



# DISTRICT *News*

WEST SHORE SCHOOL DISTRICT

April 2014

## 2014-2015 Budget Process

The District continues to work toward adopting a balanced 2014-2015 general fund budget, scheduled for final approval in June 2014. For 2014-2015, the District's adjusted Base Index is 2.1%. The Taxpayer Relief Act (Act 1) defines the Base Index and limits Pennsylvania school districts' abilities to determine final mill rates.

The Base Index is determined by the state and adjusted on an annual basis. This rate is determined by analyzing both the average wage in Pennsylvania and the Federal cost index before making adjustments based on the market value and personnel incomes within individual school districts. More details about the Taxpayer Relief Act may be found on the Department of Education's website.

In compliance with Act 1, the District must adopt a resolution 110 days prior to the start of the July

1 fiscal year committing to keep real estate tax revenue increases within the Base Index or it must adopt a preliminary budget at least 90 days before July 1. Based on budgetary projections for revenue and expenditures, the District adopted the required resolution limiting tax increases to the 2.1% inflation index on December 19, 2013.

During Public Board Study Sessions in March, administration provided the Board of School Directors with introductions to the planned general operating expenditure and revenue budgets for 2014-2015. The presentations are posted in the Business Office section of the [District's website](#) for informational purposes. The District continues working through the state's regulated budget development process to develop a balanced budget for the 2014-2015 school year. Final adoption of the general operating budget will not occur until June.

## Updated School Calendar Maintains Graduation Dates

The number of weather related school cancellations required the District to consider making changes to the 2013-2014 school calendar. The Board discussed options during a public study session on March 13. Then, on March 20, the Board of School Directors approved a revised 2013-2014 school calendar. The revised calendar complies with Pennsylvania's requirements and maintains the graduation dates as currently listed: Thursday, June 5 for Cedar Cliff High School and Friday, June 6 for Red Land High School.

Historically, the District includes three Act 80 Days in the school calendar. With this change, the District now has seven Act 80 Days. This was done by converting existing staff development and/or conference days into Act 80 Days. In addition to converting four days into Act 80 Days, the District also made June 6 a full day school for students, rather than an early dismissal day and kept April 17 and April 21 as designated make-up days for students and staff.

The revised school calendar with school cancellations and make-up days can be found on the [District's website](#).



## Pennsylvania Competency Assessment Program

Pennsylvania initiated a comprehensive graduation competency assessment program that includes the Keystone Exams. These exams are just one component of Pennsylvania's system of high school graduation requirements. Keystone Exams are designed to help school districts guide students toward meeting state standards—standards aligned with expectations for success in college and the workplace. In order to receive a diploma,

students are also required to meet the District's credit and attendance requirements. For the graduating classes of 2017 and beyond, students are to demonstrate successful completion of secondary-level course work in Algebra I, Biology, and Literature.

Based upon Chapter 4 of the Pennsylvania School Code, each Keystone Exam is designed in modules reflecting distinct, related academic content common to the traditional progression of course work. If a student is unable to meet the proficiency requirements after two attempts on a Keystone Exam, the student may supplement a Keystone Exam score with satisfactory completion of a project-based assessment (PBA). A student may qualify to participate in one or more PBAs if the student meets the following conditions:

- The student has taken the course.
- The student was unsuccessful in achieving a score of Proficient on the Keystone Exam after at least two attempts.
- The student has met the District's attendance requirements for the course.
- The student has participated in a satisfactory manner in supplemental instructional services.

Pennsylvania's State Board of Education approved a set of criteria defining the four performance levels for the Keystone Exams. The Pennsylvania Department of Education used these criteria to develop Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) to attach meaning to the students' reported test scores. PLDs associate precise quantitative ranges of scaled scores with verbal, qualitative descriptions of student status. While much less precise, the qualitative description of the levels is one way for parents and teachers to interpret the student scores. These descriptions are also useful in assessing the status of the school.

### Keystone Exam Performance Level Descriptors

- **Below Basic:** Inadequate academic performance indicating little understanding and minimal display of the skills included in the Keystone Exams Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content. There is a major need for additional instructional opportunities.
- **Basic:** Marginal academic performance indicating work approaching, but not yet reaching, satisfactory performance. Performance indicates a partial understanding and limited display of the skills included in the Keystone Exams Assessment Anchors and

Eligible Content. The student may need additional opportunities and/or increased student academic commitment to achieve the Proficient level.

