

Westside Community Schools



ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24

Message from Dr. Lucas

Superintendent of Westside Community Schools



Thank you for your continued support and for reviewing our Annual Report. We have much to celebrate and be proud of as we continue to work hard to improve through our strategic plan. Our theme for this 2023-24 school year is **FULL STEAM AHEAD** and we are pushing forward with many exciting facility projects, curriculum enhancements, and academic initiatives.

As you look through this year's Annual Report, we hope you take pride in what we are doing, knowing that we are always a "work in progress."

You will see that we get to serve a diverse student body and that we take a lot of pride in creating and maintaining a culture of "belonging for all." You will see that our students are performing very well academically, and with some additions and adjustments currently being implemented, those results will only get better. You will see that our Board of Education has reduced the tax levy for the fifth year in a row, bringing in fewer property tax dollars than the previous year, as we continue to enhance fiscal efficiencies. But, most importantly, you will see that we have wonderful students and staff that work hard and perform at a high level in the classroom, throughout the community, and in many extracurricular endeavors.

Our upcoming facility projects through Phase II of our bond issue initiative will help us address many needs throughout the district. We continue to focus on safety, energy efficiency, and an inviting learning/working environment in all buildings. Look for more information this summer as we begin to break ground at Hillside and Westgate and work on improvements at WMS and WHS. It's an exciting time to be part of Westside Community Schools.

Thank you for your support and for sharing your children with us. The "community" of Westside is extremely special and we are proud to serve you - our community. There's no better place to be than Westside!

Mike Lucas

Board of Education

Westside Board of Education meetings are held primarily twice a month on Monday evenings unless otherwise posted. Meetings begin at 6:00 p.m. at the ABC Administration Building at 909 S. 76th Street. Meeting dates, agendas and minutes can be found at www.westside66.org.

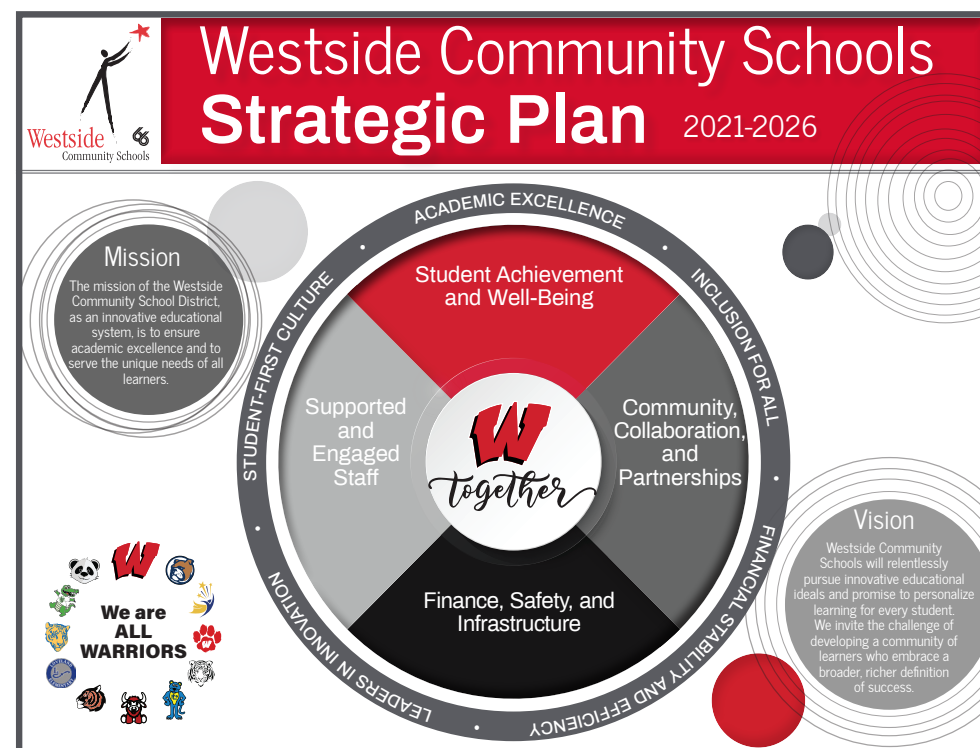


Back row: (left to right): Mike Lucas, Superintendent; Kris Karnes, Treasurer-Elect; Adam Yale, Treasurer; Dana Blakely, Vice President
Front row (left to right): Meagan Van Gelder, Secretary; Sarah Rider, Director; Beth Morrisette, President

Strategic Plan

The Westside Community Schools Strategic Plan is a detailed outlook and playbook that will take our district through 2026. This plan came to be after 15-months of community-wide surveys, research and focus groups including parents, teachers, administrators, community members, business owners and more. What do we want Westside to look like over the next several years and how are we actively working to reach those goals?

