

**Westwood High School
School Improvement Plan**



For the School Year 2018-2019

Sean Bevan, Principal, *Chair*

Staff and community representatives:

Vacant, *Faculty* (Term: 2018-2019, 2019-2020)
Laura Bucari, *Parent* (Term: 2017-2018, 2018-2019)
Jacqueline Kinsman, *Support Representative* (Term: 2017-2018)
Brian Bayer, *Parent* (Term: 2018-2019, 2019-2020)
Elyse Rast, *Parent* (Term: 2018-2019, 2019-2020)
Brad Pindel (WPD), *Community Representative* (Term: 2017-2018)
Danielle Sutton (WYFS), *Community Representative* (Term: 2017-2018)

Student representatives:

Emily Conant, *Student, Class of 2019* (Term: 2018-2019)
William Carr, *Student, Class of 2019* (Term: 2018-2019)
Hannah Murphy, *Student, Class of 2019* (Term: 2018-2019)
Daniel Xu, *Student, Class of 2020* (Term: 2018-2019)
Chris Capone, *Student, Class of 2020* (Term: 2018-2019)
Laurel Barnett, *Student, Class of 2021* (Term: 2018-2019)

Westwood High School Mission Statement

Members of the Westwood High School community will strive for excellence in academic endeavors. We recognize that fostering a climate that promotes intellectual, social and emotional growth is the shared responsibility of students, faculty, administrators, support staff, parents, and the community-at-large. We challenge all members of our school community to practice self-discipline, exhibit respectful behavior, celebrate others' achievements and demonstrate a commitment to learning as a lifelong process.

Statement of Expectations

School-Wide Academic Expectations

1. Read effectively
2. Communicate effectively
3. Define, analyze, and solve problems
4. Access and interpret information from a variety of sources

School-Wide Social and Civic Expectations

1. Practice kind, respectful, and appropriate behavior
2. Assume responsibility for one's own behavior
3. Contribute to the well-being and welfare of others
4. Participate in the school's democratic process

The Westwood High School Site Council

The WHS Site Council is an advisory group to the principal. The group is comprised of teachers, other staff, students, parents, and community members. Specifically, the group provides input on the principal's School Improvement Plan (SIP), meeting each month to receive updates on initiatives related to the SIP.

Parent, student, and teacher representatives to the WHS Site Council are elected through elections. Community representatives are appointed by the principal. All staff and community members serve two-year terms; student representatives serve one-year terms.

Westwood High School: School Improvement Plan
2018-2019, Summary

1. Assessment of class sizes, student achievement:

- Academic class sizes consist of courses in English, Language, Alternate Language, Math, Science, SIPP and Social Studies. These courses range in class sizes from 7 (AP Calculus, Bio Concepts) to 28 (several).
- 62.3% (187 of 300) of all academic classes fall between 15-24 students, 20% (61 of 300) are in the range of 25-30 students. 15 academic classes have 28 students.
- The student-teacher ratio is 11.4: 1 (1,018 students; 89 teachers/LTS)
- The student-adult staff ratio is 5.4:1

2. Professional Development outline:

DATE	HS Teachers (1:00-3:00pm, unless otherwise noted)
September 12, 2018	IDEAS training (1 of 2)
September 26, 2018	Department
October 10, 2018	J-Term: Refine, Revise, Propose New
October 24, 2018	Department
November 7, 2018	Reflective Practice
November 14, 2018	Department
November 26, 2018 *8:30-3:00	District-wide PD
December 5, 2018	IDEAS training (2 of 2)
December 19, 2018	(Comp Day)
January 9, 2019	Department
January 23, 2019	Reflective Practice
February 6, 2019	Department

February 27, 2019	Reflective Practice
March 13, 2019	Department
March 27, 2019	Reflective Practice
April 10, 2019	Department
April 24, 2019	Reflective Practice
May 8, 2019	J-Term
May 22, 2019	Department
June 5, 2019	J-Term

3. Enhancement of parental involvement in the life of the school

- The principal publishes a monthly newsletter via email to all families in an effort to share critical information about the school’s main initiatives, parent programs, and student news. Typically, the rate of newsletter recipients who open the newsletter is between 55-60%.
- The WHS Twitter feed and Facebook account are helpful in communicating with families: the WHS Twitter account has 1,783 followers, and the Facebook page has 495 followers. The principal relies on Instagram to communicate news and other information to students as it’s a platform that students access more frequently than Twitter or Facebook. The WHS Instagram feed has grown steadily in the past five years to more than 1,035 followers, the vast majority of which are high school students and recent graduates. This past year, WHS staff used a new Instagram account - dedicated solely to J-Term - to share course updates in real time during the week. The account gained 300+ users and posted 180+ photos - all in just one week. Anecdotally, students and families shared that the account provided a fun and comprehensive overview of the program during the week.
- Parents remain engaged in the healthy operation of the school through a variety of groups and avenues, including:
 - Legislative Council, which creates and/or revises student handbook policies. Like Site Council, parents and community members provide the Council with the valuable perspective of those outside the school who also have a significant vested interest in the healthy operation of the school.
 - Informational parent forums and meetings to help parents to become better informed stakeholders in their child’s education:
 - Curriculum Night and Parent-Teacher Conferences: Teachers and parents meet each of these nights to share important insights into the child’s school performance.