- **Proficient:** Satisfactory academic performance indicating a solid understanding and adequate display of the skills included in the Keystone Exams Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content.
- **Advanced:** Superior academic performance indicating an in-depth understanding and exemplary display of the skills included in the Keystone Exams Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content.

*Information reported from Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2013 Keystone Exams Technical Report Provided by Data Recognition Corporation*

## Providing Supplemental Instructional Services

West Shore's Board of School Directors approved two courses, Keystone Workshop I and Keystone Workshop II, in each content area as part of the District's plan for supplemental instruction.

Keystone Workshop I is designed to provide remediation to any student who does not score at the proficient level or above. Non-proficient students must participate in remediation and retesting until proficiency is achieved.

Keystone Workshop II is designed to provide further focused instruction on areas in need of growth. Keystone Workshop II course will prepare students to retake the Keystone Exam and/or successfully complete the PBA.

## Homeowner Tax Relief

With the passage of the Tax Payer Relief Act (Act 1 of 2006), all approved homestead/farmstead properties are eligible for property tax relief from gaming revenue provided by the state. For the 2013-2014 school year, the District's gaming revenue totaled \$1,284,936. The total number of approved homestead/farmstead properties for Cumberland and York County is 16,007. On the real estate tax bill, this results in a \$80.74 reduction in the assessed value of each approved property. The reduction in assessed value for Cumberland County is \$8,589 and for York County it is \$6,449.

As details related to savings for 2014-2015 become available the District will provide updates on this cost savings for property owners. Participation in homestead/farmstead relief is not mandatory, nor is it automatic. However, generally most owner occupied homes and farms are eligible for the property tax relief.

Homeowners who are unsure if they qualify or if their home has been approved, should contact their county's assessment office.

## Pennsylvania Pension Crisis

The District continues to adapt to the challenges of Pennsylvania's pension crisis. Due to changes that were made to the retirement calculation formula through Pennsylvania's Act 9 of 2001 and economic changes that have occurred since then, the District is required to provide a significantly larger percentage to fund retirement contributions.

In 2010-2011, the District paid \$3,052,240 (5.64% of salaries). This figure increased to \$4,169,845 (8.65% of salaries) in 2011-2012, to \$6,105,008 (12.36% of salaries) in 2012-2013 and to a budget amount of 8,273,373 (16.93% of salaries) in 2013-2014. The 2014-2015 *Introduction to Expenditure Budget Presentation* includes \$10,089,730 for pensions (21.40% of salaries).

Without changes made by Pennsylvania, this number will continue to increase, so that in 2018-2019 districts will be required to budget over 30% of salaries toward retirement expenses.

## Updating District Policies

Community members are typically able to see and comment on proposed policy revisions one month before the Board takes formal action to approve any proposed changes. Since January 1, 2014, seven policy revisions have been approved and one new policy has been adopted.

In addition to posting all policies on the District's website, changes in policy are shared with staff members at faculty meetings, District publications, and/or updated employee handbooks. A summary of the policy revisions which have been approved since January have been included to help inform the community of these changes.

To view the District's full [Board Policy Manual](#), please check online, see the receptionist at the Administration Center, or visit any District school.

### Policy 118: Academic Contract

When the Capital Area School for the Arts (CASA) became a charter school, the District's process for paying a portion of the CASA tuition became outdated. Revisions to the policy updated this procedure.

### Policy 121: Field Trips

The changes within the policy address expectations for students on field trips. The policy revision also eliminated the District's sponsorship of foreign language study tours. Students and staff are still able to participate, but any trips of this sort will be done independently, rather than with financial and chaperoning obligations held by the District.

### Policy 122: Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

The specific changes addressed within the policy define extracurricular and co-curricular activities, expectations for student behavior, and ensure that home/charter school students are permitted to participate in extracurricular activities as required by Pennsylvania law.

### Policy 213: Grading of Student Progress

This policy was reviewed and updated in partial response to the changing of the high school schedule to a six period day. In addition to changes necessary because of the change in schedule, revisions updated language for students with medical conditions and clarify how grades are calculated for students moving into the District.

