

WESTON BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING

Tuesday, February 24, 2015
Weston Middle School Library Resource Center
7:30 p.m.

Agenda

- | | | |
|--------------|--|--------------------|
| I. | CALL TO ORDER, VERIFICATION OF QUORUM
Philip Schaefer, Chairperson | |
| II. | PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE | |
| III. | RECOGNITION | None |
| IV. | APPROVAL OF MINUTES , <i>pages 1-13</i>
The Board will vote to approve the minutes from January 20 and 22.

The Board will vote to approve the minutes from January 29. | Motion |
| V. | PUBLIC COMMENT | Information |
| VI. | NEW BUSINESS | |
| | 1. Resignation , <i>page 14</i> | Motion |
| | 2. Internal Assessment Report , <i>pages 15-47</i>
Dr. Craw, Assistant Superintendent, will give a report on the implementation of district performance assessments and an update on the AIM initiative. | Information |
| | 3. Fifth FY 2015 Financial Update and Approval of Transfers
Dr. Keating, Director of Finance and Operations, will provide a monthly financial report and an update on the status of the Board of Education adopted budget for FY 2016. | Motion |
| VII. | OLD BUSINESS | None |
| VIII. | SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT | Information |
| | 1. Next Regular Board Meeting is Monday, March 16, 2015, at 7:30 p.m. | |
| | 2. District Update | |
| | 3. Principals' Reports , <i>pages 48-61</i> | |
| IX. | COMMITTEE REPORTS | |
| | 1. WHS Student Representatives' Report - Jackson Marvin, Jack Seigenthaler | Information |
| | 2. Communications Committee - Nina Daniel , <i>pages 62-71</i> | Information |

3. Curriculum Committee - Ellen Uzenoff
4. Finance Committee - Denise Harvey
5. Facilities Committee - Ellen Uzenoff
6. Policy Committee - Dana Levin
7. Negotiations Committee - Denise Harvey
8. CES - Nina Daniel
9. CAFE - Elise Major
10. Weston Education Foundation - Denise Harvey

Information
Information
Information
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Information

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion

Attendance:

Philip Schaefer, Chairperson	Sara Spaulding
Ellen Uzenoff, Vice Chairperson	Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent
Dana Levin, Secretary/Treasurer	Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent
Nina Daniel	Dr. Jo-Ann Keating, Director of Finance & Ops.
Denise Harvey	Absent: Lewis Brey, Director of Human Resources
Elise Major	

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Discussion of Long Term Planning for Facility Utilization and Possible Use of District Facilities by Town

Dr. Palmer, Superintendent of Schools, discussed the memo she issued to the Board after receiving the 2012 NESDEC demographer's report, prior to the tragedy at Newtown. She then reviewed considerations for educational space and why the district began discussions of using space differently. Dr. Palmer recalled steps the district had taken prior to Newtown to address declining enrollment, and that the issue of sharing space in Hurlbutt Elementary School's North House was tabled after the tragedy. She also discussed the steps leading up to the current five-year memorandum of understanding with the Town's Senior Center, currently housed in South House; a possibility for the Town to utilize future space in Central Office; and other factors to be considered in planning for the future and the possibility of deciding to downsize the elementary school. Discussion by the Board followed on issues such as the size of the cafeterias in Hurlbutt Elementary School and Weston Intermediate School, Cohort sizes and planning for potential future increases, deviations in past enrollment projections, details of the Horace Hurlbutt deed, other locations for Central Office staff and alternate uses for Central Office space.

III. Questions/Comments From Public

Neil Horner, Catbrier Road. Mr. Horner urged the Board to move towards making a decision so that a plan can be developed with the Town.

Sarah Schlechter, Woods End Lane. Ms. Schlechter asked the Board what would replace the gym in Hurlbutt if that was taken away, commended the Board for their commitment to keeping public offices out of the schools, and urged against housing Parks and Rec within Hurlbutt Elementary School. Ms. Schlechter requested the Board consider creating a Community Center.

Lois Guberman, Catbrier Road. Ms. Guberman spoke in favor of Dr. Palmer's presentation, and appreciated learning that there is flexibility at three of the schools to accommodate future fluctuations.

IV. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jennifer Markov, Board of Education Clerk.

Minutes reviewed/approved by Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent.

DRAFT

Attendance:

Philip Schaefer, Chairperson	Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent
Ellen Uzenoff, Vice Chairperson	Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent
Dana Levin, Secretary/Treasurer	Dr. Jo-Ann Keating, Director of Finance & Ops.
Nina Daniel	
Denise Harvey	<i>Absent:</i> Lewis Brey, Director of Human Resources
Elise Major	Jackson Marvin, Student Representative
Sara Spaulding	Jack Seigenthaler, Student Representative

CALL TO ORDER, VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

Philip Schaefer, Chairperson

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. HURLBUTT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The proposed Hurlbutt Elementary School budget represents a 1.18% decrease over FY 2015 budget, primarily due to the reduction of two classroom sections at the kindergarten level. Mrs. Kaddis, Hurlbutt Elementary School Principal, explained the budget drivers as enrollment, staffing, and books and materials. Cost containment measures include a decrease of 2.0 FTE for kindergarten, a minimal increase for books and materials, and philanthropy donations from the PTO. Discussion by the Board and administrators followed.

III. WESTON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Ms. Falber, Weston Intermediate School Principal, presented the Intermediate School's proposed budget, which represents a .28% increase over FY 2015. Priorities that drive budget decisions include academic, social/emotional, and behavioral programs; staffing; opportunities for students to receive support and enrichment; technology integration to support teaching and learning; high-quality professional development; and safety and security of students and staff. To contain costs, there will be a 1.0 FTE certified staff reduction and a minimal increase for non-salary accounts, CIL and administration-led professional development will be utilized, and PTO philanthropy grants will offer support. Discussion by the Board, administrators, and Town officials followed.

IV. WESTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

The proposed budget for Weston Middle School represents a .04% increase of the FY 2015 expected budget. Mrs. Watkins, Weston Middle School Principal, explained budget drivers, which include enrollment, adjusting the curriculum to meet the skills required in the future job market, staffing, pool operations, books and materials, and equipment. Cost containments include efficient use of certified staff, replacement of the Family and Consumer Sciences course with STEM instruction (a \$926 savings over FY 2015), a

decrease in materials based on enrollment, and postponing furniture replacement. Discussion by the Board, administrators, and Town officials followed.

V. WESTON HIGH SCHOOL

Weston High School Principal Mrs. Deorio presented the High School proposed budget, which represents an increase of 6.41% over the FY 2015 budget. Budget drivers include enrollment, particularly for the senior class; graduation requirements; and academic and co-curricular programs. Discussion by the Board, administrators, and Town officials followed.

VI. ATHLETICS

For FY 2016, a total of 853 student athletes, 11 more than FY 2015, are expected. The proposed athletic budget is \$779,580, which represents a 3.65% increase over the FY 2015 budget request. Mr. Doak, Weston High School Assistant Principal, explained that officials, insurance, transportation, and stipends/salaries, including the reinstatement of one freshmen coach, are the major budget drivers. Cost efficiencies include outside financial support, participation fees, gate receipts, maintaining an administrative assistant position as an 11-month position, no equipment costs, and no increase in supplies. Discussion by the Board, administrators, and Town officials followed.

VII. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC

There were no additional questions or comments beyond what was discussed previously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:59 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jennifer Markov, Board of Education Clerk.

Minutes reviewed/approved by Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent.

Attendance:

Philip Schaefer, Chairperson	Sara Spaulding
Ellen Uzenoff, Vice Chairperson	Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent
Dana Levin, Secretary/Treasurer	Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent
Nina Daniel	Dr. Jo-Ann Keating, Director of Finance & Ops.
Denise Harvey	Jackson Marvin, Student Representative
Elise Major	Absent: Lewis Brey, Director of Human Resources

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Discussion of Long Term Planning for Facility Utilization and Possible Use of District Facilities by Town

Mr. Schaefer, Board of Education Chairperson, and Dr. Palmer, Superintendent of Schools, provided background on the reason for holding this work session, in addition to the meeting on January 20, 2015. The Board reviewed Selectman Tracey's questions, which were submitted to the Board on January 21, 2015, and the December 23, 2014, memo submitted by the Board of Selectmen to Dr. Palmer and the Board of Education regarding facilities. Ms. Harvey and Mrs. Levin discussed data analyses they had been working on. Discussion by the Board included the desire to wall off North House as opposed to demolishing the corridor, if North House was no longer needed for educational space; the need to determine the cost benefit to altering classroom space for office space (and then reclaiming if needed), and a request to understand specific needs of the Town.

III. Questions/Comments From Public

Bob Machson, White Birch Ridge. Mr. Machson spoke in favor of the accuracy of the demographic reports and suggested the data be embraced by the Board. He requested clarification on the actual issue behind these discussions (mill rate, etc.) and Town transparency on all facilities and the cost of moving/building each.

Margaret Wirtenberg, Wilson Road. Ms. Wirtenberg spoke about her 1990s Census of Children for the Town and the inaccuracy of the State's numbers. She volunteered her help to the Board.

Michele Tivey, Godfrey Road. Ms. Tivey spoke positively about tonight's session and both Mr. Machson and Ms. Wirtenberg's comments. She feels that it would be beneficial for the Town to come up with a fiscally responsible plan for what they want to do.

Helen de Keijzer, Salem Road. Ms. de Keijzer expressed the residents' support for the school system and asked that the Board think out of the box with regards to grade configurations to help keep the costs of living in Town down.

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jennifer Markov, Board of Education Clerk.

Minutes reviewed/approved by Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent.

DRAFT

Attendance:

Philip Schaefer, Chairperson	Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent
Ellen Uzenoff, Vice Chairperson	Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent
Dana Levin, Secretary/Treasurer	Dr. Jo-Ann Keating, Director of Finance & Ops.
Nina Daniel	
Denise Harvey	<i>Absent:</i> Lewis Brey, Director of Human Resources
Elise Major	Jackson Marvin, Student Representative
Sara Spaulding	Jack Seigenthaler, Student Representative

CALL TO ORDER, VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

Philip Schaefer, Chairperson

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. FACILITIES

Mr. Olenik, Director of School Facilities, presented the FY 2016 budget request of \$4,898,965, which is a 5.46% increase over FY 2015. Budget priorities are reflective of the mission of the facilities department, which is to provide a safe and secure, comfortable, clean, functional, and efficient environment for teaching and learning. Increases are \$229,847 for non-salary accounts, primarily as funding for service contracts, maintenance projects, and energy, and \$19,382 for salary accounts. Mr. Olenik also discussed capital projects. The request totals \$583,900 in the first tier, including \$260,000 to replace two oil tanks at Hurlbutt Elementary School. In the second tier, \$878,475 is requested. Discussion by the Board followed.

III. SPECIAL EDUCATION

Ms. Pernice, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, presented the key budget drivers of the \$7,038,343 proposed special education budget as staffing, outplacements, contracted services, mediation requests, increased student needs, and grant reimbursement decreases. The proposed budget for FY 2016 is a 2.58% increase over the FY 2015 adopted budget, and a 2.56% increase over the FY 2015 expected budget. Cost containment strategies include working with Effective School Solutions to provide more in-district services for students with emotional and behavioral concerns as opposed to looking at therapeutic day schools and outplacements, and continued expansion of the 18-21 year old program for students with developmental disabilities. Ms. Pernice noted that the ESS program is just coming to Connecticut but is in 32 schools in New Jersey. She noted that the district is continuing to look at this and will have additional discussions. No number has been put in the budget at this time. Students in special education represent 9.79% of the total student population, and are aged pre-kindergarten through 21 years old. Discussion by the Board followed.

Michele Tivey, Godfrey Road. Ms. Tivey spoke positively of our special education services, and spoke in support of the Effective School Solutions program. She asked about offering ABA services in-house.

IV. PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES

The pupil personnel services cost center, with a proposed budget of \$2,561,099 for FY 2016, includes services for student counseling, class scheduling, college and career planning, nursing, and occupational and physical therapy to support regular and special needs students. The budget reflects a 1.02% decrease over the FY 2015 adopted budget, and a 0.66% decrease over the FY 2015 expected budget. Ms. Pernice discussed three budget drivers, which are staffing, increased occupational and physical therapy services due to student needs, and nursing services. Cost containment measures include continued expansion of the Center for Academic Support and Enhancement (CASE) and the middle school OST program, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Effective School Solutions. Discussion by the Board followed.

Michele Tivey, Godfrey Road. Encouraged holding a PD day for staff on awareness of disabilities.

V. SUPERINTENDENT CONCLUDING REMARKS

Dr. Palmer, Superintendent of Schools, asked that Board members forward additional questions to her. She added that she is impressed with preliminary feedback regarding Effective School Solutions and has recommended the district continue to explore this option for the upcoming fiscal year. Dr. Palmer reported that if we find ourselves in a position to move forward and it is appropriate this year, there probably would be some additional costs. Dr. Palmer also announced new areas of savings within the budget: (1) MERS retirement obligation has decreased by .5%, which translates to a \$55,576 savings, and (2) as Westport will no longer be offering adult education, Weston will work with Norwalk, reducing the amount needed by \$12,000. Dr. Palmer recommended that the budget she brings back to the Board on Monday night reflects a transfer of those funds, \$67,576, to Special Education Purchased Services. Adding \$67,576 to that line item would increase it to \$783,546. Dr. Palmer also stated that it would bring forth some resources so we can seriously consider whether it is possible for us to implement the program this year.

VI. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC

There were no additional questions or comments beyond what was discussed previously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jennifer Markov, Board of Education Clerk.

Minutes reviewed/approved by Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent.

Weston Public Schools
Board of Education Special Meeting
Weston Middle School Library Resource Center
January 29, 2015

Attendance:

Philip Schaefer, Chairperson	Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent
Ellen Uzenoff, Vice Chairperson	Dr. Jo-Ann Keating, Director of Finance & Ops.
Dana Levin, Secretary/Treasurer	Jackson Marvin, Student Representative (departed 6:49 p.m.)
Nina Daniel	
Elise Major	Absent: Denise Harvey
Sara Spaulding	Lewis Brey, Director of Human Resources
Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent	Jack Seigenthaler, Student Representative

I. CALL TO ORDER, VERIFICATION OF QUORUM
Colleen A. Palmer, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education elects Philip Schaefer as the Chair of the Board of Education for the term of January 2015 through December 2015. Motion by Mrs. Uzenoff, second by Ms. Daniel, all in favor. (6-0)

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education elects Ellen Uzenoff as the Vice-Chairperson of the Weston Board of Education. Motion by Mr. Schaefer, second by Mrs. Levin, all in favor. (6-0)

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education elects Dana Levin as the Board Secretary/Treasurer. Motion by Ms. Major, second by Ms. Spaulding, all in favor. (6-0)

IV. RECOGNITION – No report

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board voted to approve the minutes from December 8.

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education approves the minutes of the December 8, 2014 Work Session. Motion by Mrs. Levin, second by Ms. Major, all in favor. (6-0)

The Board voted to approve the minutes from December 15. Mr. Schaefer and Ms. Daniel were absent.

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education approves the minutes of the December 15, 2014 Regular Session. Motion by Ms. Major, second by Mrs. Uzenoff, 4 in favor – Mrs. Uzenoff, Mrs. Levin, Ms. Major, Ms. Spaulding; 2 abstained – Mr. Schaefer, Ms. Daniel. (4-0-2)

The Board voted to approve the minutes from January 13. Ms. Major was absent.

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education approves the minutes of the January 13, 2015 Budget Workshop. Motion by Mrs. Levin, second by Ms. Spaulding, 5 in favor – Mr. Schaefer, Mrs. Uzenoff, Mrs. Levin, Ms. Daniel, Ms. Spaulding; 1 abstained – Ms. Major. (5-0-1)

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT – No report

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion Regarding Shared Space at Hurlbutt Elementary School

Mr. Schaefer, Board Chairperson, briefly touched on the original motion from 2012, and its background.

Motion: At its meeting on December 17, 2012, Weston Board of Education tabled indefinitely: “any action and discussion by the Weston Board of Education regarding agenda Item IX, Shared Space of Hurlbutt Elementary School.” Moved that the Weston Board of Education take this item from the table for discussion and possible action. Motion by Mrs. Uzenoff, second by Mrs. Levin, all in favor. (6-0)

2. Discussion on Response to Board of Selectmen’s Questions Regarding District Facilities Utilization

Mr. Schaefer, Board Chairperson, discussed the Board of Selectmen’s request to review our facilities and the Board’s work in reviewing all information prior to the upcoming Tri-Board meeting. Dr. Palmer, Superintendent of Schools, provided an overview of the draft document crafted in response to the Town’s memo and the specific questions asked. She discussed the sequence of events, beginning in 2012, leading up to the present discussions and factors to consider in school facilities usage, including the deed for HES property, reimbursement for non-educational use of a facility constructed with a State grant, and the cost of refurbishment of school space to other uses. She also discussed enrollment and capacity at WIS and HES. The final memo is due to the Board of Selectmen Saturday morning. Discussion by the Board followed.

3. FY 2016 Operating Budget Discussion and/or Adoption

Mr. Berkowitz, Athletics Director, answered Board questions on girls’ gymnastics. Additional discussion by the Board followed on a marimba request, the copy center, and long-range planning.

