystation to the school's campus in 2018. This project not only enhances the landscape but serves as an authentic learning opportunity for students across different grade levels. In the spring of 2021, seventh graders added another rain garden to the campus, creating a natural Michigan garden that serves as a native seed producer and a vital resource for school garden pollinators. This hands-on experience allows students to grasp the significance of native plants, particularly milkweeds, in supporting the life cycle of monarch butterflies. The second-grade students, for instance, learn about the need for host plants and energy sources for butterflies, connecting their understanding to global butterfly populations.

Kindergarten students actively engage in harvesting native seeds from the Monarch Waystations, providing them with a practical understanding of seed structure and function. They use these native

plants as a seed source, contributing to the dispersal of more native seeds around the campus. This cyclical learning approach demonstrates the school's commitment to sustainability education from an early age.

The West Side Christian School garden offers rich interdisciplinary learning in human systems. As the kindergartens explore plant seed production they engage in literacy connections to healthful eating choices, exposing students to a variety of accessible freshly grown produce to taste. “Have you ever tried a Cucamelon?” In the 4th-grade energy unit, students grasp the intricate link between the garden and human well-being, learning about energy transfer from the sun as they enjoy the produce. This holistic education extends to poster projects motivating healthful eating choices. The garden is a practical math application for 4th graders, integrating calculations for potato production and sales predictions. In middle school, the garden becomes a living lab for exploring body systems, linking disease prevention to healthful eating habits. This approach deepens understanding, connecting human systems to overall well-being, and creating a dynamic learning experience.

The fifth-grade students take on the responsibility of monitoring plant population changes over time, integrating data collection and graphing skills into their curriculum. This year, the students are especially concerned about the decline in the milkweed population and have taken the initiative by drafting letters to area conservation organizations, seeking input and engagement in addressing the issue. This authentic problem-solving approach empowers students to become advocates for environmental conservation.

WSCS emphasizes the importance of animal habitat projects across various grade levels, including Kindergarten, 3rd, 5th, and 6th. Through schoolyard habitat projects, students research, design, and implement plans to improve habitats for wildlife on the school campus and nearby forested land. As previously mentioned, in 2018, the third-grade class added a Monarch Waystation to the campus, contributing to the ongoing efforts to support monarch butterfly populations as a result of inspiration that came from the children’s book, *On Meadowview Street*, as well as their integrated Michigan history studies. The fifth graders now maintain data on plant populations that impact monarch butterflies and actively participate in habitat maintenance each spring. Because WSCS is a preschool-8th grade school, authentic and meaningful cross-grade level experiences, and projects are a benefit to so many different age groups.

Element IIIB: 21st Century STEM

> Demonstrate how your early learning center, school, or district uses the environment and sustainability to develop STEM content, knowledge, and thinking skills, to prepare graduates for the 21st-century technology-driven economy.

West Side Christian School (WSCS) is a model for integrating environment and sustainability into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, preparing students for the

demands of the 21st-century technology-driven economy. The school's innovative approach encompasses various grade levels and subjects, demonstrating a commitment to cultivating STEM content, knowledge, and critical thinking skills.

In this project, students are taking action to protect our watersheds. They investigated water samples to determine what was in their water and investigated ways to improve water quality. They researched local issues as they analyzed the water quality data collected. They're working to share what they've learned by creating an action plan that focuses on improving water quality and water pollution issues in our community. Working in collaboration with community partners, they're adding their student voices to our support of community water quality improvement efforts. Students worked with the native plant landscape architect (adding the A in STEAM) to design a master plan to increase native plants in places where non-native plants dominate our campus. The sixth-grade students researched the native plants and collaborated with Plaster Creek Stewards to order the plants from Native Edges (Wes Landon's) design.

