

U.S. Department of Education
2013 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program
A Public School - 13CT4

School Type (Public Schools): **Charter** **Title 1** **Magnet** **Choice**

Name of Principal: Mrs. Lisa Wolak Deorio

Official School Name: Weston High School

School Mailing Address: 115 School Road
 Weston
 Weston, CT 06883-1662

County: Fairfield State School Code Number*: 157-61

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I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that all information is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*: Dr. Colleen Palmer PhD Superintendent e-mail:
colleenpalmer@westonps.org

District Name: Weston District Phone: (203) 291-1401

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that it is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Philip Schaefer

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

**Non-Public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*
The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools (Aba.Kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba

Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

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 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 1 High schools
 0 K-12 schools
 4 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 17952

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: 5
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	96	115	211
10	98	79	177
11	97	90	187
12	104	104	208
Total in Applying School:			783

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
3 % Asian
1 % Black or African American
3 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
92 % White
1 % 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: 1%

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.	0
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	5
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	5
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2011	783
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.01
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	1

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 0%

Total number of ELL students in the school: 1

Number of non-English languages represented: 1

Specify non-English languages:

Russian

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 2%
 Total number of students who qualify: 18

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: 8%
 Total number of students served: 66

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>9</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>19</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>29</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>1</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>4</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>39</u>	<u>6</u>
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	<u>22</u>	<u>2</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	<u>15</u>	<u>3</u>
Total number	<u>90</u>	<u>12</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: 20:1

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	93%	93%	94%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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>189</u>
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>92%</u>
Enrolled in a community college	<u>2%</u>
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>0%</u>
Found employment	<u>1%</u>
Military service	<u>0%</u>
Other	<u>5%</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

Weston High School's mission is to provide a safe and intellectually challenging environment that empowers our students to become innovative thinkers, creative problem solvers, effective communicators, and inspired learners prepared to thrive in the twenty-first century. High expectations for every student in regard to academic performance, co-curricular participation, and responsible citizenship are the foundation of our school. It is with pride that students are held to these high standards and asked to commit to maintaining the extraordinary record of achievement and contribution that is the legacy of Weston High School students.

Weston High School serves a suburban community of approximately 10,000 residents in Connecticut, situated 50 miles northeast of New York City. The town is home to professionals, entrepreneurs, writers, and creative and performing artists. The Weston community is extremely supportive of and involved with its schools. The educational campus, comprised of four schools located on one scenic road at the heart of the town, is testimony to that commitment.

Key beliefs about teaching and learning serve as the framework for the school. The faculty believes that effective teachers:

- Create opportunities for intellectual risk-taking, collaboration, problem-solving, and application of classroom learning to real-life situations;
- Implement strategies that promote ownership of learning to students;
- Design instruction to integrate a variety of innovative technological tools and resources to enhance learning;
- Demonstrate ongoing professional growth in order to increase the quality of instruction; and
- Collaborate with colleagues to share and discuss exemplary practices, interpret student performance data, and design assessments that promote twenty-first century skills.

The faculty also believes that successful students:

- Communicate in a meaningful way for a variety of purposes and audiences;
- Demonstrate a sensitivity to the precision and nuances of written, visual, and sensory medium through comprehension, interpretation, and evaluation;
- Employ critical and creative thinking skills to solve problems;
- Pose questions, examine possibilities, and apply skills to find solutions to authentic topics;
- Make positive choices related to physical and mental wellness; and
- Contribute to the local and global community in a collaborative and respectful manner.

These beliefs may appear simple and straightforward, yet their nuances and the manner in which they take shape in our school define it as an exemplary learning community. Weston High School partners with Teachers College, Columbia University to design instruction and assessments reflective of these principles. Purposefully designed curricula with school-wide analytic rubrics measure students' progress in achieving identified twenty-first century learning expectations. All juniors complete a comprehensive

cornerstone assessment within the Academic Innovation and Measurement (AIM) initiative where they analyze, synthesize, and apply knowledge to solve authentic problems.

Weston High School's greatest strength is the level of personalization that students receive during their four-year experience. With an enrollment of fewer than 800, students are known individually and are empowered to assume responsibility for their learning and the school environment. At the beginning of the year, a Trojan Kick-Off celebration is held, concluding with a unity lap around the track and the spelling of "WHS" on the field by the collaborative, physical configuration created by all staff and students. Trojan Time, the advisory program, provides students with an intimate, comfortable environment designed to promote school spirit, support academic achievement, and foster social well-being. An annual club fair is held in September followed by a spirited homecoming week where students deck the school walls and their advisory doors before the traditional powder puff football game.

Weston High School prides itself on an exceptional interscholastic program with 63 teams that sets high standards for student responsibility. An active drama club, as well as an array of different clubs including Mock Trial and Science Olympiad, are essential to this comprehensive high school. A leadership circle comprised of athletic captains, student government officers, and theater board meets throughout the year. In the spring, students organize Relay for Life, a community fundraiser for cancer research. The school campus is the site of the Connecticut Special Olympics where students volunteer and support all athletes. Student representatives participate on our district Wellness Committee, the Strategic Planning Team, and other major bodies of critical work.

Weston High School enjoys partnerships with community organizations that enthusiastically support its mission. These include the Weston Education Foundation, Weston Arts, and the WHS Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). These groups have funded a television studio and videography program, an innovative entrepreneurship program linking students with business mentors, a senior internship program, and a Chinese sister school, among other initiatives that enhance learning.