Visit www.westside66.org to view our Strategic Plan Dashboard for an updated progress report. You can also scan the QR code to learn more!



Our Mission and Vision

The mission of the Westside Community School District, as an innovative educational system, is to ensure academic excellence and to serve the unique needs of all learners.

Westside Community Schools will relentlessly pursue innovative educational ideals and promise to personalize learning for every student. We invite the challenge of developing a community of learners who embrace a broader, richer definition of success.

#WeAreWestside



Get to Know our Students and Staff!

6,319 Pre-K - 12 students <i>*as of February 2024</i>	20 Students, on average, in each K-6 classroom	34.4% of our students live outside the district and opt-in
15.5% of students receive special services (K-12)	10% of the class of 2023 scored a 30 or better on the ACT	478 Learners in Westside Early Childhood Program
407 Summer School students	77% of Westside teachers have earned a Master's degree or higher <i>NE state average is 55%</i>	40 Number of languages spoken (230 English language learners)
36.4% of our students qualify for free/reduced meals	1,162 Staff members	15 New teachers were former Educational Assistants



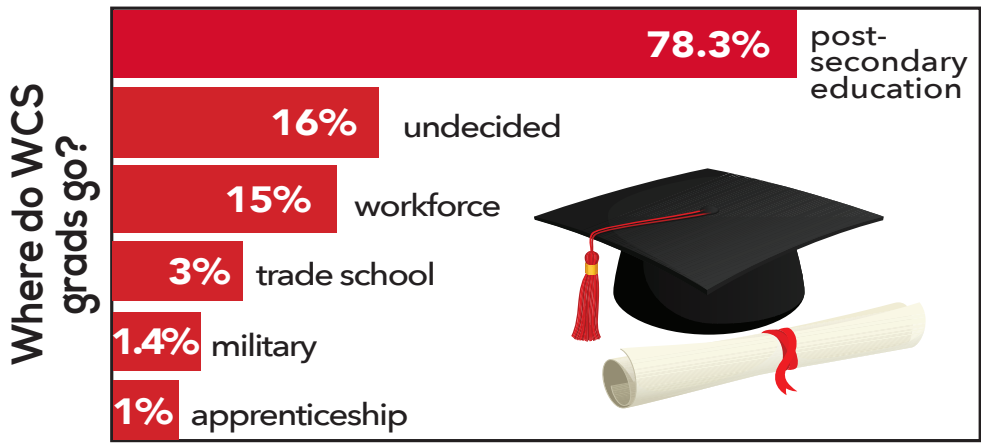
2023 Graduates

Graduates Exceed Expectations

461 WCS seniors graduated in 2023

\$14,294,403 in scholarship money was awarded to 179 graduates receiving a collective 572 scholarships.

2 seniors were named National Merit Finalists



Academic Programs Provide Foundation for Success

- 19** Students participating in Academy Programs (programs that give high school students hands-on education and experience in specific careers).
- 26** Unique Advanced Placement (AP) Classes are offered.
- 937** AP courses taken
- 635** Students enrolled in capstone programs

Dr. Mark Weichel

Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning



As stakeholders in our outstanding educational community, I wanted to highlight our commitment to student learning within Westside Community Schools.

The fundamental goal of maximizing student learning lies at the heart of our district. We take a great deal of pride in how we approach our responsibility for student performance. Our continuous efforts involve utilizing critical data from assessment measures such as FastBridge, MAP, and classroom assessments to analyze and adapt our teaching practices. This ongoing process allows us to make timely adjustments, ensuring that our students consistently achieve and grow academically.