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education approves the FY 2016 budget in the amount of \$48,864,472, which is an increase of \$1,499,616 over the FY 2015 budget or an additional 3.17%. Motion by Mrs. Levin, second by Mrs. Uzenoff, all in favor. (6-0)

4. Approval of Authorization to Apply for a State of Connecticut Technology Grant

Mr. Haakonsen, Director of Technology, discussed a grant for technology upgrades to support transition to the new standards offered by the State of Connecticut.

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education authorizes the district administration to apply for the State of Connecticut Grant for technology upgrades on its behalf. Motion by Mrs. Uzenoff, second by Ms. Spaulding, all in favor. (6-0)

5. Resignation

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education notes the resignation of Meredith Hallgren, 1.0 FTE Teacher for Hurlbutt Elementary School, effective June 30, 2015. Motion by Mrs. Uzenoff, second by Ms. Major, all in favor. (6-0)

6. Fourth FY 2015 Financial Update and Approval of Transfers

Dr. Keating, Director of Finance and Operations, provided a monthly financial update. Transfers were for an audio provider for Company's fall production, updating the high school library collection, additional VEX kits for robotics, and equipment repairs.

Motion: Moved that the Weston Board of Education approves the transfers as presented by Dr. Keating in the fourth FY 2015 financial report. Motion by Ms. Daniel, second by Ms. Major, all in favor. (6-0)

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

IX. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1. Next Regular Board Meeting is Tuesday, February 24, 2015, at 7:30 p.m.

2. District Update

Dr. Palmer, Superintendent of Schools, announced the Tri-Board meeting scheduled for next Tuesday. She also announced that, in event of delayed opening due to snow, there will be no early dismissal for professional development on Friday.

3. Principals' Reports

Mrs. Kaddis, Hurlbutt Elementary School Principal, highlighted students learning Spanish words in association with current units of study in other subjects and the upcoming 100th day of school. Ms. Falber, Weston Intermediate School Principal, commented on the combined intermediate and middle school chorus concert, an assembly on altruism and empathy, and community service initiatives. Ms. Watkins,

Weston Middle School Principal, discussed computer science week, PBIS activities, and the robotics club. She also announced the upcoming weekend performances of *The Music Man, Jr.* Mrs. Deorio, Weston High School Principal, announced eighth-grade family orientation night on February 25 and the advancement of the mock trial red team. She also discussed today's SGA-sponsored staff appreciation day.

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. WHS Student Representatives' Report – No report

2. Communications Committee

Ms. Daniel discussed the success of the Realtors Open House. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for February 19.

3. Curriculum Committee

Ms. Uzenoff discussed the following topics from the January 21 meeting: math renewal update, March Tri-State visit, modifications to K-5 reading, and implementation of the high school writing center. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for February 11.

4. Finance Committee

Per Mr. Schaefer, there is nothing to report beyond what was discussed previously on the agenda. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for February 12.

5. Facilities Committee

Ms. Uzenoff discussed the following topics from the January 12 meeting: summer projects, the operating budget request, shared space and long-term planning, and minutes approval. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for February 11.

6. Policy Committee – No report

7. Negotiations Committee – No report

8. CES – No report

9. CAFE

Ms. Major discussed the recent Legislative Breakfast at Staples High School.

10. Weston Education Foundation – No report

X. ADJOURNMENT

*Motion: Motion to adjourn by Ms. Major, second by Mrs. Levin, all in favor. (6-0)
Meeting adjourned at 10:01 p.m.*

Minutes prepared by Jennifer Markov, Board of Education Clerk.

Minutes reviewed/approved by Dr. Colleen Palmer, Superintendent.

DRAFT

February 4, 2015

Dr. Colleen Palmer
Superintendent
Weston Public Schools
24 School Road
Weston, CT 06883

Dear Dr. Palmer:

I would like to extend my appreciation to the Board of Education, yourself, and the Town of Weston for allowing me to serve as the Director of Technology for the past seven years. My time in Weston has been enjoyable and the support of the community has allowed us to move technology forward throughout the District and Town. As much as I have enjoyed my stay in Weston, I will be resigning as of February 27, 2015 to pursue another opportunity.

I will work hard with all stakeholders to facilitate a smooth transition and have every confidence the members of the Technology Department will continue to provide a robust and reliable experience for all end users. In addition, I will make myself available by phone or onsite after the transition as requested by the District.

Thank you for your support, friendship, and the opportunity of working for the Weston Public Schools and the Town of Weston and wish everyone well in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erik Haakonsen', with a stylized, flowing script.

Erik Haakonsen

Director of Technology
Weston Public Schools

cc: Lewis Brey

WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Year: 2013-14

Internal Assessment Report:

**A report on the implementation of district
performance assessments and an update on the AIM initiative**



**24 School Road
Weston, Connecticut 06883**

**Kenneth G. Craw, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction**

**Presented to the Weston Board of Education
February 24, 2015**

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Internal Assessment Report:

A report on the implementation of district performance assessments and an update on the AIM initiative

Introduction

Why is it important to highlight information regarding the implementation of district performance assessments?

All too often standardized testing results receive the most attention in education, while assessments embedded into everyday classroom experiences are rarely discussed publicly. Weston Public Schools has developed a rich array of authentic performance assessments over the past five years through our Academic Innovation and Measurement (AIM) initiative and gained valuable insights into student performance based on the information gleaned from these learning experiences. The purpose of the following report is to communicate why we value these assessments, and to provide the community with an update on how our system is promoting the development of high-priority skills through experiences designed for students to:

- Apply their thinking to real-life problems;
- Think in a manner that encourages creative/innovative solutions;
- Discuss, present, and defend their work to others in meaningful ways;
- Work effectively in a team environment; and
- Examine multiple global perspectives.

In addition, this report provides an update on how the goals of the AIM initiative have permeated all grade levels/disciplines and continue to evolve.

Why do we value performance assessments?

Performance assessments embedded in the curriculum serve a different purpose from standardized tests designed for accountability purposes. In the Weston Public Schools, performance assessments are authentic learning experiences that engage students in tasks that approximate real-life situations or problems. An assessment is considered authentic when there is an audience beyond the student's classroom teacher, such as a parent, community member, or outside organization. Teachers employ authentic performance assessments to motivate and empower students to be innovative thinkers, creative problem-solvers, effective communicators, and inspired learners prepared to thrive in an ever-changing global world. Unlike standardized assessments, teachers use performance assessments as part of an immediate feedback loop to modify and adjust their instruction. For students, performance assessments provide opportunities to engage in deep learning, revise their work, collaborate and receive valuable feedback through self-assessment, peer review, and authentic audiences beyond the classroom.

What characteristics do all of the performance assessments in this report have in common?

Student Choice and Voice: These performance assessments provide students with opportunities to drive and personalize their learning. Students are given choices during the process of completing the task, as they create a solution to a problem, or in how they deliver the product. This allows for the student's own voice and strengths to shine through.	Authenticity: There is a high level of authenticity in each of the tasks, meaning each student is communicating their end product to an audience beyond their teacher. For example, for the 2nd grade cornerstone, student representatives shared their proposals for improving the Memorial Day Fair at a PTO meeting to suggest improvements for next year's fair.
Feedback and Revision: A critical aspect of the learning process is for students to receive descriptive feedback in order to revise their work. As part of these tasks, students conference with teachers and peers. For example, teachers structured a peer feedback opportunity as part of the revision process during the 5th grade cornerstone, which asked students to investigate an issue of importance in the school and recommend improvements. Here is sample feedback from one student to another: "You have a lot of information about yourself in here. Try adding some information from your reading so your piece is balanced."	Self-Assessment and Goal Setting: Students are given multiple opportunities to reflect on their work in relation to standards articulated in rubrics, thus teaching them to self-regulate their learning. This is an important skill that performance assessments allow us to develop with our students, assisting them in becoming independent learners. For instance, the 10th grade writing portfolio builds in an opportunity for students to craft a reflective letter to discuss their strengths and areas of growth as a writer.
Motivation and Engagement: When students engage in real-life problems they can relate to, they become motivated to learn at high levels. These tasks place the emphasis on the process versus the outcome. We have found it isn't always easy to promote the mindset of 'learning for the sake of learning,' because students have been conditioned to earning grades. Assessments such as the 7th grade population study motivate students to sink their teeth into a local problem by examining analyzing and synthesizing information from several sources.	Learning Environment: These performance assessments require more than one sitting or class period to complete. The tasks are often cross-disciplinary and require changes to the typical daily schedule. Benefits include a slower pace to the day, greater flexibility to collaborate with students and teachers, and seamless use of technology. During the 8th grade cornerstone, students did not pass from class to class as they normally do, thus affording them the time to sustain their focus on the task throughout the course of the week.
Alignment to Rigorous Standards and AIM Outcomes: All performance assessments are aligned to standards and selected outcomes on our AIM matrix (see appendix). Each assessment in this report has identified a 'critical thinking' outcome as one of the AIM outcomes. This will allow us to analyze critical thinking abilities as students progress through our system.	Rubrics: Each performance assessment is accompanied by a rubric that contains clear expectations for student performance aligned with rigorous standards. Teachers use models as teaching tools to illustrate levels of performance with their students.

What is an assessment for and of learning?

With our AIM assessments, both the process of learning as well as the product are highly valued. This report is comprised of the grades 2, 5, and 8 cornerstone assessments, the grade 7 population study performance assessment, and the grade 10 writing portfolio. These tasks are all considered assessments for and of learning that **produce deep learning and measure student growth as they progress through our system.**

With an assessment for learning, students engage in a learning process over time that encompasses the characteristics described on the previous page. Teachers build in learning experiences and direct instruction that enables them to be successful in carrying out the task. As students work on the task, they engage in self-assessment and receive feedback during the task that enables them to refine their thinking and end product.

At the end of the experience, multiple teachers collaboratively score student work products and provide students with further feedback on a rubric benchmarking their progress. This is how the task also serves as an assessment of learning. Additionally, teachers send home the scored rubrics so parents can review the progress their child has made during the unit. At the end of the process, teachers set goals for modifying and adjusting instruction for the following year based on what they have learned about student performance. This helps inform our district about how we can further assist students in developing the high-priority skills outlined in the AIM matrix (appendix A).

How are the results presented on the following pages and what do they illustrate?

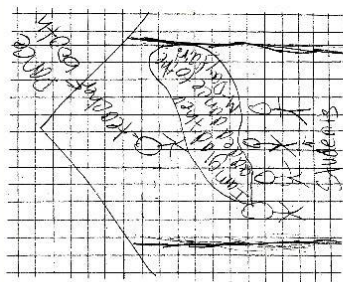
For each performance assessment, an infographic was created as a visual representation intended to communicate complex information quickly and clearly. Each infographic consists of:

- A brief description of the task;
- A visual comparison of proficient and complex responses for critical or creative thinking;
- A visual representation of the data for the total number of students performing at various score points;
- Brief excerpts of student work illustrating the difference between a complex response and a proficient response; and
- A description of project goals we are working towards during the 2014-15 school year.

On the reverse page of the infographic is the corresponding rubric for the assessment that is provided to students at the beginning of the learning process. It is helpful to refer to the rubric for additional information regarding student expectations and how they relate to the rubric levels. Please see the infographics and rubrics for the following assessments:

- Grade 2 Cornerstone;
- Grade 5 Cornerstone;
- Grade 7 Population Study;
- Grade 8 Cornerstone; and
- Grade 10 Writing Portfolio

The Task: Improving the Memorial Day Fair



Students were asked to analyze a variety of cross-disciplinary resources regarding the Weston Memorial Day Fair, and then asked to generate recommendations, supported by evidence, to make the Fair even better.



"Lots of people will consider it fun!"
~ from sample Student Proposal

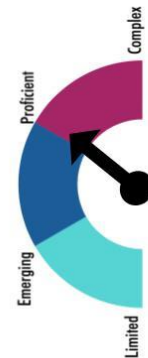
"I think that we should add dance to the Memorial Day Fair because I looked at a survey, and 100 people said that they would add dance, and it would be great exercise. . . . Dancing is a fun way to stay healthy and active."

~ from sample Student Proposal

Comparison of Critical Thinking between Score Points

"Proficient" Critical Thinking

"I think that you should add an Arts and Crafts stall because the games are not all 'get your hands on stuff' things. . . . Because on my survey results it says 20 people 'Love it!' and 150 people say it is 'OK' and 30 say 'No Thanks.'"

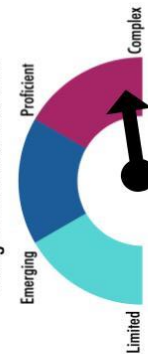


This Proficient recommendation is supported with accurate interpretation of the survey results.



"Complex" Critical Thinking

"I think we should add Pig Races because they are fun to watch and Bored Boy from 'Time for Weston Kids' will never get tired of this. Also, I have seen a pig race at the Houston Rodeo and everybody there thought that it was awesome!"



This Complex recommendation balances accurate interpretation of the artifacts with relevant personal experiences.

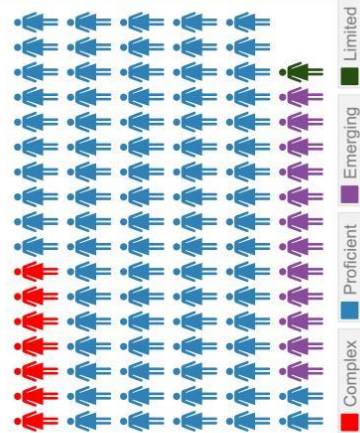
"I think that there should be a tent where you can enjoy your food when it rains on Monday. I know that it is going to rain on Monday because the weekend weather forecast is rainy."
~ from sample Student Proposal



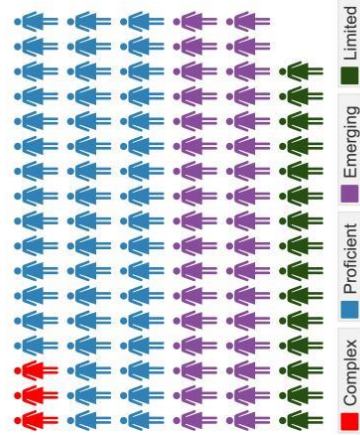
Cornerstone Assessment Feedback

Each student received score feedback in two rubric dimensions:
(1) Engaging in Real-World Problem-Solving; and (2) Critical Thinking: Interpretation & Evidence.

Aggregate Rubric Scores: Engaging in Real-World Problem-Solving



Aggregate Rubric Scores: Critical Thinking: Interpretation & Evidence



In addition, each student collaborated, discussed, and shared his/her thinking for peer feedback throughout the process. Each class chose the recommendations they felt would impact the most Fair-goers, and student class representatives shared the top proposals at a spring PTO meeting for consideration for the 2015 Memorial Day Fair.

Project Goals for 2014-15

Students will receive explicit, targeted, ongoing instruction in the Critical Thinking domain. Teachers will focus on strengthening students' ability to cite clear and specific evidence that supports the writer's interpretation. Oral rehearsing prior to responding in writing will ensure that students' written responses demonstrate the depth of thinking that occurs when speaking.

Grade 2 Cornerstone Rubric 2014

Dimension	Limited (1)	Emerging (2)	Proficient (3)	Complex (4)
Recommendations AIM Outcome #1 (Global: Engage in Real World Problem Solving: Use inter-disciplinary knowledge to solve a real-world problem)	Recommendation cannot be accurately inferred because only pictures were used OR there is no recommendation	Recommendation can be inferred from writing and/or pictures, but is not clearly stated	Clear, specific recommendation for change that will make the fair better for some fair goers	- Clear specific and detailed recommendation for change that will make the fair better for different types of fair goers - Anticipates constraints and addresses them
Evidence - use of data - personal experience AIM Outcome #2 (Critical Thinking-Interpreting: Students will be able to accurately interpret and demonstrate a deep understanding of the issue.)	- Recommendation relies solely on personal experience as support and does not use the data - OR There is no support	- Recommendation is supported with some accurate and some inaccurate interpretation of the artifacts. OR relies more heavily on personal experience - Personal experience can be inferred by reader	- Recommendation is supported with accurate interpretation of the artifacts - May or may not include relevant personal experiences to support their recommendation	Recommendation is supported with a balance of accurate interpretation from the artifacts AND relevant personal experiences

The Task: WIS Improvement

"Adults don't always have to take action. The problem is first noticed by kids, and usually the kids can make a change. We just have to care enough about the problem to be able to solve it."

- from sample Student Reflection

"Before you leave WIS for the Middle School, you will have the opportunity to investigate an issue of importance in our school and make recommendations for how the WIS community can be a better place."

- Final Product Format Choices*
1. PowerPoint / Google Presentation
 2. Written letter
 3. Speech
 4. Poster

Comparison of Creative Thinking between Score Points

"Proficient" Real-World Problem-Solving

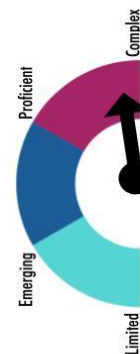
"My recommendation would be to change around the schedule. Each special would have 45 minutes per lesson, and 2 days of each special. Specials would only take up 450 minutes of a student's week. Per day, if a student had 2 specials, it would leave 330 minutes for writing, reading, science, and other subjects. This would still make time for other subjects, but also make enough time for specials."



This Proficient proposal makes a clear, realistic, and actionable recommendation for solving a perceived problem in general terms.

