



# DISTRICT *News*

WEST SHORE SCHOOL DISTRICT

October 2012

## District Goals

Each fall, the District identifies specific goals for the school year. Last year, the 2011-2012 District goal focused on developing the new three year Comprehensive Strategic Plan (CSP). The work of the planning committee for this goal has been completed and District administration is preparing to propose a three year plan at the Board's October 11 Study Session. After sharing with the Board, the proposed plan will be available for the community to view online and at all of our schools. The District will also share the proposed plan with community libraries for public display.

While separate from the Comprehensive Strategic Plan, this year's goals support many of the initiatives the members of the Comprehensive Strategic Planning Committee have been incorporating into the development of the plan.

This year, the District is focused on four goals to benefit our students, our schools, and our community.

**Student Achievement/Professional Education** - Analyze data to inform instruction, utilize proven instructional practices, and realign curriculum, where necessary, to ensure student success as measured by grade level proficiency targets on a variety of indicators including PA Common Core Standards, common assessments, PSSA, and Keystone Exams.

**Communication** - Enhance the flow of information between and among various constituencies to ensure timely and pertinent items of importance are communicated.

**Fiscally Responsive to Economic Conditions** - Maintain the District's financial stability while providing a quality education for all students. Furthermore, the District will continue to explore and implement district-wide cost-savings measures as well as revenue producing initiatives. This will provide the best opportunity for the District to prosper in the future and withstand the tough economic conditions we are experiencing.

**Community Involvement** - Effectively communicate the opportunities and challenges facing the District that are critical for student success in curricular and extracurricular programs and the ways in which the community can actively support those programs.

## Seeking Community Feedback

The District continues to share information with the community through the District website, *District News*, and twitter in addition to information shared by individual schools. The District is not able to promise publication of all topics, but we would like to hear from you. What stories would you like to see in future publications and/or web postings? Please share your ideas with Dr. Ryan Argot at [rargot@wssd.k12.pa.us](mailto:rargot@wssd.k12.pa.us).



## Explaining Act 1

The Taxpayer Relief Act, commonly called Act 1, was signed into law in June 2006 and updated when Act 25 of 2011 was adopted. The focus of this law, as it relates to school real estate taxes, provides real estate property tax relief through use of revenue generated from legalized gambling. This law also placed limits on school boards' abilities to determine the amount of money Districts generate from real estate tax revenue by establishing a "Base Index" that Districts are unable to exceed without approval through either a voter referendum or an exception granted by Pennsylvania's Department of Education. 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 personal incomes within individual school districts. For 2012-2013, the District's adjusted Base Index is 1.7%.

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. If the District adopts the resolution to remain within the Base Index, it loses both the ability to seek public approval for a tax increase and option of requesting an exception from the Department of Education.

For 2012-2013, the District adopted a preliminary budget within the guidelines and applied for one exception from the state. The exception request for increased retirement costs was approved. As the school year progresses, the District will continue exploring ways to decrease expenses and to generate alternative sources of revenue as teachers, administration, and Board members begin developing a balanced budget for 2013-2014. No decisions have been finalized related to the need to adopt a tax resolution or a preliminary budget. The decision making process will occur over the next several months as administration answers questions and shares budgetary information with the School Board during public meetings.

More details about the Taxpayer Relief Act may be found on the Department of Education's website. This site was used as a primary resource in developing this article. [Click here](#) for more information.

## Implementation of Alternate Curriculum

Since 2010, the Special Education Department has been researching and piloting an alternate curriculum to serve students participating in the Pennsylvania Alternative System of Assessment (PASA). The Special Education Department and Mini-Curriculum Committee supported this process in order to provide specific students with consistent standards-based instruction from Kindergarten through Twelfth-Grade. Based on the positive results of the pilot, the Special Education Department recommended to the School Board adoption of Unique Learning System (ULS) as the District's first alternate curriculum. At the August 16 Board meeting, the implementation of ULS was approved.

Through this alternate curriculum, the District is able to enhance differentiated instruction and increase active engagement for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Students learn about current events from articles written to their individual levels of understanding. As part of the alternate curriculum, teachers are able to assess student progress more effectively. The Special Education teachers are excited about the positive classroom changes they are seeing as they use the Alternate Curriculum

## Using Assessment Data

As the District continues its use of *Best Practices* for the delivery of instruction in the classroom, we also recognize the critical role assessment plays as we strive for excellence. As such, our staff has been involved in the development of common assessments in each curricular area. This continues to be a work in-progress as the mini-curricular committees are refining the assessments which were aligned to the PA State Standards and are now beginning the transition to the PA Common Core Standards. The Common Core State Standards were designed to provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The Standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills our young people need for success in college and careers.