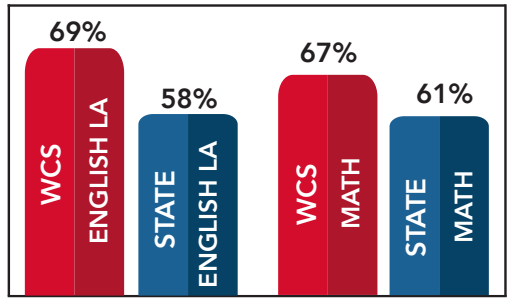
A key to our success is the collaborative partnership between district administration, building leaders, and our certified teachers. Together, we consistently engage in regular discussions and joint efforts aimed at continuous improvement.

Also, within our district, teachers participate in weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. These serve as an opportunity for dedicated teams to come together to define learning objectives, establish effective assessment methods, address any learning gaps, and extend learning opportunities for those who require additional support. These meetings are crucial in ensuring that our educational practices meet the diverse needs of every student.

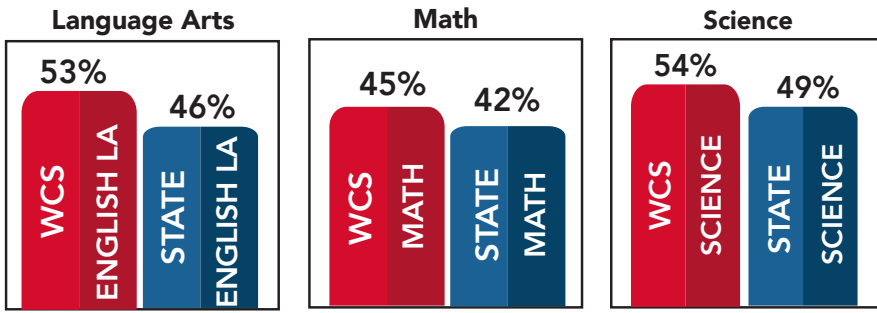
While standardized tests and accountability measures such as the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS) offer valuable insights into student performance, our commitment to understanding student achievement goes beyond these assessments. We embrace a broader approach, utilizing many tools and resources to gain a full understanding of student progress.

Your continued support and involvement in our student learning efforts are greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions or seek further insights, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

2023 NSCAS Scores (% proficient)



2023 NSCAS ACT Scores (% proficient)



NSCAS scoring combines ACT English and ACT reading scores for Language Arts scores.

NWEA MAP Growth Testing Drives Instruction

The Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments are given to WCS students in grades 3-8 multiple times per year. MAP data helps determine what students know and what they are ready to learn next, allowing teachers to modify their instruction on an individual classroom basis. MAP is a computer adaptive test where questions are adjusted based on the individual's response. If students continue to answer correctly, the questions will get harder. If answers are incorrect, the questions will get easier. MAP data provides WCS with an accurate picture of how students are performing and if they are improving over time at an appropriate level.

Winter '23-24

	Reading	Math
3rd Grade	77th percentile	66th percentile
4th Grade	74th percentile	67th percentile
5th Grade	71st percentile	62nd percentile
6th Grade	79th percentile	75th percentile
7th Grade	78th percentile	63rd percentile
8th Grade	66th percentile	64th percentile

A percentile is a national comparison score. For example, if WCS 3rd graders are at the 83rd percentile, it means that WCS 3rd graders scored as well as or higher than 83% of other 3rd grade students across the nation taking the same test.

2023 Lighthouse Literacy Award: Westgate Elementary



Proficiency: Greatest improvement in proficiency in the district (+72)

- 97% of Kindergarten students at/above benchmark & increased 35 percentage points from fall
 - Zero students at High Risk in Kindergarten (was 12% in fall)
- Moved 2 grade levels into expected range

Maintenance of Low Risk from fall to winter:

- 95% of K-1 Early Reading Composite
- 97% of 2-6 CBMreading

Growth:

- FAST: median of +6 percentage points/grade; 65% of students made typical/aggressive growth
- MAP: 104% met projected growth and 51% met/exceeded RIT goal

2023 Mirador Math Award: Prairie Lane Elementary



Proficiency: Highest proficiency in district

- ALL grades above 80% at/above benchmark (3 grades above 90%)
- 5/7 grade levels above expectations for grade
- Highest performance in district for both 4th and 6th grades
- Greatest increase in percent proficient (+81); 4 grades with double-digit increase percentages

Maintenance of Low Risk from fall to winter:

- 96% of K-1 Early Math Composite
- 96% of 2-6 CBMAutomaticity
- 100% of 2nd grade aMath (aMath is a computer-adaptive test)

Growth:

- FAST: median of +15 percentage points/grade; 78% of students made typical/aggressive growth
- MAP: 127% met projected growth and 63% met/exceeded RIT goal

Dr. Andrea Haynes

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and District Operations



As we delve into the achievements and milestones of the past year, I am thrilled to share the impactful contributions and progress made by our HR and Operations teams within Westside.

