

**Westwood High School
School Improvement Plan**



For the School Year 2017-2018

Sean Bevan, Principal, *Chair*

Staff and community representatives:

Vacant, *Faculty* (Term: 2017-2018, 2018-2019)
James Vanaria, *Faculty* (Term: 2016-2017, 2017-2018)
Laura Bucari, *Parent* (Term: 2017-2018, 2018-2019)
Jacqueline Kinsman, *Support Representative* (Term: 2017-2018)
Michael Gay, *Parent* (Term: 2016-2017, 2017-2018)
Judy O'Dwyer, *Parent* (Term: 2016-2017, 2017-2018)
Brad Pindel (WPD), *Community Representative* (Term: 2017-2018)
Danielle Sutton (WYFS), *Community Representative* (Term: 2017-2018)

Student representatives:

Mackenzie Draper, *Student, Class of 2018* (Term: 2017-2018)
Cam Valentine, *Student, Class of 2018* (Term: 2017-2018)
Riley Murray, *Student, Class of 2019* (Term: 2017-2018)
Daniel Xu, *Student, Class of 2020* (Term: 2017-2018)
Laurel Barnett, *Student, Class of 2021* (Term: 2017-2018)

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
2016-2017, 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 11 (Conversational Spanish) to 29 (Crime in America).
- 63.2% (187 of 296) of all academic classes fall between 15-24 students, 19.3% (57 of 296) are in the range of 25-30 students. There are no academic classes with over 30 students; in contrast, there were 81 and 63 classes in the range of 25-30 in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, respectively.
- The student-teacher ratio is 11.2: 1 (999 students; 89 teachers/LTS)
- The student-adult staff ratio is 6.49:1
- The student-teacher ratio is 16.9: 1
- The student-adult staff ratio is 13.6:1

2. Professional Development outline:

DATE	HS Teachers (1:00-3:00pm, unless otherwise noted)
September 13, 2017	Department
September 27, 2017	J-Term
October 11, 2017	Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners
October 25, 2017	Department
November 8, 2017	J-Term
November 15, 2017	Midyears/Finals
November 27, 2017 *8:30-3:00	District-wide PD
December 6, 2017	Department
December 20, 2017	(Comp Day)
January 10, 2018	Department

January 24, 2018	Building-wide PD
February 7, 2018	J-Term
February 28, 2018	Department
March 14, 2018	Building
March 28, 2018	Department
March 29, 2018	Department
April 11, 2018	J-term
April 25, 2018	Department
May 9, 2018	J-Term
May 23, 2018	Department
June 6, 2018	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 1,649 followers, and the Facebook page has 405 followers. The principal increasingly has relied on communicating with the student community through the use of Instagram, which is a platform that students demonstrate a greater dedication to than to Twitter and Facebook. The WHS Instagram feed has grown steadily in the past five years to more than 840 followers, the vast majority of which are high school students and recent graduates.
- Parents remain engaged in the healthy operation of the school through a variety of groups and avenues, including:
 - Legislative Council, which creates and/or rewrites 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.
- In 2016, the principal replaced a previously-existing program ("Freshman and New Student Parent Night") with a new program, a 'coffee with the principal' program in the hour prior to "Curriculum Night". The adjusted program drew dozens of parents, far more than would attend the "Freshman and New Student Parent Night". He made the change based his observations of previous years' programs through which he concluded:
 - The "Freshman and New Student Parent Night" would typically draw a small crowd (less than 30, usually); the attendees often would use the event as a forum to voice niche concerns that are best communicated in smaller venues, like personal meetings. In considering the change, the principal consulted several area high schools, and the format of the program was atypical.
 - The original intent of the "Freshman and New Student Parent Night" appeared to have been lost to time. The two remaining programs are designed to: give new parents an opportunity to meet personally with the principal and the other administrators (always with the option to arrange a formal meeting for a later date), and concerns specific to freshmen continue to be covered in guidance talks with freshmen parents.

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 unequivocal on students' feeling of safety at WHS: respondents reported that their son or daughter feels physically safe at school, with 26% agreeing and 66% strongly agreeing that this is the case, for a total of 97% in agreement. 91% of respondents agreed that their student feels emotionally safe at school. One shift in the data worth noting: we saw a change this year with the percentage agreeing strongly with this statement (50%) surpassing the percentage who simply agree (40%); and, last year's results showed 43% agreeing strongly and 47% simply agreeing with the statement.

5. Extra-curricular activities

- Westwood High School offers roughly 60 clubs and activities, an increase over years past, with several new clubs being added each year, including Hack Club and Outdoor Adventure Club.
- Additionally, Westwood High School offers 28 MIAA-sanctioned sports. One of the most notable and exciting developments in 2016-2017 was WHS's development of a Unified Champions Track and Field Team. Unified athletic programs join young people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. In fact, the team won the Division 2 State Championship, and we have developed a Unified Basketball team for Fall 2017.

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.
 - o The session in 2013-2014 addressed the distinct needs of students of color and those returning to school from concussion.
 - o In 2014-2015, in a split session, the program addressed the unique needs of LGBTQ students and how social media usage is impacting teens' development.
 - o In 2016-2017, we focused on supporting students with anxiety disorders: through a grant by the Foundation for Westwood Education, speaker Jessica Minahan delivered a presentation to staff.