"Complex" Real-World Problem-Solving

"My recommendation is 'paws' on buses. I know that seems like a copy of the normal 'paws,' but if you think about it, it isn't. The different thing about it is that it will be on your bus and every grade will get one instead of every class. If the kids are being safe and responsible, they will get a 'paw,' and whichever grade has the most 'paws' out of all the buses at the end of the month will get a prize or certificate: for example, a fifth-grade pajama party, a movie day, certificates,

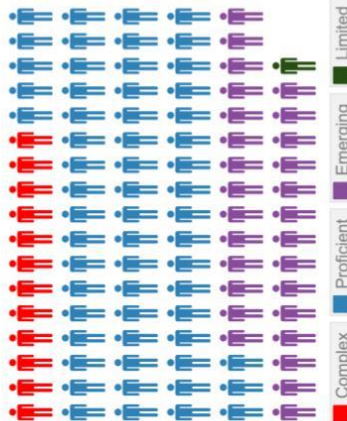


This Complex proposal makes a clear, realistic, and actionable recommendation for solving a perceived problem with specifics from student and adult roles.

Cornerstone Assessment Feedback

Each student received score feedback in two rubric dimensions:
(1) Engaging in Real-World Problem-Solving; and (2) Critical Thinking: Synthesize & Apply.

Aggregate Rubric Scores: Engaging in Real-World Problem-Solving



Aggregate Rubric Scores: Critical Thinking: Synthesize & Apply



In addition, each student received structured peer feedback during the revision process. For example, "You have a lot of information about yourself in here. Try adding some information from your reading so your piece is balanced."

Project Goals for 2014-15

All students will be given the opportunity to conduct independent research in order to more adequately support the specific recommendations they make. The curriculum will also more closely focus on using a balance of support from both evidence and personal experience in order to more effectively teach the Synthesize & Apply outcome.

Grade 5 Cornerstone Rubric 2014

	Limited (1)	Emerging (2)	Proficient (3)	Complex (4)
Description of the Problem - How well did you describe the problem? - Why should it change?	- I vaguely reference the problem. - I do not explain why the problem needs to change, or I do so in a confusing way.	- I repeat the problem in the same words as the resources. - I provide a general explanation of why the problem needs to change.	- I describe reason(s) for the problem clearly and in my own words, supported with specific examples. - I provide a clear and supported explanation of why the problem needs to change. Reasons are ordered for importance.	- I describe reasons for the problem clearly in my own words, supported with specific, strong examples. - I provide a clear and supported explanation of why the problem needs to change. Reasons are ordered for importance.
Recommendation - What is your recommendation? - Is it clear, realistic, and actionable? - How will it solve or minimize the problem? - How will adults and I work to solve the problem? AIM Outcome #1 (Real World Problem Solving: <i>Use inter-disciplinary knowledge to solve a real-world problem)</i>	I do not make a recommendation for solving or minimizing the problem.	- I make a recommendation for solving or minimizing the problem that may be unclear, unrealistic to a 5th grader, or impossible to act upon. - I say how the recommendation will minimize or solve the problem, but don't explain why. - My recommendation mostly describes student or adult roles in solving the problem.	- I make a clear, realistic, and actionable recommendation for solving or minimizing the problem. I address possible challenges the recommendations may present. - I specifically explain how the recommendation will minimize or solve the problem. - My recommendation describes both student and adult roles in solving the problem and explains why each role makes <u>sense</u>.	- I make clear, realistic, and actionable recommendations for solving or minimizing the problem. I address possible challenges the recommendations may present. - I specifically explain how the recommendation will minimize or solve the problem. - My recommendation describes both student and adult roles in solving the problem and explains why each role makes <u>sense</u>.
Quality of Support - Have you used a balance of personal experience and information from the resources? - Is your information accurate and relevant? AIM Outcome #2 Critical Thinking- (Synthesize and Apply: Integrate and apply personal and collective knowledge to a novel application)	My presentation focuses exclusively on personal experiences.	- My presentation includes support from mostly personal experiences or mostly resources. - My presentation uses general information to support ideas. Information may be inaccurate or irrelevant.	- My presentation includes a balance of support from personal experiences and multiple resources. - My presentation uses accurate and relevant information from sources to support my ideas.	- My presentation includes a balance of support from personal experiences and multiple resources organized for impact. - My presentation uses accurate, relevant information from well-chosen sources to support my ideas.

Grade 7 Population Study

Weston Public Schools

197 seventh-graders at Weston Middle School completed the Grade 7 Population Study.

2013-14

The Task: Recommending Local Proposals based on Population Issues Action Research

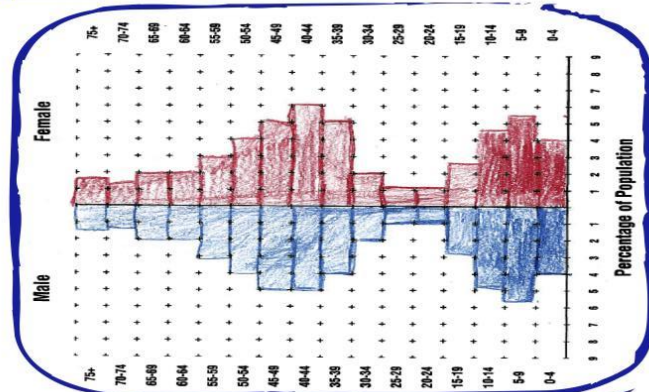
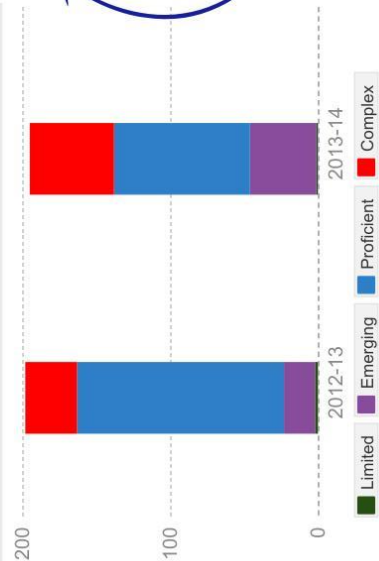
"After studying why people move from place to place, what problems come with growing populations, and what challenges are created by declining populations, your expertise is needed in addressing the situation in Weston. In light of the population changes within the town, you will then use research to make a proposal designed to address current challenges."

Assessment Feedback

Each student worked in a group to research information about the population demographics of Weston and current challenges. Feedback was received in three Critical Thinking rubric dimensions:

- (1) Analyzing Graphic Information;
- (2) Engaging in Global Issues; and
- (3) Synthesizing & Applying.

Critical Thinking Rubric Scores, 2012-13 vs. 2013-14



What would be a good "snapshot" to take of Weston based on the information provided in this Population Pyramid?

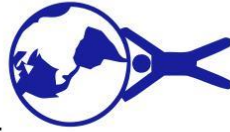
"I think we should add a public park that is kid-friendly and dog-friendly so residents and their children and pets can have a great and sociable time in the outdoors."
~ from sample Student Proposal



Comparison of Critical Global Thinking between Score Points

"Proficient" Critical Thinking

"The Weston Youth Center would provide a place for kids to do their homework, play around, and give a helping hand to children with working parents."



This Proficient proposal addresses some of the social, political, or economic consequences of Weston's population trends.

"Complex" Critical Thinking

"I think Weston should add sidewalks to the main and back roads so residents can walk safely to places, walk their pets, be able to bike, and have fresh air in a safe way. I also think this would be a major pull factor to clients moving to Weston, in particular because its small-town feel would attract even more people if it had sidewalks."



This Complex proposal addresses the social, political and economic consequences of Weston's population trends with innovative links to the town's demographics.

Project Goals for 2014-15

Students will demonstrate growth in their analytical thinking through written proposals addressing Weston's population changes. Teachers will offer multiple opportunities for student feedback and reflection, as well as cross-curricular connections.

Grade 7 Population Study Action Research Rubric 2014

	Limited (1)	Emerging (2)	Proficient (3)	Complex (4)
Describing Population Trends • Weston's Population Pyramid	• We mention trends but do not describe or relate to the population pyramid.	• We try to describe what is on the pyramid but do not use the population pyramid to identify the potential trends.	• We identify the trends and describe the issues by drawing from the population pyramid.	• We clearly identify the trends and describe the issues using the population pyramid.
Use of Evidence • Use of documents AIM Outcome #1 Critical Thinking: (Synthesizing and Applying)	• We do not really use the documents to support our proposal. • We are limited in our use of the documents; our information may be insignificant or irrelevant.	• We use some of the documents to support portions of our proposal. • We use the documents superficially or incorrectly.	• We mostly use the documents to support our proposal. • We utilize five documents well.	• We thoroughly use the documents to support our proposal. • We effectively embed the use of the information from more than five documents.
AIM Outcome #2 Engaging in Global Issues: • Analyze economic, political, and social consequences of issue. • Solution may lead to new ideas.	• Our proposal inaccurately or unrealistically explains some social, political, and economic implications of Weston's population trends. • Our proposal is unrealistic for Weston.	• Our proposal contains some inaccurate explanations of social, political, and economic consequences of Weston's population trends. • Our proposal restates portions of presented solutions, and/or may be unrealistic.	• Our proposal addresses some social, political, or economic consequences of Weston's population trends. • Our proposal restates or combines present solutions.	• Our proposal addresses the social, political, and economic consequences of Weston's population trends. • Our proposal is innovative or transformative.

The Task: Developing a \$1,000 Grant Proposal

Students were given the opportunity to create a grant proposal for up to \$1,000 to enhance the Weston Middle School community. Proposals covered a range of topics, including changes in physical infrastructure, co-curricular offerings, and school programs and events. A panel of teachers selected six finalists.

Six Finalists

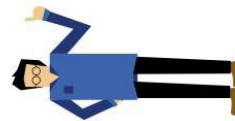
Community Care
Permanent School Store
#Mappinit (school maps)
Team Houses
Hydration Station
Hype for Skype

"This process took a lot of thinking, planning, innovating, and brainstorming."
~ from sample Student Reflection

Comparison of Creative Thinking between Score Points

"Proficient" Creative Thinking

"My idea is creating a WMS Spirit Store, an online store that allows the students of WMS to customize their very own Warrior gear and apparel. 'mylocker.net' allows the creation of a fully self-sustaining store where the students can go online and customize whatever WMS apparel according to the activities they participate in."



This Proficient response takes an existing idea and applies a new twist for the WMS community.

"Complex" Creative Thinking

"For a WPS/WPL Library Courier Service: In the school, kids can check out books and every week a courier will move the checked-out books over to the school and then he or she will return the books back to the [public] library."



This Complex response presents an original transformative idea to benefit the WMS community.



"This was a very challenging project and it really stretched my intellectual and creative abilities. A new skill I learned was how to properly manage your time like you would in a real-life situation."
~ from sample Student Reflection

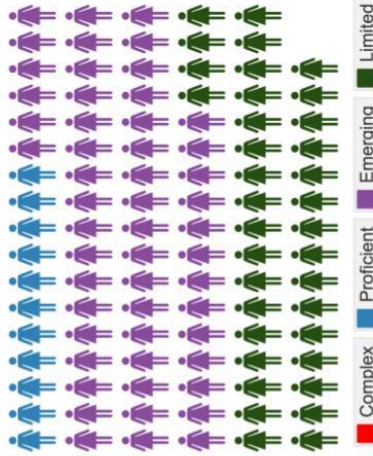
Cornerstone Assessment Feedback

Each student was supported through process stages, ultimately receiving feedback in two rubric dimensions: (1) Creative Thinking: Innovate & Transform; and (2) Critical Thinking: Synthesize & Apply.

Aggregate Rubric Scores: Creative Thinking: Innovate & Transform



Aggregate Rubric Scores: Critical Thinking: Synthesize & Apply



Process Stages

- Coaching Structure
- Embedded Lessons
- Online Resources
- Peer Review
- Collaborative Scoring/Feedback
- Finalist Mentoring

A strong focus was on establishing an authentic audience and achieving strong alignment between the task and the rubric.

Project Goals for 2014-15

Students will be provided additional instructional experiences and coaching to facilitate student achievement in the "Critical Thinking" domain. Teachers will provide more process time for students to ponder and brainstorm potential projects, and will work toward greater consistency and effectiveness in providing formative feedback to students during the process.

Grade 8 Cornerstone Rubric 2014

Component	Limited (1)	Emerging (2)	Proficient (3)	Complex (4)
Idea Selection and Description: - Innovative transformative - Goals and objectives AIM Outcome #1 Innovate and Transform	- I proposed an idea that addresses an authentic issue. My idea has been done before or it already exists in Weston. - My overall goal is unclear and/or does not support the intended issue/need.	- I proposed an idea to address an authentic issue. My idea may already exist elsewhere OR it may expand upon an existing Weston idea. - My overall goal is generally stated and mostly supports the intended issue/need.	- I proposed an innovative idea to address an authentic issue. My idea is innovative because it is a new twist on an existing idea or is completely original. - My overall goal is clearly and specifically stated and supports the intended issue/need.	- I proposed a transformative idea that addresses an authentic issue. My idea is transformative because it provides the “greatest good for the greatest number.” - My overall goal is clearly, specifically, and persuasively stated and supports the intended issue.
Needs Statement: - Justification - Backed by research/evidence AIM Outcome #2 Critical Thinking: (Synthesize and Apply)	- My idea is justified with my opinion not with evidence. - Any evidence I may have used is limited may be irrelevant or inaccurate. I have not been convincing or shown awareness of the needs of the community.	- My idea is justified with both opinion and evidence. - My use of evidence is partially relevant and accurate. I have attempted to be convincing and show some awareness of the needs of the community.	- My idea is well justified with evidence that is taken from multiple sources. - My use of evidence is relevant, specific, accurate, and is presented convincingly, and shows knowledge of the needs of the community.	- My idea is well justified with evidence taken from multiple sources and different perspectives. - My use of evidence is relevant, specific, accurate, and is persuasively presented in a way that addresses counter argument and shows deep insight into the needs of the community.
Impact: - Meets grant criteria - Sustainable/lasting - Measurable (quantitative & qualitative)	- My idea did not address the grant criteria. - My idea is unsustainable for future students. - I was not able to predict how my idea will be successful.	- My idea addresses some of the grant criteria. - My idea may be sustainable for future students but there are some questions. - I was able to predict how my idea will be successful.	- My idea addresses all grant criteria. - My idea is sustainable for future students. - I was able to predict and describe in detail how my idea will be successful.	- My idea fulfills all grant criteria. - My idea is easily sustainable for future students. - I was able to predict and describe how my idea will be successful. I chose a measurement strategy to evaluate its potential success.

Action Plan: • Feasibility and cost-effectiveness • Resources- human and material • Steps	• My plan is unrealistic. • My list of resources is vague and is missing associated costs. • My steps for implementation are disorganized and/or incomplete.	• My plan is mostly realistic. • I included a list of human resources and materials. • My steps for implementation are generally complete and/or somewhat organized.	• My entire plan is realistic and cost effective. • My list of human resources and materials includes all associated costs. • My steps for implementation are complete and logically ordered.	• My entire plan is realistic and cost effective. It anticipates and accounts for future or unknown expenses/ costs. • My list of human resources and materials includes all associated costs and includes alternatives. • My steps for implementation are logically ordered with an accompanying timeline.
Overall quality of communication: • Audience awareness • Mechanics • Word choice/sentence structure • Charts, diagrams, statistics etc. AIM Outcome #3 Communication	• My proposal is not directed at the target audience (grant selection committee). • Mechanical errors distort or interfere with meaning. • My word choice and/or sentence structure do not add value to the proposal. • Tables, charts, graphs, and statistics are inappropriately used or ineffectively communicated because of improper use of operations, units, and symbols.	• Some parts of my proposal demonstrate awareness of my target audience (grant selection committee). • Mechanical errors begin to distract the reader and/or interfere with meaning. • Some of my word choices and sentence structure are simplistic. • Tables, charts, graphs, and statistics, if used, show proper use of operations, units, and symbols with some minor errors.	• All parts of my proposal demonstrate awareness of my target audience (grant selection committee). • Mechanical errors, although they exist, do not distract the reader or interfere with meaning. • My writing is thorough because my vocabulary and sentence structure clarifies essential information. • Tables, charts, graphs, and statistics, if used, show proper use of operations, units, and symbols.	• All parts of my proposal demonstrate awareness of my- target audience (grant selection committee) and deliberately appeal to their values and/or expectations. • Very few or no mechanical errors are present. • My writing is simultaneously concise and thorough using vocabulary and sentence structure to clarify essential information. • Tables, charts, graphs, and statistics significantly enhance the proposal and show proper use of operations, units, and symbols.

Portfolio Contents: Four Interdisciplinary Writing Genres



■ Reflective Letter ■ Analytical Piece
■ Creative/Personal Narrative ■ Timed Writing

"I think of writing as a chapter in my educational journey that will prepare me for future experiences and basic necessities of life."
~ from sample Reflective Letter

"My writing goals are to go into depth in my analytical writing and to more easily generate an interesting creative piece."
~ from sample Reflective Letter

Comparison of Critical Thinking between Score Points

"Proficient" Analytical Paper

"The last two chapters of To Kill a Mockingbird act as a parenting crisis for Atticus as he must choose between being the caring parent or the honorable lawyer."



This Proficient analytical paper presents a defensible interpretation of Harper Lee's novel.



"Distinguished" Analytical Paper

"Haifaa Nour actually is astoundingly similar to Atticus Finch; both continue working to defeat a stereotype, no matter what blocks the way, with the will to stand against popular opinion to serve justice."



This Distinguished analytical paper presents and defends an important original idea synthesizing a character from Lee's novel and another person.