Within our **Human Resources** Department, our strategy for attracting, retaining, and nurturing top talent has transformed in response to the challenges of the labor market and will persist in evolving. During the past year we:

- implemented novel recruitment approaches, including an innovative veterans recruitment program.
- expanded our recruitment activities to include additional colleges and universities.
- introduced the implementation of new employee support programs.

Under the guidance of our District Officer of **Business and Finance**, our team remains dedicated to ensuring a balanced fiscal approach to academic programs, facilities, technology infrastructure, human capital, student programs/services, and operations.

- WCS continued prudent financial management resulting in optimal resource allocation, with a focus on prioritizing classroom needs, personnel development, and essential operational expenses.
- Our commitment to transparency and accountability was affirmed through successful external audits, with no material findings and swift implementation of recommended improvements.

Our **Nutrition Services** and **Building Services/Operations** teams steadfastly ensure our facilities maintain safety and cleanliness, while also guaranteeing our students receive nutritious meals each day.

- Looking ahead, our Nutrition Services team is poised to introduce innovative nutrition initiatives.
- Continued proactive maintenance measures and bond work by our Building Services staff has resulted in a well-maintained and safe environment for students and staff.

Our **Student Services** team is dedicated to delivering vital enrollment, student records, and safety services to the entire community, with a steadfast commitment to maintaining the highest level of accuracy.

- This past year, the team embarked on new collaborative efforts with community organizations and stakeholders resulting in successful initiatives that support the holistic well-being of students, fostering a sense of community and support.

We are immensely proud of the collective efforts of all of our teams. With optimism and enthusiasm, we look forward to the continued growth and achievement that will undoubtedly mark the next chapter in the success story of our school district.

CERTIFIED Staff Overview (2023-24)

Certified Staff members include teachers, administrators and instructional support providers who hold an educator's license or Nebraska teaching certificate.

- 548 certified teachers
- 127 bachelor's degrees
- 4 bachelor's plus degrees
- 322 master's degrees
- 83 master's plus degrees
- 12 specialist's degrees
- 11 doctoral degrees
- 33 certified administrators



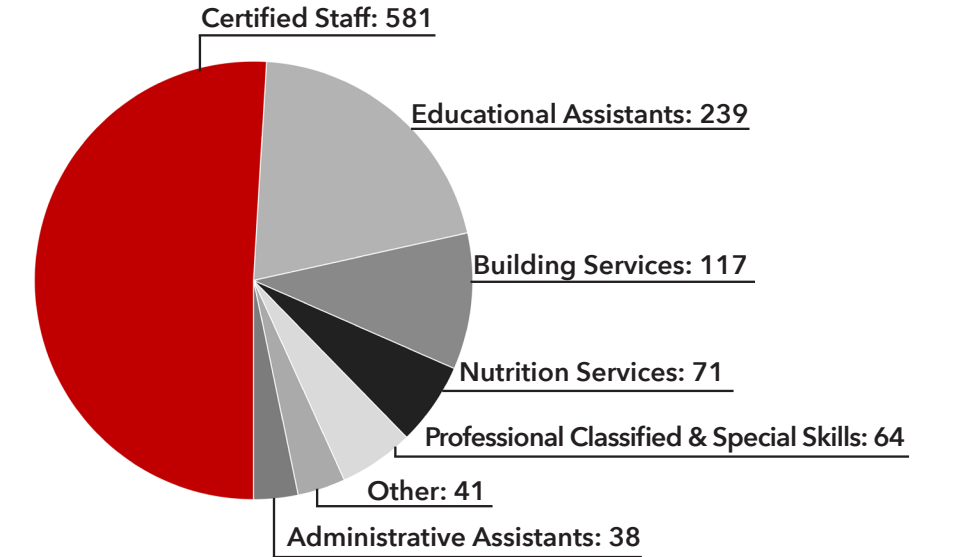
CLASSIFIED Staff Overview (2023-24)

Classified Staff members include Westside employees who are not required to hold an educator's license for their position, but offer important support services to our students and staff, vital for district operations.