- Guidance Parent Talks: Guidance counselors offer frequent parent/community events on topics ranging from the college application process, financial aid for college-bound seniors, the transition for rising eighth graders, etc.
- The principal invites parents to meet for an informal discussion over coffee before Curriculum. The event has been attended by more than 50 parents in each of the past two years.

4. School safety and discipline

- Westwood High School staff remains committed to ensuring the physical and emotional safety of all its students. Feedback from the school community is virtually unequivocal on students' feeling of safety at WHS: respondents reported that their son or daughter feels physically safe at school, with 37% agreeing and 60% strongly agreeing that this is the case, for a total of 97% in agreement. 94% of respondents agreed that their student feels emotionally safe at school. A school climate survey conducted by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education published this past Spring confirmed this data: the overwhelming majority of students view our school as a safe and supportive place, responding affirmatively to statements including, "I have at least one friend who I can count to to support me", "I have access to help at school if I am struggling emotionally or mentally", and "I feel as though I am part of a school community". Worth noting: on the survey, most (89%) of our students agree that it is true that "Students respect each other", but only 19% agree that this is *always* the case.

5. Extra-curricular activities

- Westwood High School offers roughly 60 clubs and activities, with several new clubs being added each year.
- Additionally, Westwood High School offers 28 MIAA-sanctioned sports. One of the most notable and exciting developments in 2017-2018 was WHS's development of a Unified Champions Basketball team. Unified athletic programs join young people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team.

6. Means for meeting, within the regular education programs at the school, the diverse learning needs of as many children as possible, including children with special needs currently assigned to separate programs

- Westwood High School employs many strategies for meeting the various needs of our learners. These include conventional special education interventions and the FLEX program. Annually, the staff attends a one-session professional development program designed to identify and train teachers on how best to meet the needs of diverse student learners.
- We have dedicated considerable professional development resources this year to increase our staff's cultural competence, focusing specifically on equipping teachers' skills in navigating sensitive topics that emerge in school around race. Additionally, all staff will be participating in a District-wide professional development session in November to identify strategies for meeting the needs of our students of color more effectively.

Goals:

District objective: Coherent, connected curriculum

Westwood High School goal:

1. Examine current instructional practices to identify areas for growth.

a. Strategies include:

- i. Prepare to implement “biology first” course sequence in SY 19-20
- ii. Engage in district-wide ELA curriculum review to generate recommendations for improving curriculum and instruction
- iii. Review and refine approaches to student assessment and feedback

District objective: Meaningful learning experiences

Westwood High School goal:

2. Increase opportunities for meaningful learning experiences for students and staff.

a. Strategies include:

- i. Refine J-term program course offerings and structure
- ii. Refine and enhance Courageous Conversations programming
- iii. Promote peer observation within and across departments
- iv. Introduce refined and expanded Reflective Practice programming

District objective: Healthy and supported school community

Westwood High School goal:

3. Implement programs and practices that recognize and support the needs of diverse student learners.

a. Strategies include:

- i. Examine the balance between high-stakes assessment and student social-emotional learning needs
- ii. Engage in district-wide social-emotional learning needs assessment and curriculum review
- iii. Engage in targeted professional development in support of culturally responsive teaching practices
- iv. Increase capacity for engaging in dialogue around difficult conversations through Courageous Conversations programming and student debriefs

Goals, Explained:

Goal #1:

District objective: Coherent, connected curriculum

Westwood High School goal: Examine current instructional practices to identify areas for growth.

Strategies include:

1. Prepare to implement “biology first” course sequence in SY 19-20
2. Engage in district-wide ELA curriculum review to generate recommendations for improving curriculum and instruction
3. Review and refine approaches to student assessment and feedback

Present status:

1. The members of the Science department conducted a yearlong study in 2017-2018 of the current sequence of science instruction, which includes Physical Science. The study included a review of current research and team visits to other schools in the area that offer sequences different than our own. The team presented their findings to Central Office staff, proposing to move to a biology-first model in 2019-2020.
2. WPS conducts annual reviews of the curriculum in different content areas each year, revisiting each content area with some regularity. This year, ELA staff will begin a three-year review process.
3. In 2017-2018, WHS staff used one PD session to examine their assessment practices, identifying areas for growth. Also, the final exam schedule was changed (from four days to two) to more accurately reflect current assessment practices, which vary by department.