The District's common assessments are a result of a collaborative effort by educators who teach the same grade level, course, or content area. These common assessments assist teachers and administrators in measuring what was taught and provide consistent data points between buildings, classes, and students. Common assessments are "snapshots" in time for how students performed relative to the specific content covered in that chapter, unit, course, grade level, or defined standard. When done well, they can model the content, format, and rigor of the high-stakes external assessments and may be predictors of student performance on these tests (Reeves, 2004).

In addition to common assessments developed by the District, other more formal benchmark assessments are frequently used to collect data during the school year. Examples include: 4Sight tests in Reading and Math, Writing Prompts, and CAIU math benchmark tests. In the coming months, the District will begin assessing students using the Classroom Diagnostic Tools (CDTs) and/or Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) which is a computer adaptive assessment. Together, these assessments will provide detailed information to inform instruction in a timely manner and show student growth over time.

Teacher teams at the middle schools are utilizing assessment data for lesson planning, monitoring student progress, flexible instructional grouping, re-teaching, planning interventions or enrichments, providing timely feedback, and acknowledging student successes. Other advantages common assessments include: providing a framework for consistent expectations, establishing curricular priorities and pacing within a grade level, course, and department, and helping to ensure all students are exposed to the same essential curriculum in each grade level. The middle school schedule is designed to provide additional time for the flexible grouping of students during Literacy Enrichment and Academic Advisory. Further, an academic workshop course has been designed for those students not demonstrating proficiency in reading and math.

### Algebra Moves to Middle School

Through research of best practices and analysis of student performance data, it was determined students would benefit from receiving algebraic instruction by the end of middle school. Over the last two years, middle school math teachers and administrators worked diligently to rewrite curriculum, develop common assessments, and gather information and resources necessary for effective instruction.

The changes to the middle school math curriculum, along with supports within the schedule, provide the flexibility necessary to address the needs of the learners across the spectrum. By offering Algebra in the middle school, students will be exposed to concepts that form the foundation for advanced mathematics, and will have the opportunity to take higher level math courses in high school.



## West Shore School District

### Mission Statement

The West Shore School District is committed to providing all students with a quality education to prepare them to be responsible and successful citizens.

### Board of School Directors

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### Administration

Jemry L. Small, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Todd B. Stoltz, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent

The West Shore School District shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, or disability, in accordance with Title VI-VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Act Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, in its educational and vocational programs and in its recruitment and employment practices. Inquiries concerning the application of Title VI, 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.



## Share Your THOUGHTS

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

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717-938-9577

## The School Day Just Got Healthier

The United States Department of Agriculture has recently issued new school meal requirements that are effective for the 2012-2013 school year. Students are seeing some changes in the foods served at school because of these new requirements.

We are asking parents to have a conversation with their child about the Create A Meal chart on the right.

Knowledge of the components of "what constitutes a meal?" especially at the secondary level, will guide our students in making excellent choices during their lunch selection process while being efficient consumers in the process.

Please visit the West Shore School District's [Food Services web site](#) for additional information and resources.

**Create A Meal**  
Take at least 3 food groups to create a meal

- Start with a Fruit or Vegetable (or both)
- Add some other foods like: Whole Grain, Lean Protein, and a serving of Milk
- Take a minimum of 3 food groups and a maximum of 5

**MEAL EXAMPLES**

+	=	<b>MEAL</b>
+  +	=	<b>MEAL</b>
+	=	<b>MEAL</b>
+  +	=	<b>MEAL</b>
+  (No Fruit or Vegetable)	=	<b>NOT A MEAL</b>

www.simplygoodfood.org

## Middle School Basketball Becomes Junior High Basketball

The middle school basketball program will be modified this year to reflect changes in accordance with the recommendations from the Mid-Penn conference. All seventh and eighth grade students will be eligible to try out for one of two teams which will be structured to follow a junior high model. The junior high model will provide two levels of competition for students: the junior high varsity team and the junior high JV team. In following the junior high model, ninth grade athletes are eligible for participation on one of three teams: the junior high varsity team, the high school junior varsity team, or the high school varsity team. The placement for ninth grade athletes will be based upon skill level as determined during try-outs, and all decisions are final as determined by the varsity head coach.