- 529 classified staff members
- 50 classified professionals
- 38 administrative assistants
- 239 educational assistants
- 71 nutrition services employees
- 117 building services employees
- 14 special skills



WCS Staff Breakdown



Westside Community Schools employs a diverse roster of staff, more than 1,100 employees, to serve our District and to pursue innovation and excellence. We strive to recruit and hire top talent for all positions, from administrators and teachers to operations and nutrition services.

OUTSTANDING STAFF RECOGNIZED

Phillip and Terri Schragger Award Winners 2023

Each year, the Philip and Terri Schragger Foundation honors deserving educators leading the way in innovation in the classroom. In May, the Phillip and Terri Schragger Foundation presented the 2023 Schragger Distinguished Teaching Awards to two Westside Community Schools educators, **Nick Djernes** and **Erin Lunsford**.



Nick Djernes taught and inspired Westside students through music since 2009. He taught at Oakdale and Westgate Elementary schools, and Westside Middle School. Djernes is respected not only in the Westside Community Schools, but in vocal music education circles across the country through his unparalleled success with students and programs, the level of music education offered, and the degree of opportunities provided to students.

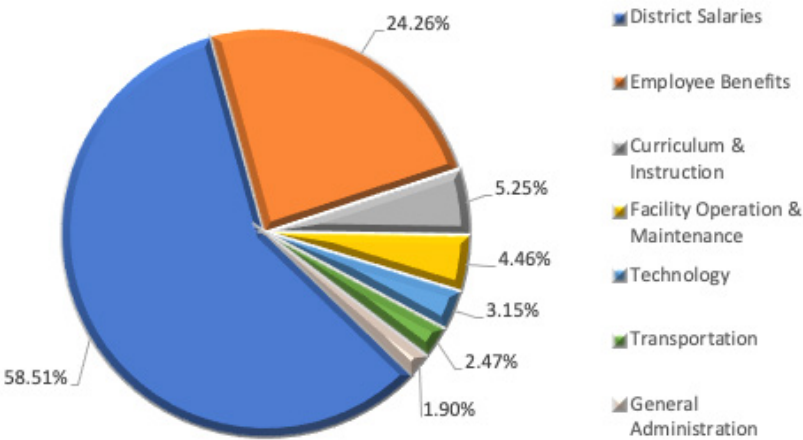


Erin Lunsford has demonstrated innovation, resourcefulness, connectivity, and creativity in many settings within the walls of Westside High School and throughout the District 66 community. With extensive training in pottery, photography, drawing, painting, and other forms of art, Lunsford provides her students with an incredible voice and choice in self-expression while helping them refine their talents through expertise in a wide range of specialties.

Where Does the Money Go?

Thanks to the dedicated work of our Board of Education, we are excited to have **reduced our tax levy rate for the fifth year in a row.**

FY24 Budgeted Expenditures

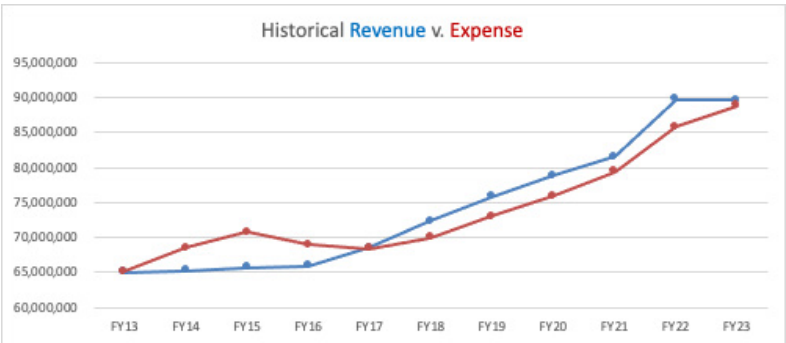


FY24 Budget: \$92,327,229

For FY23, approximately 32% of all Westside students were enrolled in the district through the option enrollment program. These students who chose to not enroll in their resident district in favor of coming to Westside added \$21,667,844 in state aid revenue to our district, allowing us to maintain 10 neighborhood elementary schools and to provide robust course offerings at Westside High School.