Goals Outline:

Goal #1:

General Goal Area: Instructional Leadership

Objective: Promote and continue to support innovative programs and practices that accommodate diverse learning styles, needs, and levels of readiness in a changing world.¹

Strategies include:

1. Develop and refine the J-Term program.
2. Examine how midyear and final exam data is/can be used to inform instruction

Goal #2:

General Goal Area: Instructional Leadership

Objective: Employ a variety of strategies to create transparency, build trust, and promote a sense of ownership within the school district community around critical school decisions and change.²

Strategies:

Develop and implement a process to measure students' risk behaviors and compare the results to regional norms in an effort to target interventions more effectively.

Goal #3:

General Goal Area: Instructional Leadership

Objective: Develop and support practices that acknowledge the diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges of students.³

Strategies:

1. Refine the emerging model for student programming, Courageous Conversations, by incorporating feedback from students, staff, and families, so that the programs meet their intended mission:
 - To expose students to diverse cultural traditions and contributions, and
 - To provide opportunities for dialogue and perspective taking
2. Identify department-specific strategies to better meet needs of our students of color

¹ District Improvement Goals, Standard I: Instructional Leadership

² District Improvement Goals, Standard IV: Professional Culture

³ District Improvement Goals, Standard IV: Professional Culture

Goals, Explained:**Goal #1:**

General Goal Area: Instructional Leadership

Objective: Promote and continue to support innovative programs and practices that accommodate diverse learning styles, needs, and levels of readiness in a changing world.

Strategy Number 1: Develop and refine the J-Term program.

Present status: Faculty spent the majority of their building-wide PD sessions from 2016-2017 in the conception and development of J-Term courses. The course list was developed and vetted through multiple student focus groups and highly-structured faculty feedback teams. The course list is nearing completion, with roughly 40 courses in the late stages of development. J-Term teams will convene for 6-8 PD sessions in 2017-2018 in preparation for the program's start in June 2018. Students will be provided with an opportunity in late Fall 2017 to hear about the course options and make their course choices.

Strategy to Accomplish the Objective	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Timeline	Evaluation/Evidence
A. Develop and execute a process for students to understand their course options and make choices of the course they would like to take	J-Term Committee	Time	To be completed by Dec. 1	Course rosters
B. Develop and administer high-quality J-Term courses that uphold the program's mission to "provide an opportunity for students to dive deeply into an existing area of interest or explore a new interest during an immersive learning experience of their choosing"	WHS Faculty, J-Term Committee	PD time	All year	Student feedback, student work products, student feedback

Strategy Number 2: Examine how midyear and final exam data is/can be used to inform instruction.

Present status: The WHS Academic Council, Site Council, and Faculty spent considerable time in 2016-2017 examining the existing schedules for midyear exams and final exams. The schedule for midyear exams remained unchanged, and the final exam schedule was adjusted to provide more class time for some departments while protecting the exam time for others. The resulting schedule reduced time dedicated to final exams from four days to two days. Entering 2017-2018, staff will work to identify best practices for using midyear exam data to adjust instruction in the second semester and to use final exam data to determine if the adjustments were effective.

Strategy to Accomplish the Objective	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Timeline	Evaluation/Evidence
A. Develop and execute professional development sessions to identify strategies for using midyear assessment data to inform second semester instruction	Assistant Principal, Principal, Academic Council	Time	First semester	Teacher feedback
B. Develop and execute professional development sessions to identify strategies for using final exam data to determine what instructional changes worked following analysis of midyear exam data	Assistant Principal, Principal, Academic Council	Time	Second semester	Teacher feedback, final exam data

Goal #2:

General Goal Area: Instructional Leadership

Objective: Employ a variety of strategies to create transparency, build trust, and promote a sense of ownership within the school district community around critical school decisions and change.

Strategies: Develop and implement a process to measure students' risk behaviors and compare the results to regional norms in an effort to target interventions.

Strategy to Accomplish the Objective	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Timeline	Evaluation/Evidence
A. Identify two sections per YOG class for the pilot implementation, and administer the survey according to CDC standards	Principal	Time	Fall	List of teachers participating
B. Conduct an analysis of the survey results, and share the results with Westwood Cares members to identify trends to inform student and parent programming	Principal, Westwood Cares members	Time	Fall	Summary of data
C. Conduct an examination of the survey process and identify areas for improvement in advance of full-school implementation in Fall 2018	Principal, Westwood Cares members	Time	Spring	Highlight recommendations from Westwood Cares (or subcommittee)

Goal #3:

General Goal Area: Instructional Leadership

Objective: Develop and support practices that acknowledge the diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges of students.

Strategy Number 1: Refine the emerging model for student programming, Courageous Conversations by incorporating feedback from students, staff, and families, so that the programs meet their intended mission:

- To expose students to diverse cultural traditions and contributions, and
- To provide opportunities for dialogue and perspective taking

Strategy to Accomplish the Objective	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Timeline	Evaluation/Evidence
A. Implement, reflect on, and refine Courageous Conversations programs that uphold the mission of the program	Principal, Equality Coalition members	Time	Full year	Student feedback, faculty feedback
B. Identify strengths and weaknesses of the program design	Principal, Equality Coalition members	Time	Full year	Student feedback, faculty feedback
C. Identify Courageous Conversations program topics for 2018-2019	Principal, Equality Coalition members, Student 'think tank' participants	Time	Spring	Student feedback

Strategy Number 2: Identify department-specific strategies to better meet needs of our students of color

Strategy to Accomplish the Objective	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Timeline	Evaluation/Evidence
A. Identify content-specific best practices for meeting the specific needs of students of color	Principal, Dean of Students, Academic Council	Time	Fall, Winter	PD feedback
B. Train teaching staff on best practices for meeting the needs of students of color	Principal, Dean of Students, Academic Council	Time	Fall, Winter	PD feedback