

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or its equivalent each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's AYP requirement or its equivalent in the 2012-2013 school year. Meeting AYP or its equivalent must be certified by the state. Any AYP status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2007 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for that period.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2012.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 1 High schools
 0 K-12 schools
 8 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 17206

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Suburban
4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 9
5. Number of students as of October 1, 2012 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	237	243	480
10	221	250	471
11	244	218	462
12	246	221	467
Total in Applying School:			1880

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
5 % Asian
2 % Black or African American
2 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
91 % White
0 % Two or more races
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2011-2012 school year: 4%
This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Step	Description	Value
(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	13
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	53
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	66
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2011	1882
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.04
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	4

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 0%
Total number of ELL students in the school: 6
Number of non-English languages represented: 3
Specify non-English languages:

French (1), Spanish (2), Norwegian (3)

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4%
 Total number of students who qualify: 68

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 10%
 Total number of students served: 189

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>11</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>42</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>102</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>15</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>7</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</u> Mental Retardation	<u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>6</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>89</u>	<u>6</u>
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	<u>55</u>	<u>10</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>21</u>	<u>1</u>
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	<u>38</u>	<u>2</u>
Total number	<u>211</u>	<u>27</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1: 21:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Daily student attendance	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%
High school graduation rate	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%

14. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools):**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2012.

Graduating class size:	<u>464</u>
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>94%</u>
Enrolled in a community college	<u>3%</u>
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>0%</u>
Found employment	<u>1%</u>
Military service	<u>0%</u>
Other	<u>2%</u>
Total	<u>100%</u>

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award:

No

Yes

If yes, what was the year of the award?

PART III - SUMMARY

Mission Statement: *We strive to become a community of learners who treat each other with care and respect; we think critically & creatively, use contemporary literacy skills, and work to solve real-world problems.*

Staples High School is the one public high school in Westport, Connecticut. Westport has been a haven for artists, writers, entrepreneurs, and risk takers for decades. Most of our students are excited about learning and eager to work hard to be life-long learners. Because of that, we attract very well-educated teachers who have a passion for their subject AND for helping young students make their way into adulthood. As a teaching community, we are never satisfied with the status quo. We are constantly looking for ways to improve not only what students learn but how they learn. For four of the past eight years, we have focused our attention on critical and creative thinking. We have been successful in infusing these skills into every course taught in the school. Therefore, building on our success, our new school goal is to provide all students as many opportunities as possible over four years to solve real-world, often ill-defined problems, working alone or in groups. The end result of their work requires that they present their findings to others in an articulate and persuasive manner.

A perfect example of this emphasis on real world problem solving is the Staples Spectacular Challenge. Students are invited to form collaborative groups and report to Staples on a given Saturday at 7:00 a.m. At that time, each group is presented with a problem. They work together to research and analyze data in order to develop a solution; they are required to submit a researched report with a solution at 7:00 p.m. These students who authored papers are evaluated by a team of teachers. The top five groups present their work to a panel of judges from the Westport community who are experts in the problem area. Those judges choose first, second and third place winners who then receive scholarship money. Topics have included how to solve the obesity problem in a local community as well as how to design curriculum, instruction, and assessment for a 21st century high school.

Our overall school strength is that we provide high quality “varsity level” programs in all areas of the school: academics, the arts, research, technology, and athletics. Our students routinely return from their first semester of college (all tiers) telling us that they can write, use math to solve problems, do research, and organize their time better than most of their college peers. Ninety-nine point five percent of our students graduate and 96% go on to college. Our sophomores score among the highest on state tenth grade tests and our math scores on that test are the highest in the state. We are equally concerned and expend great effort in creating and maintaining a wholesome, welcoming, supportive environment where students are free to express who they are without fear of bullying. For example, at our annual variety show, a boy received rousing applause for his interpretive modern dance; an Asian stand-up comic got a standing ovation for his self-deprecating humor about being a dark-skinned Muslim, and a classical guitarist received the same audience response as a rock band. Freshmen learn quickly that it is not cool to pick on someone for being different. The biggest club in our school, with over 100 members, is Best Buddies, which pairs regular education students with special needs students. That positive environment coupled with supportive parents, passionate well-educated teachers, and responsible students whose primary goal is to become well educated are the secrets to our success.