Revenue vs. Expenses

Since 2012/13, Westside has only had an average annual spending increase of 3.63%



- For FY24, we reduced our General Fund Levy by 20.5 cents, the **fifth year in a row it has decreased**
- For FY24, the total levy (General Fund/Bond/Bldg) decreased by 13.8 cents
- Based on a home valued at \$250,000, the annual tax payment would be \$2,866.91, a decrease of \$346.16 from the prior year



Opportunities at a Glance

460	4	280
6th grade students spent two days at Outdoor Education	Westside Community Walks	Battle of the Books participants
21	7	41
Students attend career academy programming with UNMC, MCC, or the Henry Doorly Zoo Academy	WHS welding students successfully passed the "Bend" test	WHS students are registered with Avenue Scholars
693	442	61
Students earned credits with Metro Community College	Students earned credits with the University of Nebraska Omaha	Students earned credits with Nebraska Wesleyan University
70	215	11.9%
College rep visits to Westside High School	Students participating in Unified Athletics	of students are identified as High Ability Learners in grades K-8

Phase II Bond Update

At the Board of Education Meeting on February 21, 2023, board members voted unanimously to authorize Westside Community Schools to pursue Phase II of the Facilities Master Plan, initially established in 2013. Extensive research and discussion involving the Westside Facilities Task Force identified top needs as part of this phase, with an estimated cost of \$121 million dollars. The bond for Phase II was approved by District 66 resident voters on May 9, 2023 via a mail-in election. This multi-year project will touch 10 District buildings.

Hillside Elementary



- Originally built in 1954
- New 3 section school
- New building will be constructed on site while current building remains in operation
- Expands from 56,000 square ft to 65,000 square ft



Westgate Elementary



- Originally built in 1956; rebuilt hastily in summer 1975 after tornado
- New 2 section school
- New building will be constructed on site while current building remains in operation
- Expands from 50,000 square ft to 56,000 square ft



ABC Administration Building



- Improve interior accessibility to be ADA compliant
- Critical HVAC improvements



Westside Middle School



- Expand and update eating area
- Infrastructure needs



Westside High School



- Expand and update eating area and programming areas
- Infrastructure needs to include major mechanical and plumbing improvements



** WHS also has the Life Complex project, privately funded by the Westside Foundation

Who We Are... BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE



Paddock Road Elementary



Rockbrook Elementary



Westbrook Elementary



Underwood Hills Early Learning Center



Loveland Elementary



Phase II Goals:

- 1.) UPDATE FACILITIES TO CURRENT STANDARDS
- 2.) PLAN AND PREPARE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS
- 3.) IMPROVE SAFETY AND SECURITY



- Create master plan for a future new school on the existing site
- Design and construction of a new gym providing a code compliant storm shelter
- New gym location to be utilized for future new school
- Expanded Early Childhood



- Create master plan for a future new school on the existing site
- Design and construction of a new gym providing a code compliant storm shelter
- New gym location to be utilized for future new school
- Expanded Early Childhood



- Extensive envelope updates
- HVAC improvements



- Infrastructure improvements



- Originally built in 1932
- New 2 section school
- Swing School would be utilized during construction
- Expands from 34,000 square ft to 55,000 square ft and moves further south off Pacific Street



Be in the Know & Stay Connected

To receive email updates about Westside Community Schools, please email: communications@westside66.net

Check Us Out:



www.westside66.org



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This Annual Report is provided as a quick snapshot of 2023. It has been produced by the WCS Communications Department. For more detailed information, please visit the district website at www.westside66.org or contact the Central Office at 402-390-2100.

Westside Community Schools does not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, religion, disability, age, marital/parental/pregnancy status, genetic information, military or veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under law in its educational programs and activities or in admission or access to, or treatment in, hiring and employment. Retaliation for reporting discrimination or harassment or participating in an investigation is also prohibited. For questions/concerns including, but not limited to, reporting discrimination, harassment or retaliation on the basis of any protected class listed above, email titleixcoordinator@westside66.net. For questions/concerns about sex discrimination or sexual harassment under Title IX, visit the District's Title IX Compliance page at www.westside66.org.

Westside Community Schools

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