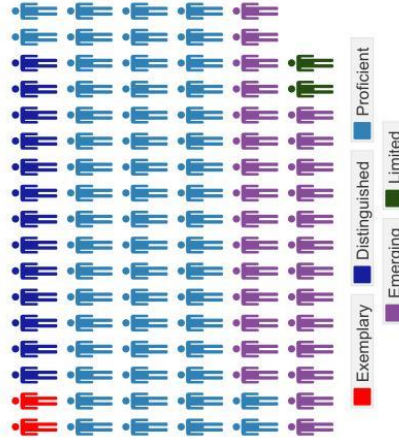
"Why there are so many, I do not know. What is in The Grapes, I do not know. It is my job to watch, not to know. To know is not to watch, and that is not my job. It is not my job to know."
~ from sample Creative Narrative



Portfolio Assessment Feedback

Each portfolio was assessed holistically on a 5-point rubric, along with narrative score feedback to each student on his/her strengths and goal areas as a writer.

Aggregate Rubric Scores



Sample Narrative Feedback

"One strength of your analytical piece is that you include strong source evidence to demonstrate the depth of Stalin's depravity, such as Jones' quotes from actual Russians living under Stalin. To improve this piece further:

- Consider what is the best form in which to present your argument given what you know about the material as well as your audience. For example, would your reader want slightly more background on Stalin before you start critiquing his 5-year plan?
- Consider also whether the amount of source material becomes overwhelming in your current form of three body paragraphs. Would more sub-divisions to create additional body paragraphs better focus your reader's attention?"

Project Goals for 2014-15

All Grade 10 students will participate in the writing portfolio assessment and related instruction. Grades 9-10 teachers across the curriculum will participate in continued professional development based on shared standards for writing assessment.

Grade 10 Writing Portfolio Diagnostic Rubric 2014

Title of Piece _____

	Purpose	Thinking	Organization	Language	Mechanics
LIMITED	Purpose of piece is unclear	Thinking does not demonstrate evidence of new ideas or interpretations	Organization is ineffective or confusing	Vocabulary and sentence structure contain significant errors	Mechanical errors significantly distract the reader or interfere with meaning
EMERGING (approaching proficiency)	Purpose of piece is not consistently clear	Thinking shows some evidence of attempts at analysis and somewhat defensible interpretations	Organization does not adequately support piece's meaning	Vocabulary and sentence structure do not demonstrate sufficient evidence of student's control of language	Mechanical errors distract the reader or interfere with meaning
PROFICIENT	Piece maintains an adequate focus and purpose	Thinking shows evidence of attempts at analysis and defensible interpretations	Organization reflects an understanding of how structure communicates meaning, although there are inconsistencies	Employment of vocabulary and sentence structure are appropriate, although there is not diversity or consistent control	Mechanical errors, although they exist, do not distract the reader or interfere with meaning
DISTINGUISHED	Piece has a clear and consistent purpose	Thinking shows skillful development of important original ideas and defensible interpretations	Organization reflects a consistent understanding of how structure communicates meaning	Employment of appropriate, diverse vocabulary and varied, deliberately designed sentences is evidence of student's control of language	Few mechanical errors are present
EXEMPLARY (contains all the elements of "distinguished" PLUS . . .)	Purpose is fulfilled in a creative, ambitious, and original way	Rigorous, highly analytical thinking shows sophistication of original ideas and interpretations	Organization reflects the intricacies of the ideas in a nuanced and complex way	Student's mastery of language is evident in employment of sophisticated vocabulary and artful, exceptionally well-written sentences	Very few or no mechanical errors are present

Overall Holistic Rating (circle one): **EXEMPLARY** **DISTINGUISHED** **PROFICIENT** **EMERGING** **LIMITED**

Weston High School Grade 10 Writing Portfolio Narrative Rubric

The assessment team will be reading portfolios with the following rubric in mind. Your goal should be to develop your portfolio to receive the highest possible evaluation.

Exemplary: This portfolio is exemplary in overall quality. It contains all of the elements of a distinguished portfolio, and also meets the following expectations: each piece fulfills its purpose in a creative, ambitious, and original way and strongly supports the needs or interests of the audience; it contains rigorous, highly analytical thinking that shows sophistication of original ideas and interpretations; its organization reflects the intricacies of the ideas in the piece in a nuanced and complex way; the student's mastery of language is evident in his or her employment of sophisticated vocabulary and artful, exceptionally well-written sentences; and very few or no mechanical errors are present.

Distinguished: This portfolio is distinguished in overall quality. Each piece has a clear and consistent purpose and clearly supports the needs or interests of the audience, its thinking shows skillful development of important original ideas and defensible interpretations, and its organization reflects a consistent and nuanced understanding of how structure communicates meaning. The student's control of language is evident in his or her employment of appropriate, diverse vocabulary and varied, deliberately designed sentences, and few mechanical errors are present.

Commendable: This portfolio is commendable in overall quality. Each piece has a clear and consistent purpose and generally supports the needs or interests of the audience, its thinking shows consistent evidence of important original ideas and defensible interpretations, and its organization reflects a consistent understanding of how structure communicates meaning. Each piece employs appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure, with consistent control and some diversity, and mechanical errors do not distract the reader or interfere with meaning.

Proficient: This portfolio is proficient in overall quality. Each piece maintains an adequate focus and purpose and generally supports the needs or interests of the audience, its thinking shows evidence of attempts at original ideas and defensible interpretations, and its organization reflects an understanding of how structure communicates meaning, although there are inconsistencies. Each piece employs appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure, although there is not diversity or consistent control, and mechanical errors generally do not distract the reader or interfere with meaning.

Emerging: This portfolio approaches proficient in overall quality. The purpose of each piece is not consistently clear, and audience considerations appear to have been limited, the thinking shows some evidence of attempts at original ideas and somewhat defensible interpretations, and the organization does not adequately support each piece's meaning. The vocabulary and sentence structure do not demonstrate sufficient evidence of the student's control of language, and mechanical errors distract the reader or interfere with meaning.

Limited: This portfolio is not effective in overall quality. Its flaws are numerous; each piece may be compromised by unclear purpose, ignorance of audience considerations, thinking that does not demonstrate evidence of original ideas or interpretations, ineffective or confusing organization, and significant errors in vocabulary, sentence structure, and/or mechanics.

Weston Infographics – Grade 2
Aggregate Rubric Scores
2013-14

Grade 2

Global Issues: Engaging in Real-World Problem-Solving

	# of students	% of total
Complex	11	7%
Proficient	134	80%
Emerging	21	12%
Limited	2	1%
TOTAL	168	

Grade 2

Critical Thinking: Interpretation and Evidence

	# of students	% of total
Complex	5	3%
Proficient	80	48%
Emerging	57	34%
Limited	26	15%
TOTAL	168	

Weston Infographics – Grade 5
Aggregate Rubric Scores
2013-14

Grade 5

Global Issues: Engaging in Real-World Problem-Solving

	# of students	% of total
Complex	21	11%
Proficient	111	59%
Emerging	52	28%
Limited	3	2%
TOTAL	187	

Grade 5

Critical Thinking: Synthesize and Apply

	# of students	% of total
Complex	20	11%
Proficient	77	41%
Emerging	68	36%
Limited	22	12%
TOTAL	187	

**Weston Infographics – Grade 7
Aggregate Rubric Scores
2012-13 and 2013-14**

Grade 7 (2012-13)

Critical Thinking: Synthesize and Apply

	# of students	% of total
Complex	35	18%
Proficient	140	71%
Emerging	21	11%
Limited	2	1%
TOTAL	198	

Grade 7 (2013-14)

Critical Thinking: Synthesize and Apply

	# of students	% of total
Complex	57	29%
Proficient	92	47%
Emerging	45	23%
Limited	1	1%
TOTAL	195	

Weston Infographics – Grade 8
Aggregate Rubric Scores
2013-14

Grade 8

Creative Thinking: Innovate and Transform

	# of students	% of total
Complex	5	2%
Proficient	37	18%
Emerging	109	52%
Limited	57	27%
TOTAL	208	

Grade 8

Critical Thinking: Synthesize and Apply

	# of students	% of total
Complex	0	0%
Proficient	22	11%
Emerging	110	53%
Limited	76	37%
TOTAL	208	

**Weston Infographics – Grade 10
Aggregate Rubric Scores
2013-14**

Grade 10

Holistic Writing Rubric Scores

	# of students	% of total
Exemplary	2	2%
Distinguished	13	13%
Proficient	55	55%
Emerging	28	28%
Limited	2	2%
TOTAL	100	

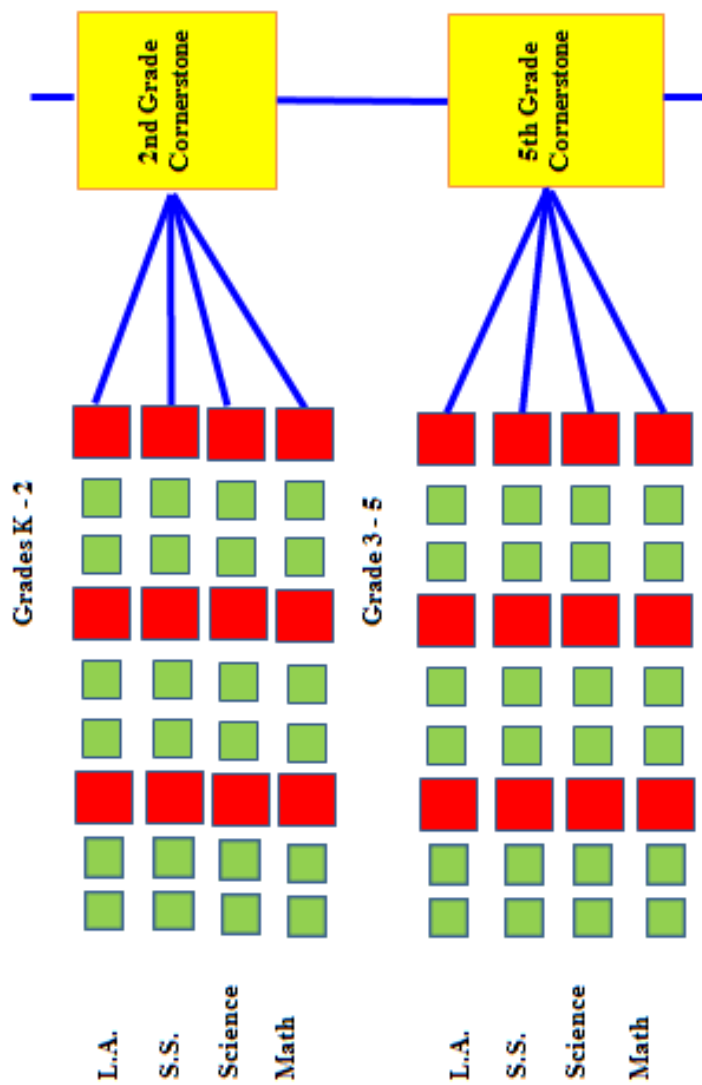
Why are the cornerstone assessments important to the district's assessment system?

The cornerstones highlighted in yellow are designed to benchmark student performance in high-priority skills outlined in the AIM matrix. Information from these assessments is used to track cohort growth for the grades 2, 5, and 8 cornerstones leading up to a capstone experience (under discussion) in high school. The district is in the process of establishing a data warehouse to track these results and to inform our system.

Cornerstones are engaging, cross-disciplinary assessments that require students to apply their thinking and skills to real-life situations. These assessments are low stakes for students and are intended to feel like learning experiences, rather than tests.

In the original design of AIM, there was an ambitious K-12 plan to design a cornerstone experience for each grade level. The plan has evolved to include student portfolios and content-based performance assessments to have a more diversified K-12 assessment framework.

K-12 Assessment Blueprint (Grades 2, 5, 8 Cornerstones leading to Senior Capstone Experience)



In the district's assessment plan, the red squares represent the end of unit summative assessments in each discipline, while the green squares represent the formative assessments leading up to the unit assessments. Collectively, these assessments prepare students for cross-disciplinary cornerstone experiences ultimately leading to a high school capstone experience. While not highlighted here, subjects such as music, art, PE, health and world language also feed into the cornerstone in the same way as the core subjects.

What is the value of situating student writing portfolios in our assessment framework?

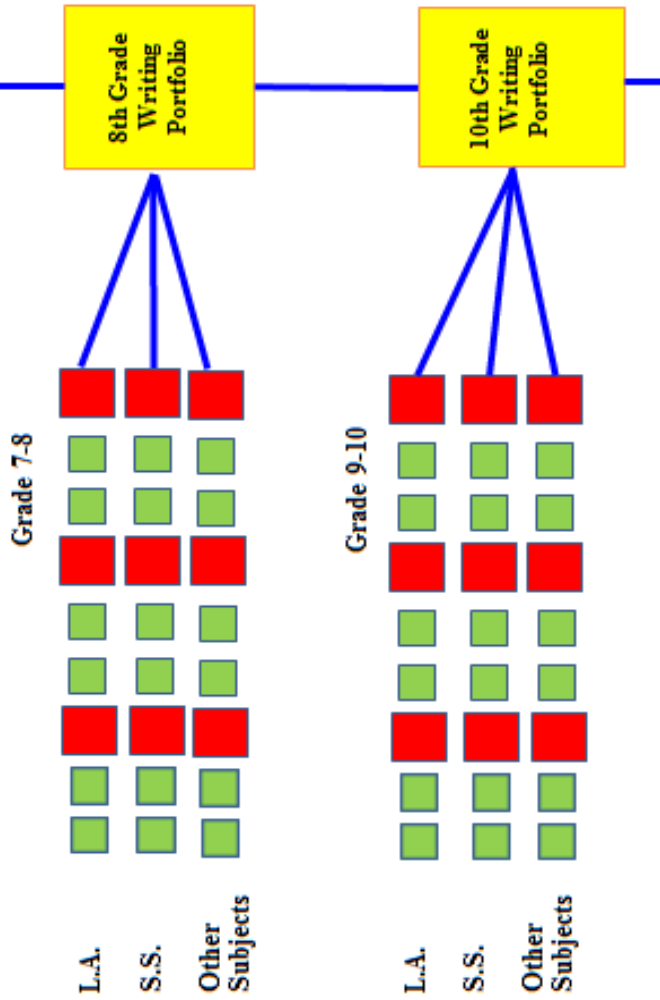
Having a student writing portfolio process at various grade levels supports our district goal to improve writing achievement. Currently, in grades 8 and 10 students build writing portfolios by revising and refining selected pieces. English and social studies teachers assist students in improving their writing by conferencing with them and providing them with descriptive feedback in relation to writing rubrics.

In addition, students reflect on their strengths and areas of growth as writers. Once completed, student writing portfolios are evaluated by a team of assessors, including writing experts from outside of Weston. We are already seeing the benefits of aligning the expectations for writing across the middle school and high school.

A fully articulated writing portfolio process across grade levels and schools is envisioned for the future to support writing across the curriculum. This will allow us to assess student growth in writing over time with our own internal assessment system.

K-12 Assessment Blueprint

(Portfolios)



In the district's assessment plan, the **red squares** represent end of unit assessments that involve writing and student self-reflection on writing development, while the **green squares** represent formative assessments teachers use to informally assess writing development against the rubric. These disciplines work in concert to improve writing achievement across the curriculum as measured by our writing portfolios.

What is an interdisciplinary performance assessment and how it is different from a cornerstone?

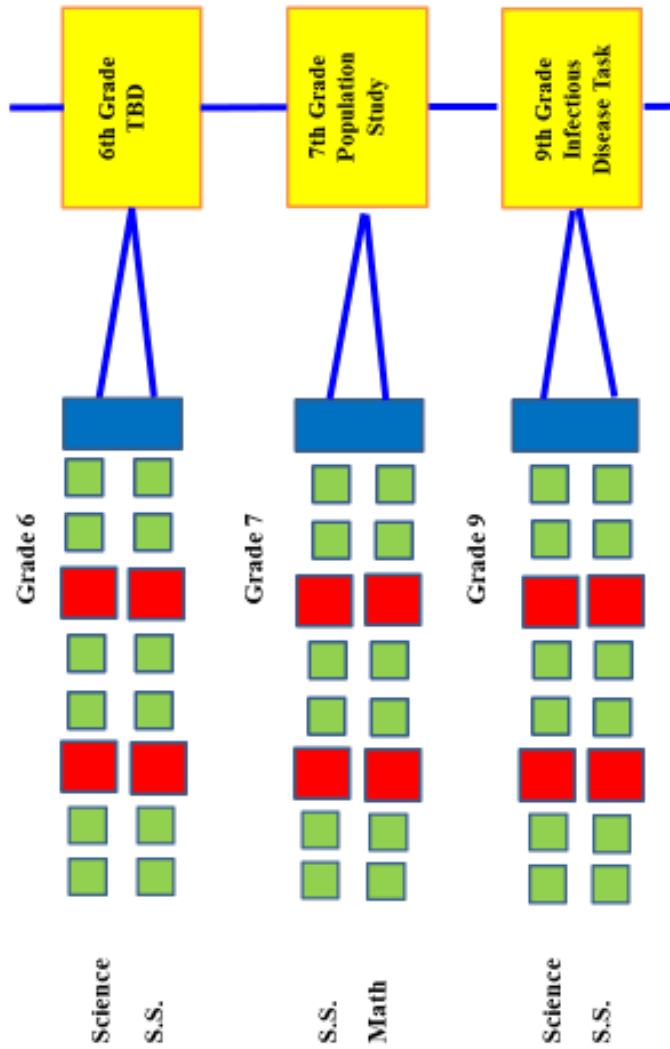
An interdisciplinary performance assessment is a learning experience that draws from content and skills in two or more subject areas.