We are now working with Columbia Teachers College to benchmark our students’ work with the best schools in the world. Because we have no major discipline problems, our teachers can spend every minute of every class focusing on students acquiring in-depth understanding across disciplines through inquiry and interaction with each other and the teachers in order to solve problems that are meaningful to them and helpful to the human race. With Teachers College, we have created a framework of 21st century skills and capacities, including collaboration, agility and adaptability, curiosity and imagination, and self-reflection, that will prepare our students to become global citizens. Next school year, we will participate

in a \$100,000 grant awarded by the National Institute of Education in Singapore. Researchers from Singapore and Teachers College will study how 21st century skills are delivered in “two top high schools from around the globe,” Staples High School and Hwa Chong High School in Singapore.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

The Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) for grade 10 is administered in four subject areas: Math, Reading, Writing, and Science. Performance levels are reported as follows: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Goal, Advanced. For Staples, the requirement for graduation is meeting the Goal standard in all four tests.

In the five year time period from 2008 through 2012, the trend line for the percent of all students achieving goal in all four subject areas has been fairly consistent and usually placed Westport in roughly the upper half of scores among the towns in our DRG, or socio-economic reference group. In Math, 2008, 86.3% made goal; in 2009, 83.6% met goal; in 2010, 86.2% made goal; in 2011, 90.2% made goal; in 2012, 86.1% made goal. In Science, in 2008, 77.4% made goal; in 2009, 75.2% made goal; in 2010, 77% made goal; in 2011, 79% made goal; in 2012, 79.6% made goal. In Reading, in 2008, 87.4% made goal; in 2009, 87.9% made goal; in 2010, 86.2% made goal; in 2011, 87.3% made goal; in 2012, 83.7% made goal. In Writing, in 2008, 89.7% made goal; in 2009, 88.7% made goal; in 2010, 89.6% made goal; in 2011, 91.5% made goal; in 2012, 91.5% made goal.

The trend line for Westport students' SAT scores has been fairly consistent from 2005 through 2012, well above the average in Connecticut and in the upper half of scores in our DRG. For example, in 2012, Staples students' average score in critical reading was 589 (state average 506); math score was 599 (state average 512); writing score was 597 (state average 510).

Advanced Placement courses at Staples are open enrollment. Staples participation in AP tests has increased from 2005 through 2012, from 292 students tested to 487 students tested. As participation has increased, scores have increased as well, from 88% earning 3 or higher to 93% earning a 3 or higher in 2012.

The only cohort group at Staples on which we are measured for AYP is Students With Disabilities. Although it is important to keep in mind that the Staples' standard is meeting goal, not simply being proficient, and that the Staples achievement gap is very similar to that of the gap in other schools in our DRG, this is an area of growth for Staples. For 2011-12, there was an achievement gap in Math, with 91.3% of regular education students reaching goal and 45.3% of students with disabilities reaching goal. In Science, 83.6% of regular education students reached goal and 48.1% of students with disabilities reached goal. In Reading, 87.6% of regular education students reached goal and 51.9% of students with disabilities reached goal. In Writing, 95.6% of regular education students reached goal and 59.3% of students with disabilities reached goal.

Upon receiving the scores of students with disabilities, the Pupil Services Team reviews the IEP goals for each student and the services received to determine if they are appropriately rigorous for the individual. Teachers deliver instruction to assist each student in making progress on the IEP goals, carefully monitoring progress and designing future instruction based on this data. Accommodations are made so that students have appropriate access to skills and content in order to achieve their personal best. Students have access to co-taught classes, modified content, and study skills classes.

The consistently high performance of Staples students on standardized tests is due to several factors. Most of our students take their academic work seriously and want to succeed. Instruction in all classes is scaffolded to help students to succeed and teachers meet on a regular basis in individual conferences with struggling students. Each subject area provides a Learning Center for additional support. Teachers work collaboratively together to analyze student work and to plan for student improvement.

2. Using Assessment Results:

Department chairs work with teachers at Staples to analyze data that results from standardized tests such as CAPT and AP tests. For example, each teacher receives a list of students in his/her previous sophomore class and how they scored on CAPT. The teacher is then asked to reflect on any students who did not make goal and how that teacher's instruction might need to be revised. Junior teachers are given a list of any students who did not make goal on the sophomore CAPT and are asked to reflect upon what scaffolding might need to be put in place to increase those students' achievement levels. During course alike meetings, teachers collaborate in terms of instructional strategies that might be embedded into each curriculum area that would support student achievement on the CAPT. This same system of examining test scores and collaborating in course-alike groups is used to ensure that over 90% of students taking AP exams achieve a 3 or above.

