



# DISTRICT News

WEST SHORE SCHOOL DISTRICT

October 2013

## Updating Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Curriculum may be generally defined as what we teach or the courses of study offered. Each area of the District's curriculum progresses through a cycle of curriculum research/review/revision, textbook review and adoption, and implementation. Through mini-curriculum committees, consisting of teachers and administrators, the District's curriculum is reviewed periodically and revised accordingly. Recent curricular revisions incorporate changes related to the high school schedule and recently approved revisions to state standards. In addition to these changes, new textbooks were adopted and purchased for the high school science courses this year. The District's curriculum is available on our [website](#) for public review.

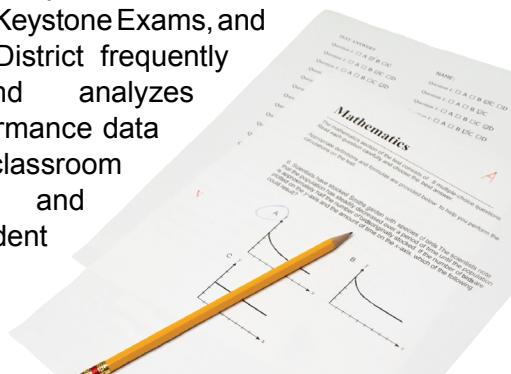
Under the area of instruction, the District has been focused on Pennsylvania's Educator Effectiveness Project and the release of the new Classroom Teacher Rating Form. Act 82 of 2012 incorporates multiple measures of teacher effectiveness, which include observation/evidence, building level data, teacher specific data, and elective data. The observation/evidence portion of a teacher's rating is based on the four domains identified in Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*, i.e., Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. The building level data will be derived from the School Performance Profile (further information below). The other measures include overall student achievement, student academic growth, and other factors associated with student/school performance.

Assessment plays an important role to assist us in determining the effectiveness of both our curriculum and instruction. Last school year, the

District began using a computerized adaptive assessment called Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). MAP testing was conducted three times throughout the year, in first through eighth grades, to determine areas of strengths and weaknesses in math and reading.

Since the first testing window in October 2012 and continuing with the most recent attempt this fall, issues with interrupted testing sessions and other technological difficulties affected the testing environment for students. Despite efforts by Northwest Evaluation Association, which developed MAP, and our own technology department, we were not able to resolve these issues to ensure a stable testing environment for all students. As a result, the District will no longer use MAP testing. However, the District will continue to evaluate its assessment options to make certain detailed information is available about student performance and progress.

In the classroom, assessment is used to evaluate student progress and to inform instruction. At the District level, assessment is used to evaluate how well our programs and curriculum are meeting student needs and academic standards. The District uses a combination of assessments to accomplish these goals, including benchmark assessments, the Developmental Reading Assessment, Classroom Diagnostic Tools, the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, Keystone Exams, and others. The District frequently reviews and analyzes student performance data to improve classroom instruction and overall student achievement.





## Expansion of Academic Workshop & Academic Advisory in the Middle School Schedule

In recent years, our middle schools utilized a standard “junior high school” scheduling model where students in grades six through eight were assigned to an 8-period day, having 43-minute class periods. This conventional schedule was believed to hinder the creativity and collaboration of middle school teachers. As a result, a new schedule was implemented two years ago.

With the schedule modifications, our middle school students experience a daily schedule that permits their core teachers to collaborate and exchange the time provided for each curricular area. The schedule is less restrictive and provides for 50-minute lessons in the core and encore subject areas for all grades six through eight.

With the implementation of the schedule in 2011, modifications to the courses included Academic Workshop for selected eighth grade students and Academic Advisory for all seventh and eighth grade students. These additions or modifications have had a clear focus on student achievement and success. The District is very excited about the opportunities these additions provided for both students and teachers. This year, these two course offerings have been expanded to include grades six, seven, and eight. The course descriptions for Academic Workshop and Academic Advisory are included below:

### **Academic Workshop**

Students deemed to be non-proficient based upon a score of Basic or Below Basic in at least one area of the PSSA may be scheduled for Academic Workshop. This class meets three times per cycle and utilizes a specialized curriculum tailored to each child’s specific area of need. For example, students who were not proficient in reading or math receive direct instruction in that area only. Students who are not proficient in both reading and math receive instruction in both areas.