Interdisciplinary tasks allow for a deeper study of a topic and for students to draw on skills from multiple content areas.

Teachers collaborate to identify connections between content areas. For example, in the 9th grade infectious disease task, students learn about various diseases in their biology classes, while in global studies they learn about diseases as one consequence of interactions between societies.

An interdisciplinary performance assessment differs from a cornerstone because it is based on the content in the curriculum. In contrast, a cornerstone is outcomes-based and independent of the specific content. Both types of assessments produce deep learning and allow us to monitor student growth in relation to the AIM learning outcomes.

K-12 Assessment Blueprint (Embedded Interdisciplinary Performance Assessments)



In the district's assessment plan, the **red squares** represent end of unit summative assessments, while the **green squares** represent interdisciplinary performance assessments. The **blue rectangles** represent interdisciplinary performance tasks embedded into the curriculum. For example, the grade 7 population study incorporates content from both social studies and mathematics.

To what extent were steps taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the information in this report?

Through our AIM initiative, the district partnered with Teachers College, Columbia University to establish a reliable scoring process. A psychometrician from Teachers College reviewed our cornerstone data for grades 2 and 5 and determined that our collaborative scoring process yielded a high degree of inter-rater reliability. For example in his analysis of the grade 2 cornerstone data, Dr. Lawrence DeCarlo stated, “It is immediately apparent that reliability is quite high in this case, being .90 or higher in many cases.” Further, he indicated that the rater reliabilities for the grade 5 cornerstone were quite high as well. While the other assessments were not reviewed by the psychometrician, the district has instituted the same scoring process in order to have a high degree of confidence in the results.

Among the procedures Weston uses to ensure inter-rater reliability are the collection and analysis of anchor papers. The anchor papers illustrate high, medium, and low levels of student performance. These papers are used to calibrate teachers prior to scoring each student work product. An additional benefit of having teachers collaboratively score student work is that it serves as a valuable form of professional development as they review student work together. It results in teachers identifying trends in student performance and discussing ways that they might modify curriculum and instruction to improve student achievement.

In terms of validity, the district partnered with Learning Center Initiatives (LCI), an organization with expertise in the development of high-quality performance assessments, who assisted us in the refinement of our cornerstone tasks and rubrics. LCI President, Dr. Giselle Martin-Kniep, and LCI consultant, Diane Cunningham, worked with our design teams to embed the desired standards and criteria measured by the task in the rubrics. For example, AIM outcomes were clearly articulated in the rubrics in order for students to know exactly what was expected of their performance. As a result, we have greater confidence that these performance assessments measure the intended outcomes. For students, this tight alignment, between the standards embedded in the rubric and the task, makes it clear what they are expected to know and be able to do.

What is the district doing to reduce the number of assessments students take?

The district is currently conducting an inventory of all major assessments administered to students during their academic career in an effort to reduce or eliminate any unnecessary or redundant assessments. The assessment review process will consist of identifying and reviewing grade level and course-specific assessments. Curriculum instructional leaders and administrators will collaborate to identify standardized and non-standardized assessments that students take during the course of the year. In addition, the district will determine what assessments it will include in the data warehouse in an effort to track and analyze student performance.

In addition, the district plans to continue emphasizing the use of performance-based assessments embedded into the learning process. We recognize the value of an assessment system that employs a variety of types of assessment, particularly performance-based assessments. Since these assessments fit seamlessly into teaching and learning they blur the lines between assessment and instruction. Finally, while our AIM partnership with Teachers College, Columbia University has concluded, the district continues to provide our teacher teams and new teachers with the necessary professional development on the effective development and implementation of performance assessments to sustain the goals of AIM.

Reflection and Analysis

Analysis of AIM performance data must be viewed in the appropriate context. All of these assessments have high expectations for student performance at the appropriate developmental level. The aggregate rubric scores provide us with a benchmark of where students are performing in relation to standards on the rubric. This information serves as a baseline for year-to-year comparisons as we continue to implement and expand the use of performance assessments in Weston. In future years, the district anticipates reporting on at least one performance assessment in each grade level to provide a more complete K-12 story of the kinds of deep learning experiences being implemented. We will also be able to examine performance trends over time for each grade level.

- 1. Cornerstones:** There was a common theme in the grades 2, 5, and 8 cornerstone tasks. Each involved students studying a local problem in either their school or community in order to come up with solutions or recommendations to a problem. Students in grade 2 analyzed and interpreted several documents and information related to the Weston Memorial Day Fair and presented solutions to the school's PTO. Students in grade 5 researched, analyzed, and synthesized several documents pertaining to an issue of importance to them and presented their findings to a school panel for how the WIS community can be improved. Students in grade 8 researched, analyzed, and synthesized several sources of information to create a grant proposal to enhance the WMS community. These tasks become increasingly complex with higher expectations from grade 2 to 8. Over time, we will be able to see whether or not increased percentages of students are achieving at the complex and proficient levels for critical thinking as cohorts move through our system.
- 2. Grade 2 Cornerstone:** Analysis of grade 2 cornerstone results indicated that our students are able to engage in *Real-World Problem-Solving* at a developmentally appropriate level. *Real-World Problem-Solving* refers to the extent to which students can use interdisciplinary knowledge to solve a real-world problem. 99% of Hurlbutt students recommended solutions to problems for the Memorial Day Fair at the emerging, proficient, and complex levels on the grade 2 rubric. Similarly, 85% of Hurlbutt students were able to *Interpret Evidence* (textual and visual) at the emerging, proficient, and complex levels on the grade 2 rubric.

However, a greater percentage of students, 87%, were able to engage in *Real-World Problem-Solving* at the proficient level or higher in comparison to only 51% of students who were able to *Interpret Evidence* at the proficient level or higher. As a result of this discrepancy between outcomes, one of our goals for the current year has been to afford students experiences targeting the critical thinking domain, by focusing on strengthening students' abilities to cite clear and specific evidence that supports the writer's interpretation. Oral rehearsing prior to responding in writing will ensure that students' written responses demonstrate the depth of thinking that occurs when speaking.
- 3. Grade 5 Cornerstone:** The percentage of students achieving at proficient or higher levels on the grade 5 rubric for *Engaging in Real-World Problem-Solving* was 70%. This result was significantly higher than for *Synthesizing and Applying*, which had

52% of students achieving at the proficient level or higher. Due to this discrepancy between outcomes, our teachers are having students focus on using more textual evidence to effectively teach the *Synthesize and Apply* outcome.

- 4. Grade 8 Cornerstone:** More than half of our eighth graders, 52%, performed at the emerging level on the rubric for *Innovate and Transform*. Similarly, for the *Synthesize and Apply* outcome more than half of our eighth graders, 53%, performed at the emerging level. In addition, a significant percentage of students, 27%, scored at the limited level on the rubric for *Innovate and Transform* with an even higher percentage of students, 37%, scoring at the limited level on the rubric for *Synthesize and Apply*. This information has informed us that we need to provide additional instructional experiences in these domains during and leading up to the 8th grade cornerstone.
- 5. Grade 10 Portfolio:** The results of the 10th grade writing portfolio pilot were intended to inform the full implementation of the portfolio for the current school year. Each of the 100 portfolios in the pilot year were assessed using a Narrative Rubric based upon five key dimensions of writing: Purpose, Thinking, Organization, Language, and Mechanics. Each overall score was holistic, taking into account all dimensions of writing as embedded in all four portfolio pieces: the reflective letter, the analytical piece, the creative or personal narrative, and the timed writing (appendix B). Rubric scores based on the pilot Narrative Rubric were generated solely to provide the basis for further analysis by the pilot team, including ongoing rubric development. Given that 55% of students scored in the proficient range and that there was a wide range of variability within this level, the pilot team revised the rubric for the current school year include a sixth level.

At the conclusion of the portfolio pilot, Jonathan Budd, the district's writing consultant, conducted structured interviews with 19 students who participated in the pilot (appendix C). Question number three asked, "Did you seek individual help from someone in developing your portfolio? Why/why not? If so, with whom did you work, and on what did you focus?" The responses indicated that most students (n=12) did not seek individual help from someone in developing their portfolios. Those who did (n=7) focused on selecting pieces, revising pieces, and editing pieces with their portfolio class teacher (n=2), parent (n=2), another teacher (n=2), or friend (n=1). This nugget of information combined with feedback from the teachers suggests the need to offer additional supports to assist students with their growth as writers. The district is in the process of establishing a Writing Center at Weston High School designed to provide one-on-one conferencing support to assist students in improving writing achievement.
- 6. Grade 7 Population Study:** The results show that the number of students performing in the complex band for *Synthesize and Apply* increased significantly from 18% in 2013 to 29% in 2014. Teachers attribute this to the increased focus on this skill within the unit.

Appendix A – AIM Matrix

Critical Thinking	Creative Thinking	Collaboration	Communication	Global
Evaluation and Justifying Students will be able to identify and clearly define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation while citing appropriate evidence to justify conclusions.	Imagining Students will be able to imagine new directions/approaches (including alternate, divergent, and contradictory ideas) to solve a real-world problem.	Engaging in Collective Intelligence Students will be able to work as a group towards a complex problem that can only be solved through the collaboration and various expertise of each group member.	Projecting Students will be able to choose the most effective medium for the message, use knowledge and information interactively to share important information with purpose to impact readers/listeners/receivers.	Engaging in Real World Problem Solving Students will be able to utilize inter-disciplinary knowledge that involves deriving new, innovative solutions to a real-world problem requiring students to synthesize knowledge.
Interpreting Students will be able to accurately <i>interpret</i> and demonstrate a deep understanding of the issue.	Simulating Students will be able to create models and simulations to explore complex systems and issues to identify trends and forecast possibilities.	Engaging in Distributed Cognition Students will be able to negotiate various person(s), digital tools, applications, digital mediums and environments to accomplish a specific objective.	Reflecting and Meta-Analysis Students will be able to reflect, analyze and evaluate on progress of learning and implications for new learning.	Engaging in Global Issues Students will be able to analyze ethical, economic, political, scientific & cultural issues affecting the world internationally and the transnational implications for humanity. This may lead to contributions of new ideas of advancing humanity.
Analyzing Students will be able to <i>deconstruct</i> a question or problem by identifying appropriate strategies, data sources, analogous examples and <i>underlying assumptions</i> .	Innovating and Transforming Students will be able to identify and explore unique ideas, novel ideas, and original formats to solve a real-world problem and/or transform existing ideas, knowledge and solutions into new ideas, products, and processes.	Suspending Judgment Students will be able to suspend judgment to a high degree in order to grapple through complex issues.	Rationalizing and Contextualizing Students will be able to apply and rationalize different mediums of communication in various contexts/environments to work in concert to accomplish a specific objective.	Engaging in Multiple Perspectives Students will be able to engage in an original empathetic response informed through examining an issue from multiple perspectives (e.g. alternate theories, possibilities, other absent sources).
Synthesizing and Applying Students will be able to demonstrate flexibility in integrating and applying personal, collective and generated knowledge to a novel application.	Design and Research Students will be able to engage in a design process involving modeling while conducting research using a variety of research tools, methodologies and various information.	Risk Taking and Tolerating Ambiguity Students will be able to negotiate problems when no obvious choice exists among a wide range of possibilities; this opens space for adaptations, further explorations, and risk-taking.	Connecting and Applying Students will be able to communicate with others globally, seeing oneself as an individual, part of a community, and the greater world.	Engage in Multiple Modalities Students will be able to engage in original combinations of two or more modalities, requiring students to understand and go beyond the potentialities of each modality to solve a problem.

Appendix B – Description of Writing Portfolio Contents

Student Guidelines

By Monday, May 12, 2014, you must submit an assessable portfolio, which is one that contains all five components listed below. All pieces must be typed and clean – meaning no stray marks, grades, or handwritten corrections. All pieces will be assessed as part of the portfolio reading process.

We encourage you to demonstrate the strengths of your writing across the curriculum. Therefore, your pieces may be selected from any subject area, and your portfolio must include writing from at least two different subject areas. The reflective letter (#2) will be written as part of the portfolio preparation process in this class.

1. Table of Contents

2. A Reflective Letter

In this piece, you will introduce yourself and your writing to the assessment team. It is your chance to use a strong voice to present how you have grown as a writer, how you have developed the portfolio of writing that follows, and/or how writing fits into your life overall. We will work on this letter later in the semester once you have made choices and revisions to the other pieces described below.

3. An Analytical Piece

You may choose any analytical piece of writing, from any subject area, for this category. Whatever the subject area, in an analytical piece, you will have used examples for support to articulate conclusions about writing or visual text(s). The primary purpose of writing that satisfies this category is to support a claim with strong textual evidence. A substantial analytical piece is usually at least one page in length.

4. A Creative or Personal Narrative

You may choose either a creative or a personal narrative, from any subject area, for this category. Works submitted here may be fiction, nonfiction, poetry, a simulated experience, journalism, or autobiography. Typically such pieces are not dependent on a central premise or thesis supported by textual evidence. The primary purpose of writing that satisfies this category is to demonstrate the student's unique voice as developed through the effective use of language as a tool for communication.

5. An In-Class Timed Writing

This piece is written in one class period and not revised after that point. We will discuss this category further later in the semester.

Appendix C – Writing Portfolio Reflection

Individual Student Interview Questions Summary Report 6/12/14

Subsequent to parent permission, 20% of students (n=19) participating in the Weston High School Grade 10 pilot portfolio project were interviewed individually based on nine structured questions. Student selection was designed to represent the score demographics of the pilot portfolio group as a whole¹, and random (though partially based on schedule availability) after that point.

Nine questions were asked, with summary data in bold below:

- 1) How much class time did you spend working on your portfolio?
 - *The mean length of class time reportedly spent working on the portfolio was just under 2½ class periods (2.49), with a range from 20 minutes to 5 class periods.*
- 2) How much time out of class did you spend working on your portfolio?
 - *The mean length of time out of class reportedly spent working on the portfolio was slightly over 2½ hours (2.67), with a range from 30 minutes to 10 hours.*
- 3) Did you seek individual help from someone in developing your portfolio? Why/why not? If so, with whom did you work, and on what did you focus?
 - *Most students (n=12) did not seek individual help from someone in developing their portfolios. Those who did (n=7) focused on selecting pieces, revising pieces, and editing pieces with their portfolio class teacher (n=2), parent (n=2), another teacher (n=2), or friend (n=1).*
- 4) Do you believe your portfolio is a good representation of who you are as a writer? Why/why not?
 - *The vast majority of students (n=16) felt their portfolios were good representations of who they are as writers. Those who did not (n=3) articulated that they did not put as much time into choosing, revising, and/or editing their pieces as they should have.*

¹ Interview Subgroup: 5% (n=1) Exemplary; 16% (n=3) Distinguished; 58% (n=11) Proficient; 21% (n=4) Emergent. Pilot Portfolio Group: 2% Exemplary; 13% Distinguished; 55% Proficient; 28% Emerging; 2% Limited.

- 5) What made you choose each of your portfolio pieces?
 - *Answers ranged widely for this question, but the vast majority of students (n=17) articulated personal interest or enjoyment in at least one portfolio piece as a reason for why that piece was chosen.*
- 6) You were asked to include pieces in your portfolio from more than one subject area. How might your portfolio have been different without that requirement?
 - *Four of the students had chosen pieces only from English class for their portfolios. Of the remaining 15 students, students were split on whether the requirement opened up choices for them (n=6), limited choices for them (n=5), or had a negligible impact (n=4).*
- 7) If you had needed to include a piece from a subject area other than English and social studies, what piece would you have picked, and why? How might your portfolio have been different with that switch?
 - *Five of the students had already included a piece from other than English and social studies. Of the remaining 14 students, answers included pieces from several disciplines/courses, including science (n=3), world language (n=3), health (n=2), and Public Presentation (n=2); four students could not identify a discipline/course outside of English or social studies in answer to this question.*
- 8) If you could change anything about the portfolio process, what would it be, and why?
 - *Answers ranged, and included: clarifying a regular ongoing timeline and reminders for the portfolio (n=3), integrating regular attention to revising and editing for the portfolio (n=2), and adding additional timed writing opportunities (n=2). Three students had no suggestions.*
- 9) If you could change anything about writing at Weston High School, what would it be, and why?
 - *A sizable number of students (n=8) articulated, in various ways, an interest in more creative writing. Some contrasted such writing with what they felt was an over-emphasis on structure in writing, to the extent that it constrained their ability to think and write as freely as they desired. Some of the students in this subgroup referenced the SRP as a prime example of the writing they most enjoyed. (These 8 students in this subgroup included the 1 student with an Exemplary score, and 2 of the 3 students with a Distinguished score.) Two students had no suggestions.*

~ J. Budd, 6/11/14

Appendix D –Sample Assessor’s Feedback

Weston High School Sophomore Writing Portfolio

May 19th and 20th, 2014

Student Name: Last, First

Comment:

Student, I enjoyed the sincerity in your reflective letter; although the development of one’s writing skills is rarely straightforward or linear, it was great to read that you perceive such improvement in your written work over time. You use the word “passionately” in your letter’s first paragraph to describe your tone in that inspirational eighth-grade piece. I would suggest that such “passion” is not only a great asset for a writer, but one that clearly has stayed with you over time. Without a doubt, “Check, Check, Check” is a compelling story. The “overhanging ambiguity” you worked to create is evident throughout; I found it particularly powerful to consider what your narrator understands – and doesn’t understand – about his current situation. In some ways, we know more than he does, which keeps an ironic tone balanced well by your sensitivity to sentence structure and language. Your analytical piece, “Double Definition,” is compelling in a slightly different way: here, you express sophisticated thoughts about both *Casablanca* and *The Maltese Falcon*, and use some good specifics to back up your ideas, including the secondary source by Tunc. As you keep writing, keep your eye focused on using the absolute best analytical details, and on using them as precisely as possible. There are places in your analytical paper where plot summary might be said to dominate a bit too much. It’s probably also the case that your paper could benefit from more frequent paragraph breaks to help organize your ideas more clearly for the reader. With your passion for writing, you’re in a great position to keep exercising your thoughtful mind in new and exciting ways; best of luck as your writing career continues

WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS REPORT

February 24, 2015



Weston High School

Lisa Deorio, Principal

In this issue...