More important than looking at standardized test scores is teachers looking collaboratively at student work, both formative and summative assessment results. Teachers work together to analyze and to reflect upon student essays, lab reports, the solving of non-routine problems, student multi-media productions, among other work products. The questions are always the same: What are the strengths of the work? The areas for growth? How might the individual student be supported to become more successful? How might the curriculum, instruction, or assessment be re-designed to increase student learning? These discussions take place within departments.

To extend the use of assessment data to improve student achievement, with the advent of our Westport 2025 initiative, we are now also meeting across departments to look at units of study designed using the lens that we created with our Columbia Teachers College partners (TC), which provides a framework for teaching 21st century skills. We have a central K-12 task force that meets six times a year and a task force within each building that meets four to six times a year. In those meetings teachers from all grade levels and subject areas share lessons or units created using the lens and share student work. Acting as critical friends for each other, analyzing the student work with our TC partners shows us the degree of success we are achieving in teaching 21st century skills.

Students and parents receive four report cards and four mid-quarter progress reports on line each year. In addition, Staples has opened the electronic grading system to parents and students so that they can see, in real time, grades and assignments in all of their courses. All teachers place emphasis on students coming for conferences to discuss and improve their work. Teacher-parent-guidance counselor communication is vital in terms of analyzing students' strengths and areas of growth, particularly in light of college choices, and in light of reducing stress over academic achievement in a high powered community such as Westport. The Development Guidance Program supports students as they work to improve their academic performance and develop realistic college choices. Frequent and extended communication on line or on the phone or in person is common. While parents are involved in supporting their children, we place emphasis on students learning to self-advocate and to develop the essential 21st century skill of resilience. To that end, the Guidance Department has just begun a new program called the Staples Resilience Project, offering monthly tips online with a vision to work with the PTA to provide a nationally recognized speaker for parents and students at an evening meeting. The many parent meetings mentioned in questions 4 and 7 provide a context for parents to understand individual student development and achievement. The Central Office staff presents an annual detailed analysis (30 pages) to the Board of Education, televised and made available to the public, on all standardized K-12 testing.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

The department chairs of all major subject areas provide leadership in supervision and curriculum development. In addition, as mentioned in other questions, our Westport 2025 initiative provides articulation and coordination of the teaching of 21st century skills K-12. Staples staff members are engaged in both state and national organizations. In the spring of 2011, Westport Schools were invited to make a presentation to the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) annual conference to

share our Westport 2025: Meeting the Global Challenge initiative. We are members of the Tri-State Consortium of Schools. Both the Directors of Elementary and Secondary Education attend regular meetings to share curriculum and assessment strategies and to discuss common issues. Both teachers and administrators from Staples have participated in many Tri-State Evaluations of our neighboring schools, which have provided opportunities for us to learn and to share educational strategies. Many of our administrators and teachers are leaders in subject area professional development organizations. For example, the Math Department Chair sits on the state of Connecticut Steering Committee, whose task it is to create a model Algebra I curriculum; he also was awarded a Phi Delta Kappa travel scholarship to visit the school systems of Finland and Sweden during this school year in conjunction with our Westport 2025 initiative. The Social Studies Department Chair sits on the Connecticut State Department of Education Frameworks Revision Committee. The Science Department Chair is an active board member of the Southern Connecticut Science and Engineering Foundation. Staples Math, English, and Science teachers have frequently been presenters at the national annual Math, English, and Science conferences. A number of our teachers are working on contracts to publish text books. For example, four English teachers are working with Pearson on a book of literature units focused on Common Core Standards. During the 2011-12 school year, Public Television filmed exemplary lessons in both middle school and high school, which now appear on the PBS Teaching Channel, viewed throughout the United States. Staples High School will be a participant, school years 2013-15, in a \$100,000 grant awarded by the National Institute for Education in Singapore. Researchers from Singapore and Teachers College will research how 21st century skills are delivered and assessed in two of the "top high schools around the globe," Staples High School & Hwa Chong High School in Singapore. Both schools will share lessons learned about 21st century skills.

4. Engaging Families and Communities:

Engaging Families and Community: We have found that timely and frequent communication with parents pays huge dividends in building a trusting relationship.