Strategy to Accomplish the Objective	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Timeline	Evaluation/Evidence
Prepare to implement “biology first” course sequence in SY 19-20	Principal, Science dept. chair	PD time	Fall: review impact on Bio Concepts Winter-Spring: PD/Dept. Training Spring: Planning complete for course request window	Program of Studies, Department agendas

<p>Engage in district-wide ELA curriculum review to generate recommendations for improving curriculum and instruction</p>	<p>Principal, English dept. chair</p>	<p>PD time, other time (outside of school)</p>	<p>Fall: gather info about current practices</p> <p>Winter: Conduct horizontal, vertical analysis; identify connections to other depts, areas of District focus (i.e. SEL)</p> <p>Spring: Conduct visits to other districts, examine practices re: HW and assessment</p>	<p>ELA Curriculum Review Team notes, documents</p>
<p>Review and refine approaches to student assessment and feedback</p>	<p>Principal, Academic Council members</p>	<p>AC meeting time(s)</p>	<p>Full year</p>	<p>Agendas, communications with staff incl. PD notes, slides</p>

Goals, Explained:

Goal #2:

District objective: Meaningful learning experiences

Westwood High School goal: Increase opportunities for meaningful learning experiences for students and staff.

Strategies include:

1. Refine J-term program course offerings and structure
2. Refine and enhance Courageous Conversations programming
3. Promote peer observation within and across departments
4. Introduce refined and expanded Reflective Practice programming

Present status:

1. The J-term Steering Committee has reviewed course feedback from students and consulted with staff to identify courses that need significant changes and to consider new course possibilities.
2. Staff that have been leading the development of Courageous Conversations programming reviewed program feedback from 2017-2018, including data from a “Think Tank” meeting with 30 students in the Spring to identify themes and areas for growth in the coming year.
3. This has not been an area of consistent focus in the recent past. WHS has a welcoming professional culture, but promoting peer observation is a new endeavor, one that is a focus across the district.
4. This has been a PD model we have used in the past, and it’s one that staff really enjoys and appreciates. It has been four years since we have employed the model.

Strategy to Accomplish the Objective	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Timeline	Evaluation/Evidence
Refine J-term program course offerings and structure	J-term Steering committee	Time (Fall)	Fall: publish new course offerings	Course enrollment data Student feedback
Refine and enhance Courageous Conversations programming	Equality Coalition	Time (incl. summer)	Ongoing	Student, staff feedback
Promote peer observation within and across departments	Asst. Principal, Academic Council	Time (Fall-Winter)	Fall-Winter	Peer observation notes

Introduce refined and expanded Reflective Practice programming	Principal, Academic Council	Time (Fall-Winter)	Fall-Winter	PD agendas, staff feedback, various evidence from RP projects (from staff)
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Goals, Explained:

Goal #3:

District objective: Healthy and supported school community

Westwood High School goal: Implement programs and practices that recognize and support the needs of diverse student learners.

Strategies include:

1. Examine the balance between high-stakes assessment and student social-emotional learning needs
2. Engage in district-wide social-emotional learning needs assessment and curriculum review
3. Engage in targeted professional development in support of culturally responsive teaching practices
4. Increase capacity for engaging in dialogue around difficult conversations through Courageous Conversations programming and student debriefs

Present status:

1. In the first year of changing the final exam schedule, we heard that students and staff alike struggled to manage a high peak workload in the days leading up to J-term. This is an area we need to learn more about this year.
2. This works has begun at the District level, with several WHS staff participating in the review committee.
3. We have not attended to this topic in more than a year, and even then, our approach was to look closely at the specific needs our students of color and report the findings to staff. The approach was successful in achieving an understanding of these students' needs, but subsequent attempts to develop training were unsuccessful.
4. We have not focused on this as a full-staff priority until this year.

Strategy to Accomplish the Objective	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Timeline	Evaluation/Evidence
Examine the balance between high-stakes assessment and student social-emotional learning needs	Academic Council	Time	Winter	Communications to staff, students
Engage in district-wide social-emotional learning needs assessment and curriculum review	SEL Review Team	Time	Ongoing	Recommendations

Engage in targeted professional development in support of culturally responsive teaching practices	Principal	2 Early release PD sessions, 1 full-day PD session	Fall	Staff feedback, student feedback
Increase capacity for engaging in dialogue around difficult conversations through Courageous Conversations programming and student debriefs	Equality Coalition	Four presentation days	Full year	Staff feedback, student feedback