- Principal's Update*
- Rotary International*
- Academic Program*
- Professional Development*
- Co-Curricular Program*

Principal's Update

The scheduling process for the 2015-2016 school year is well underway, with school counselors meeting with all freshmen, sophomores, and juniors these past few weeks. There are times when families have questions regarding the course recommendations for their students. If they wish to have their students' course placement reviewed, families should email the curriculum instructional leader by Friday, March 27 to request a review of their performance data. The CIL will then contact parents/guardians to discuss the placement and if a review of additional performance data is warranted.

Any second review will take place after all final grades have been submitted. The CIL will then contact families with a final decision. The following is a list of the curriculum instructional leaders by discipline:

- English – Christine Cincotta at christinecincotta@westonps.org
- Social Studies – Brian Scott at brianscott@westonps.org
- Math – Janine Russo at janinerusso@westonps.org
- Science – Darcy Ronan at darcyronan@westonps.org
- World Language – Christina Donigian at christinadonigian@westonps.org
- Fine Arts – Elizabeth Morris at elizabethmorris@westonps.org

Any further request for consideration must be made to the following administrators by July 1, 2015.

- English/World Language – Lisa Deorio, Principal lisadeorio@westonps.org
- Science/Social Studies – Dan Doak, Assistant Principal dandoak@westonps.org
- Math/Social Studies – Dr. Michael Marotto, Assistant Principal michaelmarotto@westonps.org

Scheduling our school is a challenge with over 120 multi-grade level courses and 300 sections. We appreciate your cooperation in following this process and working with us to provide the best program for our students.

We would like to extend a special invitation to all eighth graders and their parents/guardians to our transition evening on Wednesday, February 25, at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium. Administrators and

curriculum instructional leaders as well as students from various grade levels will speak, followed by a club/athletic fair in our cafeteria.

Rotary International

I am pleased to announce that WHS is partnering with Rotary International to receive an exchange student for the 2015-2016 school year. The Rotary Club of Westport will be recruiting families for these students to attend Weston High School and Staples High School. Host families typically have their student guest for three months. If you are interested in this program, please contact Ms. Fides Ostbye, Youth Exchange Officer, at fidesmo@aol.com.

Academic Program

The Arts

Our Symphonic Orchestra entertained the senior citizens of Weston at their luncheon on February 4. Students played sections of the Haydn Cello Concerto in C, Mozart's Symphony No.29, and Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*.

Two of our band students auditioned and made All State this month. Tenth graders Eric Hirsch (flute) and Grace Low (bass clarinet) are now recognized as two of the top high school musicians in the State, which is quite an accomplishment for sophomores. Our Wind Ensemble will be performing on the legendary stage at Symphony Hall, 301 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02115 on Sunday, February 22. Finally, our Spectrum concert will be held on March 5 in the gymnasium. We hope to see you there.

Our art department is pleased to announce that 10 of our students have pieces displayed at the Sacred Heart University High School art exhibit this month. The mediums used range from colored pencil, ink, and pastels to film photography and aluminum tooling sheets. The following students are participating in this month-long exhibition: Melissa Welsh, Sydney Fain, Mary Katherine Connors, Olivia Stanley, Adele Kaczmarek, Rachel Roberts, Dani DeCanio, Bevin Benson, Anna Kimberly, and Emma Strauss.

Language Arts

All of our sophomores attended a meeting earlier this month to kick off the Sophomore Writing Portfolio. This semester, students will create individual portfolios as a way to demonstrate their abilities in writing, thinking, and learning. Building this portfolio will give them the opportunity to present themselves outside of the typical classroom context and to receive personalized feedback on strengths and goal areas from writing experts both within and outside Weston High School. In these ways, a portfolio approach enhances the ways teachers already assess students and is a natural outgrowth of the existing writing curriculum students have already experienced in Weston. The portfolio is due in May and students will receive support in building it throughout the semester.

Writing Commons

This semester WHS has a new Writing Commons where students can find help in all stages of the writing process. In individual conferences, students acquire support and feedback in purpose, thinking, organization, language, and mechanics. The Writing Commons is staffed by Mrs. Martha Glynn, retired WHS English teacher. Mrs. Glynn is collaborating with teachers to communicate more information about this resource to our students. Students will receive additional information about signing up for conferences from their teachers.

Physical Education/Health

In senior health, teachers are working with twelfth graders on strategies for managing stress and anxiety in their lives. The students are working at recognizing stressors they face. They have also been receptive to powering down their devices and practicing deep breathing, guided meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation techniques.

Freshmen and sophomores have begun their semester in PE with a fun and engaging activity *The Amazing Race*, Indoor Edition. Groups rely on their partners to utilize individual strengths both physical and cognitive and compete for the lowest time in this 10-part competition.

Science/Technology

Honors Biology classes are beginning a collaborative lab with Honors Biology classes at New Canaan High School. Both schools are planting and observing the effects of radiation on different seed species. The data will be pooled so that the students may draw conclusions from a larger sample size and collaborate with a scientific community beyond their own classroom.

Students in Project Lead the Way are currently working on a variety of projects. The Laser Engraving Club is designing and producing pencil holders that attach to clipboards for our coaches. Civil Engineering and Architecture students are finishing up an efficient residential home design complete with a set of working drawings. Principles of Engineering students are starting their robotics unit, utilizing VEX equipment and learning the basics of programming language. Additionally, Computer Integrated Manufacturing students are learning how to convert human thought into computer code, also known as G&M Code, to manipulate CNC (computer numerical controlled) equipment. Students will be using these skills for several activities, and are enthusiastic about their results.

Social Studies

Mr. Jorge's Advanced Placement United States History (APUSH) students recently completed the individual research papers that they had been working on for much of the school year. Students selected their own topic in U.S. history to research. Starting in October, students were guided through all stages of the research process, from proposals on their topics to constructing bibliographies and outlines to the final draft. This process helps prepares students for the research papers and projects they will face in college by teaching them the value of the research process. Topics included the American Revolution, causes of the Civil War, effectiveness of the New Deal, and the legacy of Woodstock.

Many of the ninth-grade World Studies students took on new identities this past month, becoming Renaissance artistic masters, philosophers of humanism, and radical reformers. This activity was part of the character shadowing that World Studies teachers employed to help their freshmen students see the twists and turns of the Renaissance and Reformation Era from the perspective of those people living through them. Students wrote biographies for their characters, journal entries in response to developments their characters witnessed, and took part in classroom discussions as their historical character on the nature and consequences of this important time period in world history.

Miss Conetta's Honors Modern World Studies classes worked with the Library Learning Commons archives to investigate how bias and perspective contribute to the various perceptions of war. Together, with the aid of Mrs. Snaith, Miss Conetta's WWII historians examined *LIFE* and *National Geographic* magazines, and copies of the *New York Times* to draw conclusions about the American perspective of WWII, and then compared these ideas to our studies of other nations'

views. Students put on archive gloves and spent the week sifting through magazines from 1939 through 1945. They then discussed conclusions about race, women's roles, propaganda, and military strategy from the time period.

World Language

The year 2015 marks the 400th anniversary of the publication of the second part of Miguel de Cervantes' universal novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha*. Students in the Spanish 5 Honors are currently reading and analyzing this world-renowned masterpiece of Spanish literature

Professional Development

Latin teachers Ms. Telford and Ms. Furst attended a Living Latin conference in New York City, organized by the Paideia Institute, which is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the study and appreciation of the classical humanities. At this conference they learned about the educational uses of spoken Latin in the classroom while learning new teaching techniques and discussing ancient literature.

Social studies teacher Mr. Moeder was selected by the College Board to attend the AP United States History reading in Louisville this June. High school teachers and college professors from around the country are chosen to read the exams. Mr. Moeder will be reading and grading essays based on the new redesign of the course, which will be invaluable for teaching of the course to our students in subsequent years.

Spanish teacher Ms. Caracuel attended the annual Applied Linguistics Lecture (APPLE) at Columbia University Teachers College on February 6. The guest speaker was Professor James Paul Gee, Professor of Applied Linguistics at Arizona State University. The topics of the APPLE Talk Lecture included the following: "Grammar, Language, and Discourse: A New Situated Approach to Language Teaching" and "Language, the World, and Video Games: Why and How all Learning is Language Learning."

Co-Curricular Program

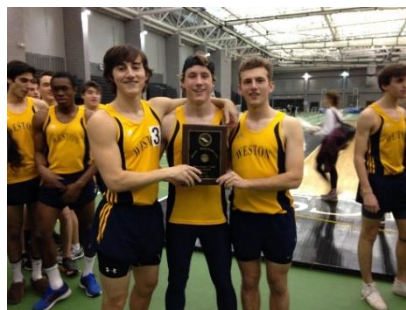
Trojan Time is the Weston High School advisory period that meets bi-monthly throughout the school year. These times are an opportunity for assemblies, sharing of information, and building school community. This year we are emphasizing relaxation and offering students tips and tricks to help reduce stress and anxiety. Students viewed a 60-minute segment entitled, "Mindfulness" and were given meditation strategies to be implemented in short time periods. They also reviewed progressive relaxation techniques and are encouraged to try these methods on their own time to help reduce their overall level of stress.

Student Government

This month, Student Government sponsored our WHS Winter Snow Down. The week involved a competition between the grades through various spirit initiatives, including events like floor hockey, trivia night, a week-long duck scavenger hunt, grade team luge, a basketball skills competition, a dunk contest at the pep rally, and a DVCC (Domestic Violence Crisis Center) Karaoke Night. The central focus of our Snow Down was to kick off our second Shine A Light initiative, which highlighted the Domestic Violence Crisis Center Teen Peace Works. Last month our Shine A Light focus, Wounded Warriors Project, raised over \$500. Student Government and the Weston High School community hopes to exceed this for our DVCC partners.

Athletics

We are pleased to announce that our boys' and girls' indoor track teams won the SWC Championship this month. Here are pictures of both teams together with their plaques.



Aspiring reporter and filmmaker Eric Benninghoff recently completed a documentary that featured sophomore swimmer David Gelfand. The story covers David's inspirational story dealing with proximal femoral focal deficiency and his journey as a swimmer for WHS. If you would like to watch this program, you may find it at the following link: <http://youtu.be/lYcWKzPNZb4>.

Clubs

The WHS Model United Nations Club held its first bake sale on Friday, February 13. With a Valentine's Day theme to the various baked goods, the sale was a clear success. Many thanks to the families and students of the Model United Nations for generously baking and donating the cookies, cupcakes, and other sweets that made the sale possible. All the money raised will be used to help defray the cost of upcoming Model UN conferences in which students hope to participate.

Weston Teen Peace Works, the youth group associated with the DVCC organized this year's Open Mic Jam on Friday, February 13. Students performed songs and read poetry in honor of National Teen Dating Abuse Prevention Month. That morning Teen Peace Works members handed out lollipops with the No More logo in the main lobby as well as butterfly pins to show their support for the No More domestic violence cause. With support from WHS Student Government, proceeds from February's Shine A Light campaign activities went directly to DVCC and its local safe houses that shelter domestic violence victims and their families.

W78 Weston TV Network Club programmed multiple Board of Education Budget Workshops to air on Cablevision's Education Access Channel 78, allowing residents to view the discussions before voting on the proposed budget for the 2015-2016 school year.

Our three Mock Trial teams have all had great seasons, with the Weston Red and Blue teams advancing beyond the State regionals. Our Red team is one of the final eight teams remaining in the State, with their next quarterfinal competition scheduled for Monday, February 23, at the New Britain Superior Court. The State semifinals will be held at the New Britain Superior Court on Wednesday, February 25, and the State finals will be held on Wednesday, March 4, at the Supreme Court in Hartford.

Key Club hosted its annual Valentine's Day celebration for our Community class. Students enjoyed making arts and crafts, dancing, and bowling after school last week.



In this issue...

Spotlight Student is Back
National Geography Bee
Families of Seventh-Grade Social Studies Students
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World Language Students to Compete in the National Language Exams
PBIS/SOAR Door Decorating Contest

Spotlight Student is Back

Spotlight Student has returned and students have been recognized for their efforts demonstrating character, integrity, strong leadership qualities, and their commitment to being a role model to peers. We will continue to recognize our students each trimester. Congratulations to Beckett Lewis, Camille Gitow, Liam Cavicchia, Audrey Skodia, Sarah Franco, Zaman Khan, Izadorha Cayo, Kelvin Green, Elizabeth Kleiner, Neil Kaeslin, Xavier Lewis, Mariel Zech, and Kelly Roseman.

National Geography Bee

Thursday, January 15, student representatives from each grade level demonstrated their geography skills for the National Geo Bee. Prior to break students answered questions designed by the National Geographic Bee board to test their knowledge of geography around the world. The entire student body participated in their social studies class. Sixteen finalists (named below) answered rounds of questions until there were only two. In the final round between Adam Levin (8th grade) and Ty Kopsis (6th grade) the final winner was named – congratulations to Adam for taking first place in this year's contest. Adam will move forward to

the next round and complete a written portion to determine if he will move on further. Congratulations to all students who participated. Thank you to Brian Scott, the social studies Curriculum Instructional Leader, and all of our social studies teachers.

Congratulations to our finalists: Ty Kopsis, Mark Kibbe, Janak Sekaran, Liam Crowe, Aidan Kurtz, Ethan Klotz, John (Jake) Jones, Aiden Cornelius, Duncan McGrade, Ben Rosenberg, Adam Levin*, Robert Constantine, Doran Sekaran, Gabe Toth, Jesse Hirtenstein, and Zoe Saldinger.

*2015 Winner

Families of Seventh-Grade Social Studies Students

Beginning the week of February 23, as part of our Global Connections social studies course, students will be connecting with English speakers and learners from around the world through PenPal

Schools. The purpose of the global pen pal program is to study and exchange perspectives on global issues in the news. The global issues explored over the six-week exchange include the environment, poverty, technology, war and conflict, and government. Students will watch original videos and discuss real news stories that encourage them to think critically and to share personal experiences and perspectives. In the coming weeks, our students will be signing up for the program during their social studies class, after which time they will be matched with a PenPal class. While students will have the opportunity to reflect on the perspective of others from across the world and form their own ideas, no personal information will be exchanged.



Part of the mission of PenPal Schools encapsulates the essence of what our students study in their seventh-grade social studies curriculum. “As our world becomes more interconnected, it’s more important than ever for students to be global citizens – to understand and respect their peers no matter where they come from, and to work together to build a better world.”

We are looking forward to facilitating our students’ connection with their global community of learners.

Grade 7 English Explores the Harlem Renaissance



Weston Middle School seventh-grade students have recently been transported back in time to the Roaring Twenties and the Jazz Age during their study of the Harlem Renaissance. Working as a small group study, students rotated through different learning stations focused on a specific art form from the time period. Their focus at each station was to analyze how art, in all of its forms, can be an agent for social change. Students read and studied a variety of texts including: non-fiction essays, news articles, creative short stories, poetry, song lyrics, paintings, and photographs. Through these lenses students gained an understanding of what life was like and the difficult struggles African Americans faced during the 1920s.

At the literature station, students read a selection of works by and about Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay. During their stop at the music station, students read about and listened to the works of legendary jazz musicians Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Bessie Smith. Students then spent time studying and gazing upon artwork that was indicative of the time period by artists such as Jacob Lawrence, Aaron Douglas, and William H. Johnson. They viewed photographs by James Van Der Zee and studied the sculptures of Augusta Savage. Lastly, students read essays and speeches by some of the most important political figures of the time period at the activist station. Through the words of W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Alain Locke, students have a first-hand account of the struggle these leaders faced head on in order to end racism in America. Students are currently competing to have their figure showcased in a special exhibit located in the middle school library learning commons. The Harlem Renaissance Hall of Fame exhibit will be created by seventh-grade students to acknowledge and celebrate the lives and contributions of these



important and influential figures. Students are in the process of finalizing their nomination packages which include a nomination form, a short biography on their figure, and a mini-poster exhibit display. The top 10 nominations will be showcased in The Harlem Renaissance Hall of Fame exhibit.

Eighth-Grade Writing Portfolio

The middle school continues to reinforce the development and growth of our students' writing proficiency in alignment with our district goals. The high school has successfully implemented a writing portfolio for all grade 10 students. In our continued effort to ensure vertical articulation between the middle and high school, students in grade 8 will compile a writing portfolio for review. The seventh- and eighth-grade social studies and English teachers have collaboratively reviewed the writing process and identified the essential components of an eighth-grade student's writing portfolio. Our eighth-grade students will be the first cohort who can build upon the work they compile this year and reflect on their growth in tenth grade.