All teachers call or email parents on a regular basis, not only to alert parents to problems, but more importantly, to share students' successes. Software allows the principal to communicate with individual parents, or the entire school.

Relationship building begins one week before school begins for freshmen. Each freshman and her/his parents are treated to a one hour orientation and personal tour conducted by upperclassmen. New students are paired with a present Staples student to aid in this transition. These individual sessions send a clear message that we care about each student. After that introduction to Staples, the following information sessions are provided throughout the four years: Freshman Parents' Breakfast, Sophomore Parents' Breakfast, Junior Parents' Night, and Senior Parents' Breakfast are all conducted by the Guidance Counselors, providing pertinent information vital to students in that grade.

We continue with Students of the Month, which honors about a dozen students each month who contribute to the wholesome atmosphere of the school. Every year we have a breakfast for the families of students that counselors identify as most improved from the year before. In some cases, this is the only public recognition these students and their parents have ever experienced. Fifteen Minutes of Fame, which occurs six times per year, identifies a student who does something very interesting outside of school and provides those students with recognition and a feature article and photo in the local paper. There is a monthly "Message From the Principal" in the PTA Newsletter that goes to every family.

The Principal meets with about 100 parents each month at the PTA Coffee to answer questions and share information. The Principal has held community meetings at the local library for high profile problems such as intoxication at Homecoming. The Principal often presents to local citizens at Rotary, Kiwanis and other community organizations.

Another way in which our students connect with the community is through our Job Shadow Program for

juniors and our Senior Intern Program, which takes place the last four weeks of the school year. These programs give our students opportunities to engage in local businesses, and professional organizations in order to practice such real world 21st century skills as collaboration, problem solving, communication, and meeting the requirements of an employer.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

Curricula are designed based upon the Common Core Standards, our Westport framework for 21st century skills, and the national standards for each content area. Our focus on both the Common Core Standards and Wagner's 7 Survival Skills for the 21st century prepares our students for college and career readiness. In fact, PBS has included 3 videos of Staples faculty teaching to the CCS on their Teaching Channel. Each department offers courses at four levels: Advanced Placement, Honors, A level and B level. Students choose which level is most appropriate. In addition, differentiated activities are offered in classes. Technology is infused into all curricula as students learn to research on line as well as communicate, collaborate, and create products using digital media.

The math curriculum has been revised to reduce the number of topics for each course and to focus on in-depth understanding of major concepts and the solving of non-routine problems. The Math Department collaborates with HeyMath, whose servers are located in Singapore, to create a web-based curriculum with lessons that are interactive, engaging, and focused on conceptual understanding.

Social Studies has completed a revision of its entire curriculum based on the latest NCSS standards as well as CCS and Westport's 21st century skill framework, including real world problem solving. Emphasis is placed on an articulated series of writing goals; the infusion of problem-based learning experiences in all courses; the use of web authoring programs to create original products.

The English Department focuses on critical and creative thinking as demonstrated in reading complex texts, both fiction and non-fiction, as well as writing in a variety of genres, including digital communication. All juniors are required to write a thesis driven research paper. English teachers meet consistently with students in writing conferences, which enables students to revise frequently, using in-depth feedback provided by the teacher.

The Science Department is completing a revision of all of its courses based on national science standards, emphasizing the inquiry based approach. Science offers some unique curricular experiences, such as computer programming courses that focus on programming strategies, themes and development of computational thinking rather than learning specific programming languages. Additionally, there is a three year science research course that allows students to choose their own area of research and to generate original data in that area. Next year, Staples will be offering engineering and design courses.

World Language offers six languages including Mandarin Chinese. Classes emphasize consistent speaking in the target language, knowledge of other cultures, and connecting with other disciplines.

Through substantial experiences in the Visual and Performing Arts (Music and Theater) students think critically and creatively, work independently and collaboratively, and share/communicate their artistic creations through exhibits, concerts, and theater productions. The Art Department includes more than thirty courses in traditional and digital art media and has added an AP 3-D Art for next year. The Music Department offers four bands, four orchestras, four choruses as well as courses in music theory and Music Technology. The annual Staples Candlelight Concert has been a tradition for 72 years. The theater program offers multiple courses, and the Staples Players is a nationally renowned theater group that has won the New England Theater Conference Moss Hart Award ten times.