### Policy 214: Class Rank/Numeric GPA/ Academic GPA

Changes in this policy confirm the expectation that the students honored as valedictorians and salutatorians have been enrolled in the District for at least two full academic years.

### Policy 215: Promotion and Retention

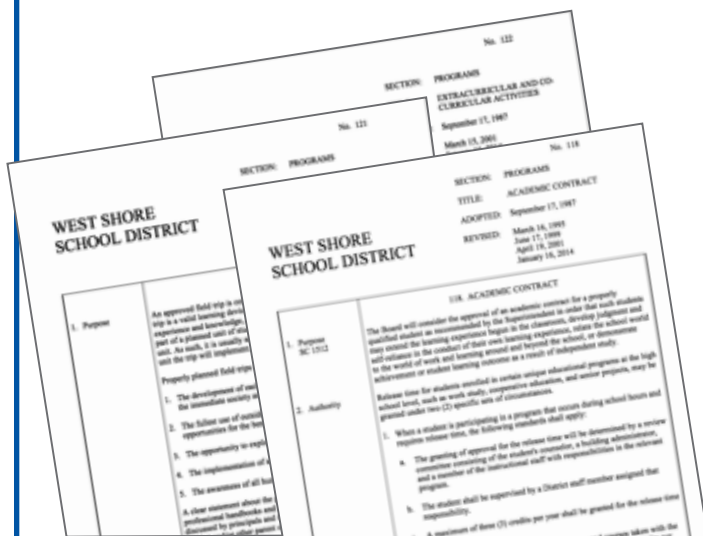
This policy was reviewed and updated in partial response to the change in high school schedule. Additional changes reflect updated language for student retention, the Child Study process, and students with Individual Education Plans.

### Policy 338.1: Compensated Professional Leaves

Since 2012, the District has been working to merge three employee policy sections into one. As part of this process, this policy was adopted to ensure the District's compliance with Pennsylvania School Code related to providing compensated professional leave (ex. sabbaticals).

### Policy 339: Uncompensated Leave

Changes in this policy seek to clarify language relating to handbooks where different classifications of staff are able to find information about uncompensated leave and the process used to request leave without pay.





## 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

Anthony J. Tezik, Ed.D., President

Ronald L. Candioto, Jr., Vice President

Judith A. Crocenzi

Denise N. Grover

Brian K. Guistwhite

Frank J. Kambic

Abigail A. Tierney

Christopher D. Weidenhammer

### Administration

Jemry L. Small, Ed.D.

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 12-2013



## Share Your THOUGHTS

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

Jemry L. Small, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools

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## Sharing Board Meeting Information with the Community

Multiple techniques are used to share information about Board study sessions and business “voting” meetings with the community on an ongoing basis. In addition to advertising Board dates in the newspapers and on the website for the entire year, one day before each Board study session/meeting the agendas become automatically available to the public through [agendaman](#).

On the day of each study session/meeting, the [District tweets](#) topics of potential community interest and adds a link to the District webpage inviting community members to attend or watch online. For some time, *Penn Live* has also been publishing a brief article on the day of each study session/meeting highlighting a topic or two the reporter chooses to focus on. Most Board study sessions preview items of particular interest in that month’s business agenda.

As follow-up to Board study sessions/meetings, the District publishes [On Board](#) electronically during the school year. *On Board* summarizes the study sessions for the community and features the formal business items in advance of the Board’s adoption of official meeting minutes. The approved minutes are maintained on the website, so community members are able to view the archive if they choose to do so.

The District publishes [District News](#) at least four times per year. The articles in this publication feature items of interest to the entire District, rather than focusing on individual buildings. Board actions, such as approval of the operating budget and changes to policy, are included in each issue. When appropriate, such as the approval of a new three year Comprehensive Strategic Plan, additional issues are produced if the preexisting publication schedule does not share information quickly enough.

In addition to these efforts, the Board Secretary is available for questions from the media after all Board study sessions/meetings. *Penn Live* attends most Board study sessions/meetings, follows-up with the Board Secretary at the meeting’s conclusion, and usually publishes the same night.