A writing portfolio will allow students to review, revise, and edit previously written pieces based on the feedback they have received from teachers and additional lessons they have learned. Students will have the opportunity to include writing pieces across content areas from seventh grade as well as eighth grade. The purpose of having students review their work through this lens is to identify their best or most improved pieces and reflect on their continual growth as writers. A team of teachers will review students' portfolios and provide individual feedback. The writing portfolio is not an additional assessment for students. Students will receive targeted feedback to help them continue to develop as writers.

Students have already begun learning about the writing portfolio from their teachers. This will give students the opportunity to begin thinking about pieces they have already written and how each could be revised and consider pieces they will write this spring. Time will be set aside to assist students in the selection of their pieces and to write their reflection. The portfolio will be due toward the end of April.

Mock Trial Teams Compete

The Mock Trial Regionals for the WMS Mock Trial teams took place on Tuesday, February 3, at Bethel Middle School. Our students did a fabulous job serving in the roles of prosecutors and defenders, as well as witnesses and bailiffs. The judges commended the Weston teams for their professional demeanor and the level of rigor they brought to the competition. As a result of their efforts our teams won six out of eight rounds. It was truly an amazing sight. Two of our four teams will advance to the quarterfinals in March. We are so proud of the hard work everyone demonstrated in preparation for this competition. Congratulations to everyone.



Robotics Club Inaugural Competition



Last weekend, through a grant made possible by the Weston Education Foundation, the WMS Robotics Club competed in its first regional competition at Danbury High School. Two robotics teams of approximately 10 students each, along with several other club members, attended this first competition. The teams worked diligently to prepare for the event, putting in long hours after school and even on the weekends. In the end, both teams built, programmed, and tested robots that qualified for entrance into the competition. Each team participated in several rounds of the Skyrise Challenge, where their robots scored points by stacking cubes several feet into the air. In the end, both teams' robots prevailed despite intense competition from many local middle and high schools. One team even scored highest among all competing middle schools. A huge congratulations to all of the students who pioneered this first robotics competition.



The daylong event included many fun and exciting learning experiences. Students had the opportunity to meet middle and high school students from across Connecticut. Students were exposed to different robot ideas, designs, and strategies. They brought back a great deal of knowledge and tips to all of the WMS Robotics Club teams.



The WMS Robotics Club adventure continues. All seven teams continue to build, program, troubleshoot, and test robots that, only a few months ago, were mere imaginations. Later this spring, WMS will host a competition for all of the club's approximately 70 members to showcase their robots. The event will take place on Weston Middle School's very own competition field. Details to follow soon.

Bridgeport Musical Exchange Program

Every year, the Weston eighth-grade orchestra participates in a musical exchange program with Bridgeport Public Schools, and this year has been a wonderful success so far. The first exchange occurred on Friday, January 23. Weston students travelled to Bridgeport and met their instrumental partners for the first time. They rehearsed together, ate lunch together, and participated in sections run by the conservatory-trained Haven Quartet (<http://www.musichavenct.org/whoweare.html>). Our next visit with students from Bridgeport will be on Friday, February 27, here in the Weston Middle School LRC. The combined ensemble concert will take place on April 24, with a 1:00 p.m. concert at Weston High School.



Weston students Haroun Siddiqui, Cate Cataldo, Oliver Schiff and Taryn Seigel work with students from Bridgeport, coached by Colin Benn, violist for the Haven Quartet



Weston students Nicholas Moy, Alexa Policano, Nikita Moffly and Lilly Garone work with Gregory Tompkins, second violinist for the Haven Quartet

World Language Students to Compete in the National Language Exams

Students in eighth-grade French and Spanish have been registered and will begin preparing for the national contests: Le Grand Concourse and the National Spanish Exam. These exams are administered by the American Association of Teachers of French and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. These are the largest exams of their kind in the United States, with well over 120,000 students participating in the National Spanish Exam annually.

The purpose of participating in these contests goes far beyond winning or receiving national recognition. It also provides a national guide to help our teachers determine how our students perform, item by item, based upon major grammatical concepts, reading comprehension, aural comprehension, and cultural topics. Students will continue to take national exams at Weston High School in their Spanish, French, and Latin courses as well. Teachers and students are looking forward to participating in the exams for the first time this year.

PBIS/SOAR Door Decorating Contest



During the month of January, sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students at WMS participated in a school-wide spirit activity and door decorating contest during our SOAR Time. The themes for this year's contest were "Resolutions" or "Making a Difference" which tied in with our Giving Tree activity in December. During our small-group SOAR Time, students had the opportunity to work together and plan their door decorating based on the themes and how they connected with SOAR. There were winning doors selected at each grade level with several honorable



mentions. In grade 6, Mrs. Harasiuk's advisory group (featured) were declared winners. In grade 7, Mrs. Holmes and Mrs. Buckley's groups (featured) tied for first place. In grade 8, Sra. Geel's advisory group took the top honor. These advisory groups enjoyed hot cocoa and cookies.

Weston Intermediate School

Pattie Falber, Principal

In this issue...

***Grade Level News
Black History Month
Community Service
Hats for Warm Up America
School Spirit***

Grade Level News

Third Grade

This month, students began learning about fractions in math. In third grade, the students work with fractions of wholes that are divided into more than four equal parts, as well as learn new concepts such as equivalent fractions and identifying a fraction of a set. Throughout the unit an emphasis is placed on students developing an understanding of the meaning and uses of fractions, such as representing parts of a whole, parts of a set, and points of distances on a number line. Lessons are carefully designed to incorporate the concrete-pictorial-abstract spectrum to help students gain a solid understanding. In the accompanying picture, students are engaging in an exploration of equivalent fractions using fraction circles.



Fourth Grade



Students in several of the fourth-grade classrooms were pleasantly surprised when Dr. Craw became a guest teacher last week for a lesson on circuits and electricity. He led them through a lab called “squishy circuits,” where the students experimented with a special type of play dough that could create circuits to light up a series of lights. Dr. Craw drew on their knowledge of insulators and conductors to help them identify why this play dough could be successfully used to transfer energy. Students then enthusiastically applied their knowledge of

circuits to create series circuits as well as parallel circuits to illuminate an assortment of LED lights.

Fifth Grade

Fifth-grade students are enthusiastically tackling their first Math in Focus algebra unit. Students are learning to write both numerical and algebraic expressions and equations that correspond to specific circumstances. They are also learning to simplify, evaluate, and solve expressions and inequalities. Remarkably, our students are actually constructing equations to answer questions. Rather than using words, our fifth-grade algebra students are learning to use mathematical symbols to make statements about situations and solve real-world problems.



Black History Month



To help us celebrate and acknowledge Black History Month, each class chose to study an important person or event that illustrated a significant accomplishment in the history of black Americans. Students then created a poster which featured important highlights of the person’s life or event. With the help of two very talented moms from the PTO, the posters were mounted onto colorful paper and then used to create a very long timeline down our main hallway. The timeline begins in 1797 with Sojourner Truth and continues on into the current day

with profiles of important artists, political activists, writers, musicians, inventors, and athletes. The students and staff have been taking museum walks to learn about these important people.



Community Service

Following our recent assembly on altruism and empathy, students put what they learned into action by continuing to collect items for their grade-level community service projects. Third graders brought in an assortment of pet food and supplies including several cat and dog carriers that will be donated to a local animal shelter. The fourth graders contributed numerous boxes of food to support the Weston Food Pantry, and fifth graders donated several big boxes of assorted toiletries to support our troops. We were so pleased with our students' willingness to help others in need.



Hats for Warm Up America

Students in Mrs. Schlotter's fifth-grade class have been busily knitting for the Warm Up America project which distributes warm afghans, caps, and other items to tens of thousands of people. Students learned to hand knit and to use looms to knit with the help of parents, grandparents, and each other. Often students would choose to work on knitting to celebrate their birthdays instead of having a snack. Students knitted hats and scarves for the project. The charity is always accepting afghans, hats, scarves, even sections of a blanket. Their next project will involve making baby hats for newborns and preemies in local hospitals.



School Spirit

One of the PBIS initiatives at WIS has been that groups of students receive a "paw" each time they are recognized by staff members for showing PRIDE behavior. Our WIS PRIDE bulletin board displays the paws earned. After earning 25 paws the students celebrated their accomplishments by participating in a whole school pajama day. A few months later, 50 paws were awarded and students were treated to a few days of no written homework. Recently we have reached our third goal of 75 paws and the PBIS committee is finalizing the details of a celebration. We are so proud of our students and their commitment to building a positive and respectful school community.



Hurlbutt Elementary School

Laura Kaddis , Principal

In this issue...

Hurlbutt Celebrates a Positive School Climate

Teaching and Learning

Home School Partnerships

Hurlbutt Celebrates a Positive School Climate

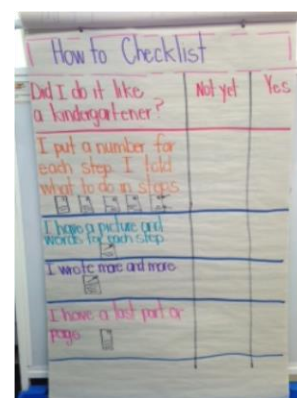
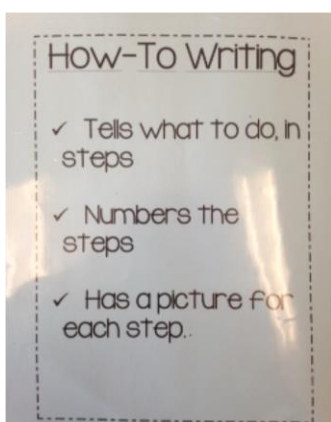
In February we celebrated 100 days of school. As a class activity, each teacher led a discussion about everything that we love about Hurlbutt Elementary School. Together we made a beautiful poster naming 100 reasons we love our school community. Our students said they loved "all specials, Run for Life, creating science experiments and doing them in the science lab, learning Spanish, the field trip to Coley House, being with friends, and teachers who love us." Throughout the day, classes

celebrated 100 days of learning at Hurlbutt. Each class marked this day with a variety of activities including wearing 100-day hats, and counting, grouping and performing many mathematical applications. Numeracy is an important concept for kindergarten as students continue to build understanding of numbers and the base-ten system that is an important building block for developing computational fluency. Since the first day of school, our students have been counting days of school. There was much excitement as our count grew closer and closer to 100.



Teaching and Learning

Our kindergarteners continue to amaze us with their writing stamina. They are now very proficient in writing how-to books. They are learning to say more and have embedded techniques for talking to their readers. For example, in a book about how to do karate you will see valuable advice. “You need to go to practice.” You will also see our youngest learners include a warning to their reader in their books. When learning how to make lunch, our writers might warn you, “Be careful not to spill your drink.” The books demonstrated increased volume of writing. They are continuing to learn how to revise and to say more. They have learned how to use a checklist to monitor their own writing. They feel very proud when they can identify their strengths and also know what to add to make their writing more powerful. When visiting our classes you will hear them say, “When you are done, you have only just begun.”



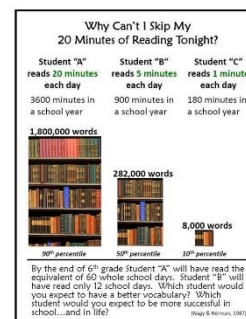
First graders are finishing their informational books in their non-fiction writing unit of study. They have learned more detailed techniques for non-fiction writing including creating chapters, zoom in, bolded words, diagrams, and labeling pictures. They were so excited to write about something they are an expert on.

Our first graders have begun the Forces and Motion AIM unit. Students began their study by designing a roller coaster using five pieces of track. The students then went to the computer lab to design their prototype and test it. If their roller coaster was successful, a marble rolled from the beginning made it all the way to the end. If the roller coaster was not successful, the marble would get stuck. The most important part of the task was having the "engineers" determine why their roller coaster did or did not work. Throughout the unit they will be given more opportunities to use scientific vocabulary that will help them while writing their reflections.

Our second graders are beginning the biography unit of study this month. This unit is designed to integrate social studies and reading standards during Black History month in order to highlight the important contributions African Americans make to society. In addition to learning about famous African Americans, the students also learn about women who made a lasting impact and valuable contribution to the world. Our students begin to realize that they too can make a difference in their community and can be a part of the changes they want to see in the world.

Home-School Partnerships

Our curriculum instructional leader, Andrea Noble, led a very informative presentation and discussion on reading levels of students at our February general PTO meeting. Parents learned about independent reading levels and the power of encouraging reading at home. Did you know that students who read for 20 minutes a day are exposed to 1,800,000 words a year? This eye opening statistic sparked great conversation about the importance of making time for reading, promoting literacy. Andrea also shared advice on how to choose appropriate reading material for their young readers.

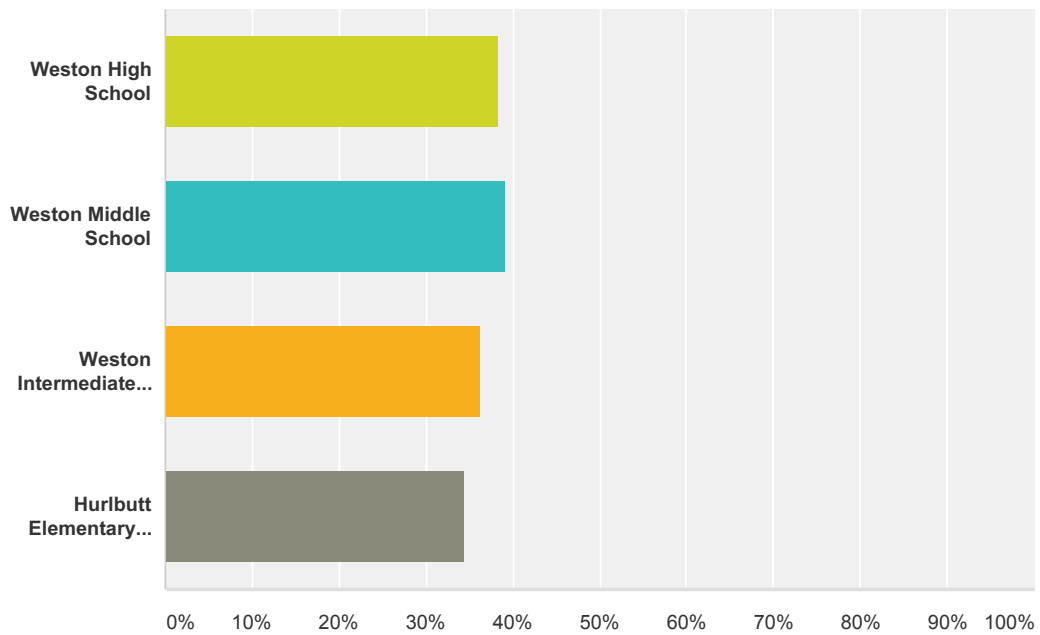


The Board of Education Communications Committee administered a survey to families regarding the effectiveness of district communications. The attached graphs represent the results.

Communications Survey

Q1 At which school(s) do you have students?

Answered: 229 Skipped: 0

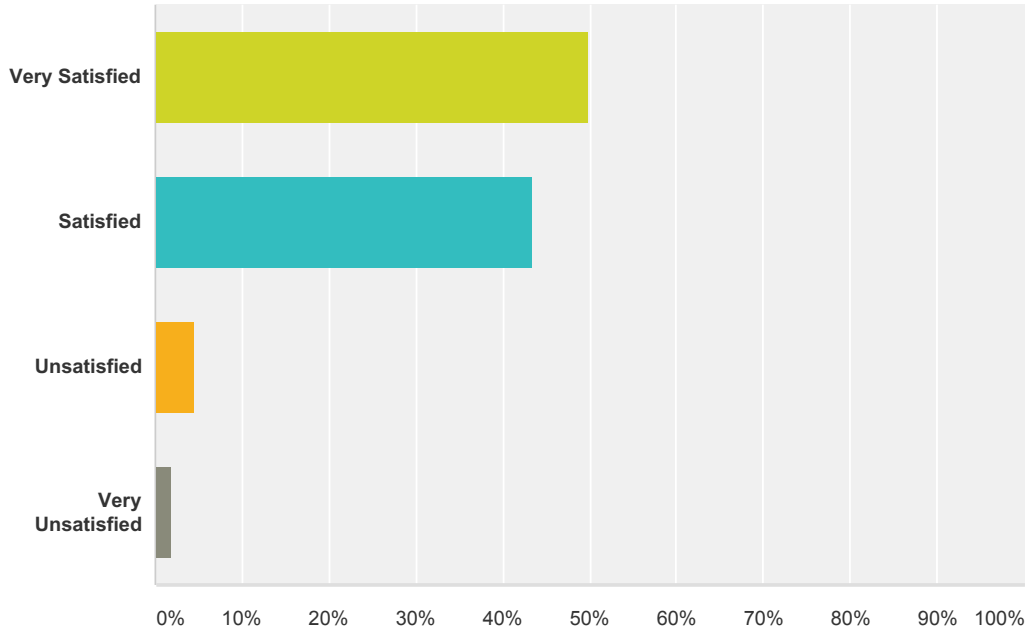


Answer Choices	Responses	
Weston High School	38.43%	88
Weston Middle School	39.30%	90
Weston Intermediate School	36.24%	83
Hurlbutt Elementary School	34.50%	79
Total Respondents: 229		

Communications Survey

Q2 Please describe your level of satisfaction with communications from Weston High School (if applicable).