The Health and PE Department programs are student centered, utilize individualized assessment and goal planning and focus on lifelong fitness and wellness. A unique portion of the curriculum is the Fitness Concepts class, a modified Anatomy, Kinesiology and Exercise Physiology program. All students are

prepared for college readiness though emphasis on critical thinking, in depth understanding of rigorous content, and a variety of experiences which build perseverance and resilience.

2. Reading/English:

The Staples English curriculum is intensely focused on critical and creative thinking as demonstrated through the reading of complex texts, both fiction and non-fiction, and writing in multiple genres, including literary analysis, memoir, researched persuasive essays, short stories, and poetry. English teachers instruct four classes; they meet with students in conference during what would have been a fifth period class. Therefore, there is a tremendous emphasis on students revising their writing, supported by written feedback from the teacher as well as multiple conferences outside of class. Models of excellent writing, as well as rubrics, are provided. All students are required to write a thesis driven research paper in junior year.

Instructional methods focus on units designed around essential questions, student generated questions, self-reflection, close analysis of text, collaborative work (either in small groups in the classroom or through use of blogs and discussion boards), frequent quick writes in class to make thinking visible, Socratic seminars, comparison/contrast of texts, inquiry, and problem-based learning. There is also a growing emphasis on multi-modal communication skills, especially the ability to make persuasive oral presentations accompanied by digital media, produced by students, appropriate for audience and purpose. Students engage in 21st century multi-media communication, learning the traditional skills of writing and oral presentation as well as production of digital media.

Emphasis on scaffolding reading instruction as well as student choice of reading materials helps students who read both above and below grade levels to develop fluency, stamina, and a love of reading. At Staples, students have a choice of course levels; there is also differentiation within each course level.

After the foundational freshman and sophomore years, there is a choice of over 20 different content area courses, offering students the ability to develop global awareness and to appreciate the literature of diverse groups of people. Examples include British Literature; Caribbean Literature; Film Analysis; Gender, Sex, and Identity. These content choices allow students to pursue their own interests, while continuing to develop reading, writing, and thinking skills. In addition to the required four credits in English, students can register for Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop, or Personalized Study Skills for additional academic support. A variety of technologies, such as Smartboards and software programs such as Read Write Gold, support struggling readers and writers.

3. Mathematics:

Six years ago, the Staples Math Department began a process of revising the curriculum to focus on deep conceptual understanding of essential topics in math, and to reduce the number of topics taught in each course, thereby responding to the criticism of the US math curriculum as “a mile wide and an inch deep.” The Math curriculum is coherent, in that every topic deepens the understanding of previously taught math concepts and skills or lays a foundation for upcoming concepts. This approach allows students who are performing both above and below grade level to be successful. Westport has formed a partnership with HeyMath, whose servers are located in Singapore, to create a web-based curriculum with interactive, differentiated lessons available on line 24/7 for students. The curriculum is a living document; groups of teachers meet throughout the year and in summer workshops to reflect and revise in light of skills and understandings needed for the 21st century, such as the resiliency, creativity, and perseverance needed to solve complex problems. Math students have been extremely successful by all traditional measures: CAPT, SAT, all three AP tests. The department is now beginning to benchmark against international standards, as part of Westport’s collaboration with Columbia Teachers College, with its focus on solving non-routine, real world problems.

Because of our students’ success in solving complex, real-world problems in all of their math classes,

they began to participate in the Moody's Math Challenge. Each year our team has reached semi-finalist status or beyond. For example, in 2005 Staples team won the first place award of \$20,000. The excitement generated by participation in Moody's Math Challenge led to the creation of our own Staples Spectacular Student Challenge. Eleven teams of students volunteer to spend twelve hours on a Sunday solving a real-world problem of our creation. The finalists then present their findings to a team of judges from the local community and beyond.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

The Staples mission includes teaching students to think critically and creatively, to use contemporary literacy skills, and to solve real world problems. To that end, the Social Studies Department is in the midst of a transformation centered on students' acquisition of these skills. Our courses have moved away from emphasizing content acquisition, and are now focused on the overarching skill of solving real-world problems. Final assessments in core course are now based on students' demonstrating their ability to apply accurate, relevant content to authentic situations, and present their solutions or findings to their peers.