### **Academic Advisory**

All students in grades six, seven, and eight are scheduled for this 32-minute period at the end of each school day. The purpose of this advisory time is to teach specific math, writing, and reading skills based on the results of state and local testing. Students are placed into groups based on the specific skill area(s) in which there are strengths and/or deficits. For students who scored Proficient/Advanced, the District looks at any areas needing improvement and aims to strengthen them while working to provide enrichment in the noted areas of strength. Again, these groups will be flexible and will change throughout the year depending on the skills being taught and the performance level of the student on PSSAs, CDTs, District writing prompts, and other local assessments. It is important to note that Academic Advisory is not a study hall and is not a time for students to complete their homework at school.

Middle school teachers and administrators remain committed to enhancing the collaboration among teachers and utilizing best practices to deliver the curriculum in meeting the needs of our students.

For further information regarding middle school scheduling, please contact Dr. Tammi Jones, Director of Secondary Education.

## Revising Board Policies

### **Board Policy Committee Meetings**

The 2013-2014 schedule of Board Policy Committee meetings was adopted at the same time the Board established the 2013-2014 schedule of Board meetings and public study sessions. They can be found on the website on the Board Policies subpage.

Board Policy Committee meetings are open for public attendance and therefore need to be advertised in advance. Because of the advertisement requirement, more meetings were scheduled than the Committee actually needs. This permits the Committee to cancel unneeded meetings, rather than paying for separate advertisements. When meetings are canceled, the cancellation is placed on the District website and posted on lobby doors at the Administrative Center for Education.

### **Recently Revised Policies**

The community has multiple opportunities to review and comment on proposed Board Policy changes during the time it takes for policies to move from the Board Policy Committee to the full Board for approval. During the most recent Board meetings, several policy revisions have been approved.

At the September 19 Board meeting, three policies were updated.

**Policy 112: School Counseling** - The revisions in this policy, which resulted in an almost total rewriting of the policy, are based on the School Counseling Standards as developed by the American School Counselor Association. They describe the opportunities to receiving assistance by the school counselors.

**Policy 204: Attendance** - While this policy explains attendance regulations and expectations for all students, the recent changes address compulsory education, confirming parents' responsibilities to ensure continued attendance for kindergarten students who have enrolled in

school. The policy revisions also confirm the District's compliance with The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act for homeless students.

**Policy 913: Relations with Special Interest Groups** - The changes within this policy focus predominantly on the requirements nonprofit profit organizations must comply with in order to distribute fliers to our students. More detailed information about flier distribution is found on the District's Community Bulletin Board.

At the August 15 Board meeting, four policies were updated.

**Policy 103: Nondiscrimination in School and Classroom Practices** - During the 2012-2013 school year, the District updated its Unlawful Harassment policies for students and staff. The changes within Board Policy 103 align with the Unlawful Harassment policy revisions to strengthen the reporting and investigation protocols used while maintaining a school environment free from discrimination regardless of a student's race, age, color, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry, marital status, pregnancy, national origin, or disability.

**Policy 206: Assignment Within District** - This policy describes the attendance boundaries for all schools in the District. Changes became necessary with the closing of Lemoyne Middle School. Middle school attendance boundaries were revised based on the work of the Demographics Committee. Additional changes reflect clarification to the description of requirements for seniors requesting an attendance exception after their parents have moved from the District.

**Policy 218.1: Weapons & Policy 218.4: Terroristic Threats** - These student policies provide rules prohibiting students from bringing weapons to school and from threatening others. Both policies were updated to ensure the District reports student weapons and threat violations in compliance with state law.

## The Bully Project

As an extension of the Student Assistance Program, the District's three middle schools will be joining together for a showing of *Bully*. This viewing of the documentary will be open to both our parents and students on November 5th at 6 p.m. in the Crossroads Middle School auditorium. *Bully* is a PG-13 video documentary on peer-to-peer bullying in schools across America, and it does an excellent job in presenting the consequences of bullying. Visit [www.thebullyproject.com](http://www.thebullyproject.com) to view the movie trailer and learn more about The Bully Project.