In integrating technology into the study of the Monarch Waystation plant population, students in 5th grade engage with various digital tools to deepen their understanding and connect to the technology-driven economy. Using spreadsheets, students annually collect data on plant populations and graph their findings, fostering data analysis skills essential in a technology-driven world. Comparing current data to previous years, students conclude and create digital presentations to effectively communicate their findings, honing digital literacy and presentation skills vital in the modern workforce. Through this process, students not only learn the importance of conservation but also develop proficiency in digital communication tools commonly used in professional settings. As they identify a decline in the Milkweed population, students plan to leverage technology by emailing local conservation groups, demonstrating proactive engagement with real-world environmental issues through digital platforms. Moreover, students utilize digital documents to craft collaborative letters with teachers and land management staff, facilitating efficient communication and teamwork. By integrating technology into their study of plant populations, students at West Side Christian School not only deepen their understanding of ecological concepts but also cultivate essential skills for success in the technology-driven economy, such as data analysis, digital communication, and collaborative problem-solving.

In the fourth grade curriculum, WSCS integrates energy science to introduce students to diverse energy types and renewable sources, including wind, hydro, and solar power. The emphasis on hands-on activities allows students to explore scientific principles related to energy and apply engineering concepts in everyday scenarios. The culmination of this unit involves the creation of an engaging bulletin board showcasing alternative energy options and practical ways the community can conserve energy. This not only reinforces STEM concepts but also encourages students to think critically about sustainable practices in their community.

Element IIIC: Civic Engagement in Sustainability Issues

Discuss how your early learning center, school, or district develops civic engagement knowledge and skills and students' application of such knowledge and skills to address sustainability issues in their community.

For six years West Side Christian School has been working in collaboration with the Groundswell Stewardship Initiative to engage in ongoing professional development to provide quality place-based education student-led projects. Groundswell has equipped WSCS to implement place-based stewardship education (PBSE) that uses the local community and environment as the basis for teaching and learning—a feature that may make it especially engaging for learners. The following elements of a complete PBSE effort are integrated into our interdisciplinary sixth-grade studies.

Students visit a nearby park and a nature center to begin identifying and understanding options for learning and stewardship actions that would result in a positive environmental impact. This experience raises students' awareness of environmental issues in their community. Working in collaboration with local community partners, students work with a list of local stewardship needs and choose from the items identified. Students play an important role in making a selection, and teachers can help them choose wisely using tools such as Earth Force's criteria-based decision-making process. Intentional planning happens to make the connection to content standards. Community partners offer knowledge and expertise, historical and current data sets for students to analyze, direction on the type of action project best suited to your timeline and students, access to a field site, equipment, opportunities to publicize your work, a home for the data you collect, and opportunities for students to learn about careers related to natural resources. Before they can take action on a local environmental issue, students build their knowledge and understanding of the specific situation and the solutions that could help. Lastly, students implement their project share results, and celebrate. Thanks to our collaboration with Groundswell, students gather and present at a venue to communicate about what they've learned and what they've done to enhance the community. From 2018 to 2022, the students have completed five student-led environmental stewardship projects.

Additional Information

Please provide any ***additional*** information (no more than 350 words) regarding the efforts of your early learning center, school, or district that you think make your application stand out as a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School.

As an urban city, located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, there are a lot of great options for great education. West Side Christian School prides itself on investing in our students and the environment. We encourage our young people to be good stewards of the world around them and the role they play as young citizens to care for and help at a local level. In this year, 2024, we hope to erect a 1200-square-foot greenhouse to provide more learning opportunities for our community and students.

Assurances

By submitting this application, we assure that:

- All information submitted is true to the best of our knowledge.
- If nominated, we will submit 5-10 high resolution photographs with descriptions including who, what, when, and where. Photos should be action shots, not posed. By sending these photos, we understand that we will be giving the U.S. Department of Education permission to use them in their newsletter and social media.

Name of Principal/Director: Ms. An Kurosu
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School/Center Name: West Side Christian School
(As it should appear on an award)

Official School Name Mailing Address: 955 Westend NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

County: Kent
State School Code Number *: 410105545

Telephone: 616 453-3925 Fax: 616 453-4150

Web site/URL: wscsgr.org E-mail: school@wschristian.org

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space*

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

Principal/Director: An Kurosu Date: 01/08/2023
Type Full Name for Digital Approval

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

District Name:

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

Superintendent/Director: An Kurosu Date: 01/08/2023
Type Full Name for Digital Approval

Send completed applications by 5:00pm EST on January 9, 2024 to: *MDE-ED-GRS@michigan.gov*