For example, our sophomores in all levels of U.S. History must use content from the course and apply their understanding of different groups' experiences, the role of government, and mastery of course content to address scenarios such as forming an effective protest, developing a foreign policy proposal, or evaluating the state of civil rights. In our Middle East Studies course, students' final assessment is a debate where each student must argue an issue from different point of view to create understanding among their classmates. Initiatives such as this grew from our long-standing school goal of developing real-world assessments. These efforts led directly to the creation of our freshman year Global Themes course, which not only utilizes problem solving to deepen student understanding, but has been designed with flexibility for students and teachers, and in which all historical time periods are taught with an eye on connections to the contemporary world. In every unit of the course, our freshmen at every level are using knowledge of historical documents, cultural developments, economic systems, and geographic implications to learn about the complex world that they live in. Our youngest students are making connections between the triangle trade and modern human trafficking, following goods from their places of origin to trace impacts around the world, and applying lessons about the rise and fall of civilizations to current conflicts.

Our instruction has evolved so that while students still write both argument-based and explanatory works, they are doing so on websites, by creating videos, blogging, and gathering information from traditional databases as well as via web 2.0 sources such as YouTube and Twitter. These types of assessments and lessons directly align with the 21st century capacities outlined in our Westport 2025 initiative, and have now led to revisions of our entire middle and high school program of studies.

5. Instructional Methods:

Instructional methods focus on active student engagement in the classroom in order to achieve in depth understanding of complex content as well as the practice of 21st century skills and dispositions. The goal of all curriculum areas is to prepare all students to apply what they have learned in terms of content and skills in order to solve real world problems in an innovative way. Students at all grade levels at Staples and in all courses practice inquiry-based learning; Socratic seminars; frequent quick writes in class based on prompts from Making Thinking Visible; individual and collaborative problem solving of complex, non-routine problems; close reading and annotation of complex texts; research and writing across all subject areas; individual and collaborative oral presentations supported by student produced digital media; laboratory research in science; revisions and multiple iterations of work products in all subject areas, ranging from paintings to essays to lab experiments, in order to teach perseverance; written reflections in which students assess both their own products and process of learning. Courses are offered at the AP, honors, A, and B levels. Students are recommended for levels, but the final choice of level is up to the student and parents. The goal of a lower level is to provide scaffolding and individual support to help

students working below grade level to move to a higher level. There are team taught classes in several subject areas in which a regular education and a special education teacher provide instruction for students. Skills and content are often differentiated based on student interests, learning style, and ability level. Course content can be modified for students with special needs.

Technology in the classroom supports struggling learners. Smartboards provide opportunities for interactive learning, visual support for the understanding of complex concepts, and can be used to send notes and materials created in class to all students on line. Software programs, such as Inspiration and Read Write Gold, aid struggling students in developing comprehension, fluency, and writing skills. In addition, regular education students can take the following support courses: reading workshop, writing workshop, personalized study skills. These courses complement required courses in several disciplines by offering scaffolded, personalized instruction in literacy and executive functioning skills.

6. Professional Development:

The professional development approach of the Westport system is focused, coherent, and long term. We offer professional development in particular content areas as well PD for the teaching of skills and dispositions K-12 across content areas. A good example of our approach to PD is our Westport 2025: Meeting the Global Challenge initiative. Three years ago we instituted a task force, composed of 45 teacher and administrator volunteers who met eight times during the year, to determine what we need to do in order to prepare students for the 21st century. We partnered with Columbia Teachers College to determine best practices for teaching 21st century skills. With TC, Westport teachers have created a framework for planning to teach four domains: critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, global capacities. These domains are broken down into 16 specific capacities. In addition to the original task force, we now have a cohort 2 at each building in the system. Teams of teachers have worked with TC staff members to design curriculum units based on 21st century skills. We are employing a train-the-trainer model; these teachers then reach out to their colleagues to guide them in designing new curriculum units K-12. Teachers and administrators and TC staff members serve as critical friends to those teachers who have designed curriculum units, analyzing the units and student work samples K-12 using the lens we created with TC. In the spirit of continuous curriculum improvement, we plan to work in partnership with a school in Singapore beginning this spring in order to benchmark our curriculum and assessments against theirs. Time for PD comes from six dedicated PD days, use of department and faculty meeting time, as well as a great deal of volunteer time of the task force members. The title of our initiative, Westport 2025, indicates that this is a consistent, long term project that will take some years to accomplish. We are essentially trying to move, K-12, from a 20th century to a 21st century paradigm of teaching and learning, from transmission of knowledge by teachers to construction and application of knowledge by students.