The District recognizes the importance of maintaining an educational environment free from bullying. Students who are bullied, intimidated or fearful of other students may not be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered by the School District.

Bullying means unwelcome verbal, written, or physical conduct directed at a student by another student over time, that has the objective and subjective effect of:

- Physically, emotionally, or mentally harming or intimidating a student.
- Damaging, extorting, or taking a student's personal property by physical force, threat of force, threat of an intimidating nature, or by other action designed or which has the effect of intimidating a student into relinquishing property.
- Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical, emotional, or mental harm.
- Placing a student in reasonable fear of damage to or loss of personal property.
- Creating an intimidating or hostile environment of such pervasiveness and severity that it materially and adversely alters a student's educational environment.

## Healthy School Lunches

This year, the District's Food Services department is partnering with Whitsons Culinary Group to provide healthy meal options for students. Whitsons is committed to making a difference with each meal they serve and aims to provide great tasting, nutritious meals, made from fresh ingredients that meet the *Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act* guidelines.

The District's secondary school cafeterias have adopted a number of new concept stations this year. *Miss Ruby's Grill* features hot sandwiches with a vegetable to encourage consumption of a reimbursable meal. The *Great American Deli* contains a variety of fresh bread products, cheeses, Boars Head cold cuts and a toppings bar, allowing students to mix and match their sandwiches.

At the elementary level, menus are designed to be kid-friendly and feature safari characters who teach children how to select healthy choices for a well-balanced diet. During the course of the year, there will be special events inviting students to try some new foods and learn more about good nutrition habits.

The progressive implementations of the *Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act* requirements continue to pose challenges. However, the District and Whitsons are committed to providing a wide and delicious variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat milks daily to encourage students to consume these nutritious items and promote the purchase of a reimbursable breakfast or lunch.

To learn more about Whitsons School Nutrition, including nutrition and allergy information, visit the [District's Food Services page](#). If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Food Services Department at 938-9577.





## West Shore School District

### Mission Statement

The West Shore School District is committed to providing this generation with a quality education serving as a foundation for responsible and successful citizenship.

### Board of School Directors

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Superintendent  
Todd B. Stoltz, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent

The West Shore School District will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, marital status, or disability in accordance with state and federal laws governing educational and vocational programs and in its recruitment and employment practices. Inquiries concerning the application of Title VII, Title IX, Section 504, the ADA, and the implementing regulations may be referred to the Director of Human Resources, 507 Fishing Creek Road, P.O. Box 803, New Cumberland, PA 17070-0803, telephone (717) 938-9577. Revised 12-2012



## Share Your THOUGHTS

If you have a concern, question, suggestion, or solution, please share it with me.

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## Sharing Information about PA School Performance Profile from the Department of Education

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) recently released the [Pennsylvania School Performance Profile](#). This public site provides an academic performance score for public schools in the state. This performance score is designed with several purposes in mind:

- to inform the public of school performance
- to provide a building level score for educators as part of their evaluation system
- to allow the public to compare schools across the state
- to give schools a methodology to analyze their strengths and needs

While public schools across the state have previously received designations under *No Child Left Behind* (e.g., Made Adequate Yearly Progress, Making Progress, Warning, School Improvement, Corrective Action), schools will now receive an academic performance score based upon many data points. Test scores, progress in closing achievement gaps, and degree of student growth over time are factored into the scoring. Other identifiers of high achieving schools are also considered: graduation, promotion, and attendance rates, as well as evidence of offering rigorous courses factor into the calculation. Schools may also earn extra points beyond the 100-point scoring system for those students who have earned advanced scores on the state, industry, and Advanced Placement Exams.

West Shore is proud of its students' academic and extracurricular successes. Most of the information provided in the new School Performance Profiles was already available to parents. As PDE broadens the arena of how schools are assessed, this information is being shared in a new format.

Rather than looking at any single score or report, parents are encouraged to review all of the information provided about their children's schools. Individual school profiles and newsletters as well as the District's comprehensive plan provide information for parents who are interested in learning more about our schools. Building principals are reviewing the new School Performance Profiles and continue to work toward school improvement.