Answered: 108 Skipped: 121

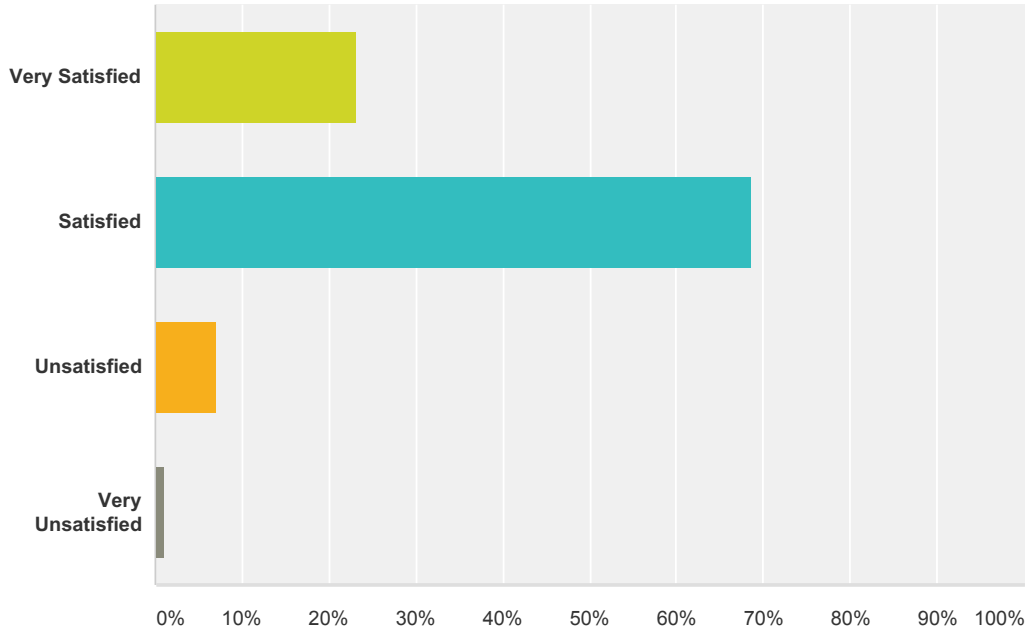


Answer Choices	Responses	
Very Satisfied	50.00%	54
Satisfied	43.52%	47
Unsatisfied	4.63%	5
Very Unsatisfied	1.85%	2
Total		108

Communications Survey

Q3 Please describe your level of satisfaction with communications from Weston Middle School (if applicable).

Answered: 99 Skipped: 130

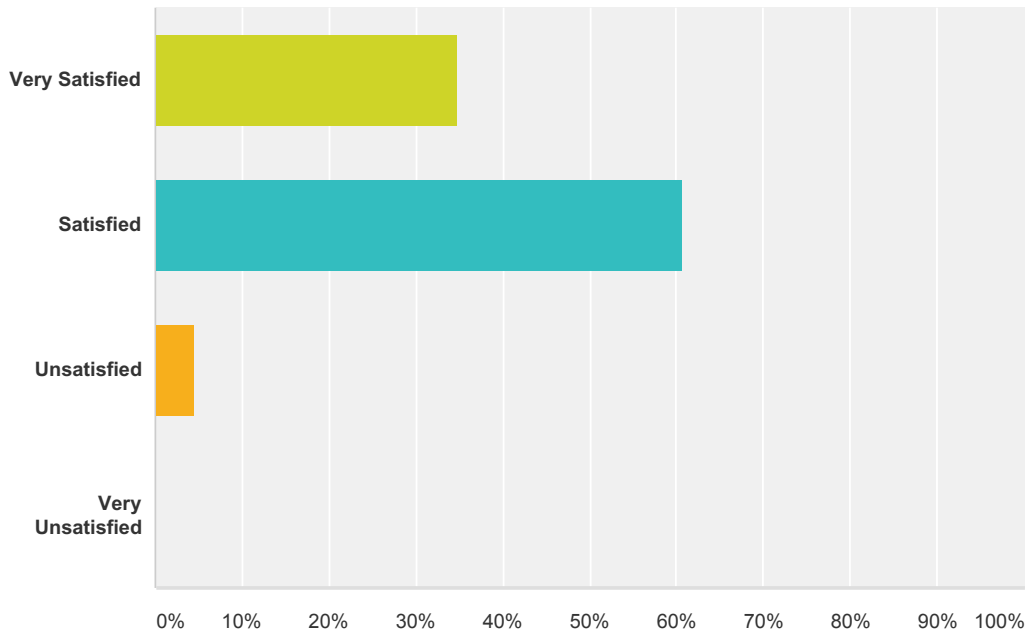


Answer Choices	Responses	
Very Satisfied	23.23%	23
Satisfied	68.69%	68
Unsatisfied	7.07%	7
Very Unsatisfied	1.01%	1
Total		99

Communications Survey

Q4 Please describe your level of satisfaction with communications from Weston Intermediate School (if applicable).

Answered: 89 Skipped: 140

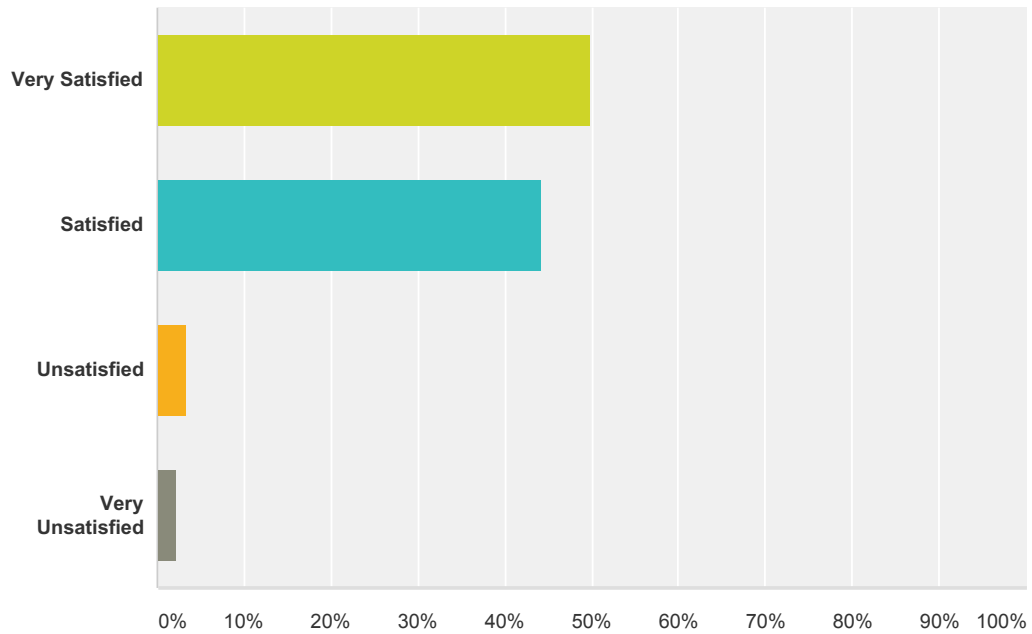


Answer Choices	Responses	
Very Satisfied	34.83%	31
Satisfied	60.67%	54
Unsatisfied	4.49%	4
Very Unsatisfied	0.00%	0
Total		89

Communications Survey

Q5 Please describe your level of satisfaction with communications from Hurlbutt Elementary School (if applicable).

Answered: 88 Skipped: 141

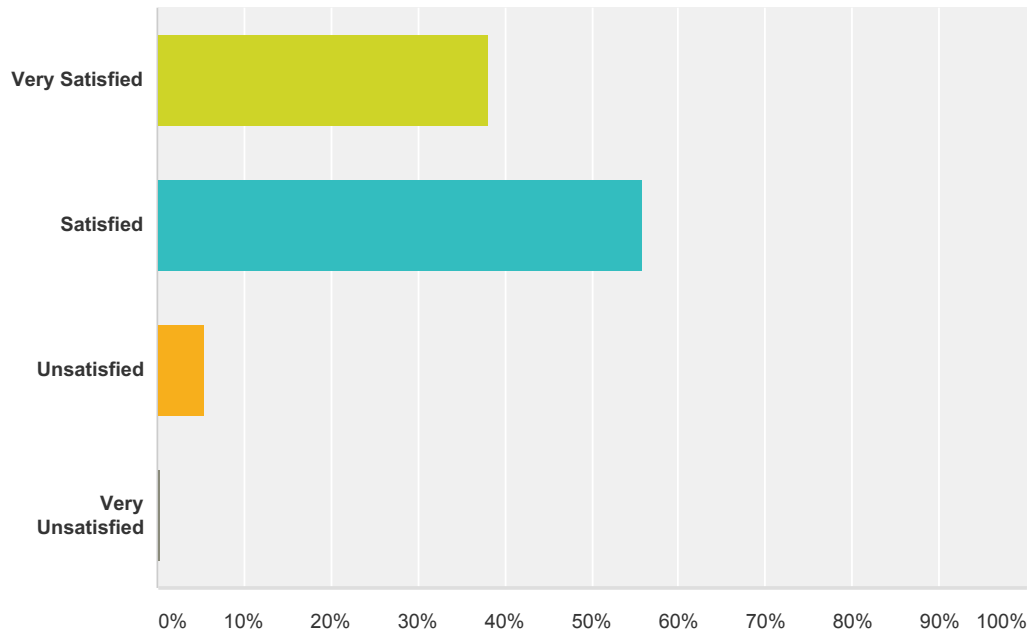


Answer Choices	Responses	
Very Satisfied	50.00%	44
Satisfied	44.32%	39
Unsatisfied	3.41%	3
Very Unsatisfied	2.27%	2
Total		88

Communications Survey

Q6 Please describe your level of satisfaction with communications from district administration.

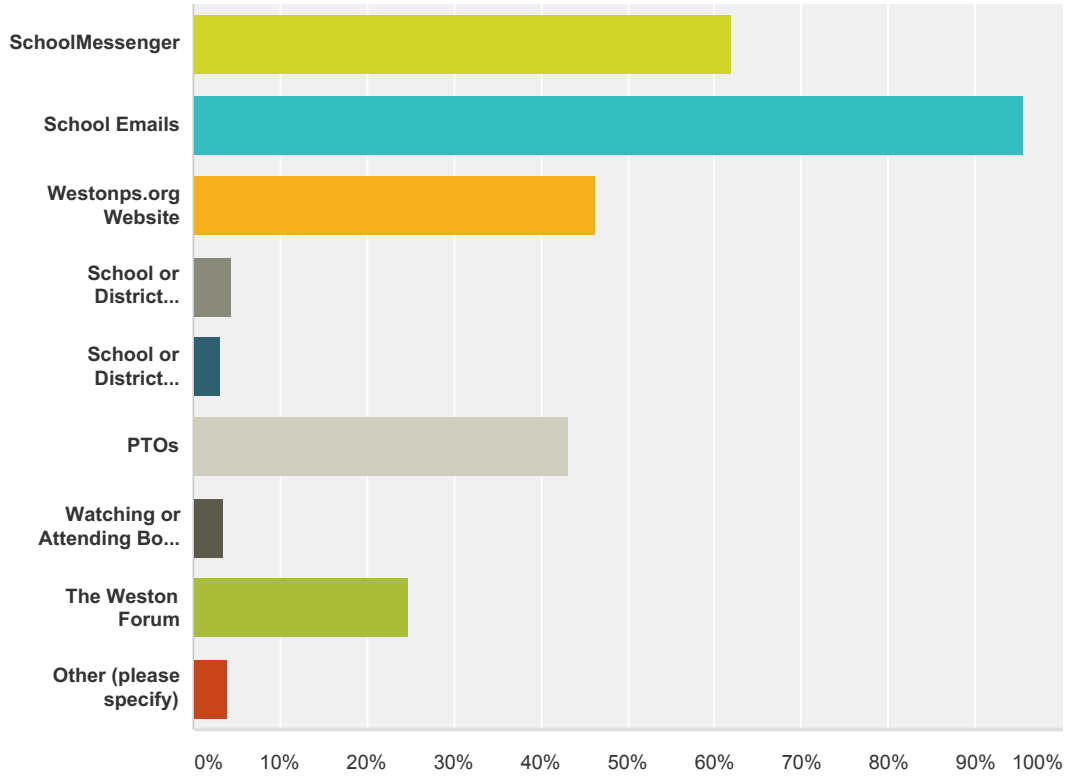
Answered: 222 Skipped: 7



Answer Choices	Responses	
Very Satisfied	38.29%	85
Satisfied	55.86%	124
Unsatisfied	5.41%	12
Very Unsatisfied	0.45%	1
Total		222

Q7 Where do you get your information regarding our schools or district?

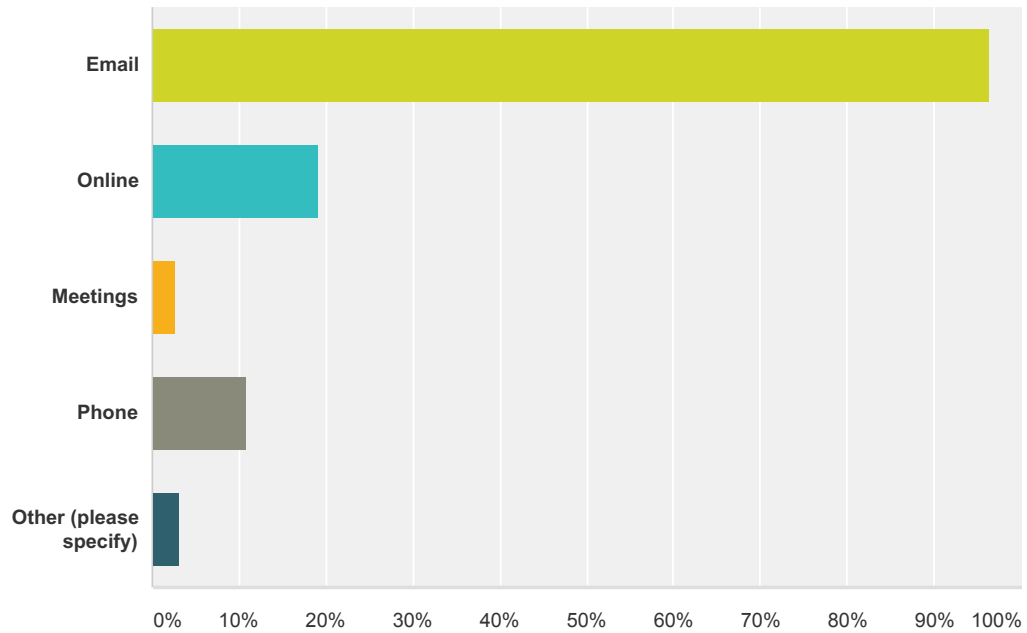
Answered: 229 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
SchoolMessenger	62.01% 142
School Emails	95.63% 219
Westonps.org Website	46.29% 106
School or District Facebook Page	4.37% 10
School or District Twitter Feed	3.06% 7
PTOs	43.23% 99
Watching or Attending Board Meetings	3.49% 8
The Weston Forum	24.89% 57
Other (please specify)	3.93% 9
Total Respondents: 229	

Q8 What modality of communication do you prefer?

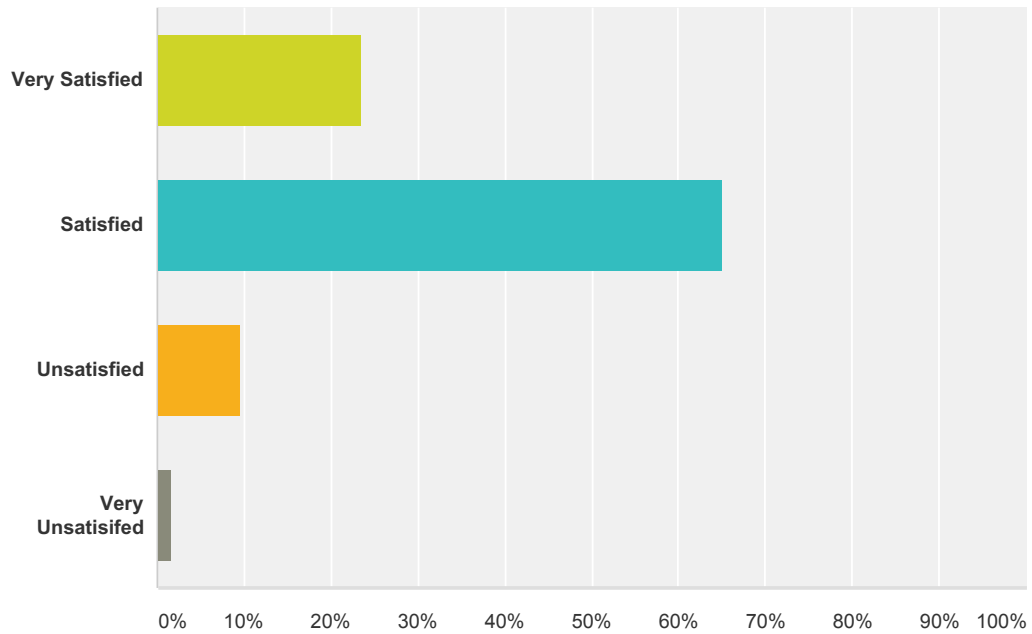
Answered: 229 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Email	96.51% 221
Online	19.21% 44
Meetings	2.62% 6
Phone	10.92% 25
Other (please specify)	3.06% 7
Total Respondents: 229	

Q9 What is your level of satisfaction with opportunities to provide feedback to the district?

Answered: 229 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Very Satisfied	23.58%	54
Satisfied	65.07%	149
Unsatisfied	9.61%	22
Very Unsatisfied	1.75%	4
Total		229