7. School Leadership:

The principal has made it clear to every member of the staff that we must always strive, through self-reflection, to find ways to stimulate students' thinking about their learning and to look for ways to make school relevant to their lives. It is our responsibility to create and maintain an environment which is safe and in which students feel comfortable expressing their true ideas and beliefs. We create an environment which is personalized; our goal is to make sure that every student has connected with at least one adult to whom he/she can speak comfortably.

Leadership at Staples is collaborative. Twice a month the principal meets with his administrative team comprised of four assistant principals (who remain with their classes for four years, which strengthens their relationship with students), and all department chairs. Meetings focus both on student achievement and student well-being. Issues of instruction, assessment, and curriculum as well as social and emotional concerns are discussed and resolved based on data collected by the department chairs and Assistant Principals. This data driven approach has informed our instructional decisions and, for example, has supported the high percentage of students who consistently make goal on all CAPT tests.

In addition, we have formed a partnership with Columbia Teachers College to go beyond the goals of current state tests and to prepare our students with what Tony Wagner has called “the seven survival skills for the 21st century.” We have created a “lens,” a matrix of 21st Century skills, for all teachers to use as they plan units of study which will prepare our students to be leaders in the 21st century. We provide time for teachers to collaborate in designing units that focus on solving real world problems, using both critical and creative thinking.

Each week, the school Collaborative Team meets to discuss big ideas that might impact the whole school. Teacher representatives from every department, all department chairs, all administrators, the two PTA Co-Presidents, and two seniors from student government serve on this team. The team’s recommendations are very important. The Superintendent of Schools, for example, came to the Team with the idea of increasing credit requirements for graduation from 22 to 25 and changing the distribution of those credits. The results of the Collaborative Team deliberations were accepted by the Superintendent and new graduation requirements went into effect the following year.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 10 Test: Connect Academic Performance Test

Edition/Publication Year: State Test

Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient and above	86	90	86	83	86
Advanced	52	58	53	49	52
Number of students tested	454	461	425	470	400
Percent of total students tested	100	99	99	98	97
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	1	2	5	5
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	1	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and above					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient and above					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and above					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient and above	46	59	54	41	46
Advanced	12	15	12	9	15
Number of students tested	52	49	47	39	44
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and above					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
6. white					
Proficient and above	87	91	88	85	87
Advanced	54	58	55	50	53
Number of students tested	403	432	380	438	371
<p>NOTES: * The state of Connecticut has received permission from the federal government to use its own growth measurement tool and reporting beginning with the 2011-2012 school year. The state no longer uses the AYP report card. The 2011-2012 school year data was used as the baseline for the new tool. It has been included. The data used in the chart above is from the raw data received from the state in our own password protected portal. It cannot be found online like the other AYP report cards. ** The State of Connecticut only reports the percent of students who score at the various levels for cohorts that are 20 students or more. Many of our subgroups are below that threshold and are thus noted in the chart above as Under 20.</p>					

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 10 Test: Connect Academic Performance Test

Edition/Publication Year: State Test Publisher: Connecticut State Department of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient and above	84	87	86	88	87
advanced	54	58	59	59	62
Number of students tested	454	460	425	471	402
Percent of total students tested	99	99	99	98	98
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	1	2	5	5
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient and above					
advanced					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Proficient and above					
advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient and above					
advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient and above	53	64	45	53	44
advanced	20	23	21	15	10
Number of students tested	52	48	47	39	44
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient and above					
advanced					
Number of students tested					
6. white					
Proficient and above	85	88	86	89	88
advanced	54	58	60	61	63
Number of students tested	403	431	380	439	372
<p>NOTES: * The state of Connecticut has received permission from the federal government to use its own growth measurement tool and reporting beginning with the 2011-2012 school year. The state no longer uses the AYP report card. The 2011-2012 school year data was used as the baseline for the new tool. It has been included. The data used in the chart above is from the raw data received from the state in our own password protected portal. It cannot be found online like the other AYP report cards. ** The State of Connecticut only reports the percent of students who score at the various levels for cohorts that are 20 students or more. Many of our subgroups are below that threshold and are thus noted in the chart above as Under 20.</p>					