During this time of transformation characterized by the rapidity of change and emerging challenges, Weston High School holds steadfast to the commitment that its students will become contributing members of a global community. Through the staff's collective spirit of caring and academic support, students achieve their goals and leave this learning community well prepared for the challenges and opportunities that lie before them upon graduation.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

Students at Weston High School complete the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) in March of their sophomore year. Students are assessed in four academic areas: Math, Science, Reading Across the Disciplines, and Writing Across the Disciplines. Students receive one of five ratings in each area: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Goal, and Above Goal. While the State of Connecticut has set the rating of Proficient as the benchmark for gauging adequate yearly progress, Weston High School has determined that a rating of Goal is the acceptable school standard. Beginning with the class of 2009, the Weston Board of Education added the requirement that students demonstrate “Foundational Competencies” in Reading, Writing, Math, and Science by achieving Goal on the related section of CAPT. Students who do not meet Goal on one or more sections of CAPT are required to demonstrate these “Foundational Competencies” through coursework and individual portfolios.

WHS has consistently ranked within the highest-performing districts, and has been designated as the overall highest-performing school in the State in two of the last five years. The most recent year’s No Child Left Behind data are consistent with CAPT scores for the past five years with more than 80% of our students achieving at or above Goal: Reading = 84.6% at or above Goal; Writing = 93% at or above Goal; Math = 84.5% at or above Goal; Science = 83.4% at or above Goal.

Beginning in the fall of 2012, all sophomores and juniors now complete the PSAT/NMSQT during the school day. Prior to this date, the PSAT/NMSQT was taken on a voluntary basis on a Saturday. This assessment provides teachers with information on college readiness in the areas of critical reading, mathematics, and writing skills. They are then able to use these data to inform instruction. In October of 2012, 163 sophomores and 178 juniors took the PSAT/NMSQT. According to the results, the percentage of students determined by the College Board as “College and Career Ready” rank WHS in the uppermost range.

SAT and ACT results for the class of 2012 continue to demonstrate that our students perform well above state and national averages: 156 students took the SAT for a combined total average of 1794 and 119 students took the ACT for an average composite score of 26.3. In May of 2012, 210 students sat for 474 Advanced Placement (AP) exams in 18 subjects: 94% of these students scored a passing grade of 3, 4, or 5. Results on these assessments have contributed to achieving *U.S. News and World Report’s* Gold Medal Status for Best High Schools and *Newsweek’s* ranking WHS as number one in Fairfield County and number two in Connecticut.

2. Using Assessment Results:

Each year the high school administration and the curriculum instructional leaders analyze the assessment data from CAPT and AP exams. Overall results of the CAPT and AP exams are presented formally to the faculty and Board of Education. Faculty members of specific academic departments analyze data pertaining to their subject area in order to identify specific weaknesses or deficiencies. These conversations influence instructional practice, and detailed reports on each child’s performance are mailed home to parents.

The high school administration works with the curriculum instructional leaders to identify ninth-grade students who do not meet Goal on any section of the Connecticut Mastery Test taken in March of their eighth-grade year, and also identifies any of the eleventh-grade students who do not reach Goal on any section of the CAPT during their sophomore year. Detailed student performance data are shared with classroom teachers. Conversations are held among counselors, administrators, staff members, and parents to determine whether any interventions or additional supports are indicated to improve student

achievement. For example, students who do not meet Goal in reading complete a reading assessment by one of our staff members. The purpose of the screening is to determine whether the student's failure to reach Goal represented a weakness in fluency, decoding, or comprehension. If the teacher identifies a weakness in any of these areas, the school seeks to provide appropriate reading interventions through our Scientific Research-Based Interventions.

The team also analyzes assessment data to identify students who would benefit from the Center for Academic Support and Enhancement (CASE). This program is for regular education students who experience difficulties as a result of weak skills in academic areas such as writing or math and who may need help with time management or study skills. Students have multiple pathways for referral to CASE: parents/guardians, teachers, and counselors may make referrals to CASE, as well as the students themselves. The program is geared toward freshmen and sophomores, although upperclassmen are occasionally placed in CASE as well. Students are typically assigned to CASE for one period during the school day. A certified teacher coordinates the program and works closely with teachers and families to monitor each student's progress. The program also contains a counseling component, as needed, which is delivered through the school counseling department.

In addition to standardized test results, teachers find that ongoing formative assessments and departmental assessments, including midterms and final exams, provide important data about student learning. These home-grown tools allow them to assess student progress toward meeting the student learning expectations that Weston High School has developed in skill areas that are not readily assessed on standardized tests. These include analysis, presentation, problem-solving, and writing. Student achievement towards meeting the social and civic learning expectations is also measured.

Teachers use school-wide rubrics to report student achievement in these areas. They enter the data into PowerSchool, our information management system that parents/guardians access via the "parent portal." Administrators analyze these data to determine how well the entire student body is progressing toward meeting these expectations.

Data analysis of the eleventh-grade AIM cornerstone assessment is critical to the work centered around twenty-first century skills in which the staff is engaged through the partnership with Teachers College, Columbia University. Students' competencies in key areas of these twenty-first century skills are evaluated to inform both individual students and the school at-large.

The data from all of these sources influence programming and school budgeting/resource allocation decisions. Student achievement data are shared with the community in the monthly newsletter and the school profile, which can be found online at the school's website.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

Teachers at Weston High School work collaboratively with teachers within our district and with teachers from neighboring districts to share best practices. One example is the work that our science teachers have accomplished with inquiry-based instruction. Weston High School science teachers were trained in this methodology through the Connecticut Science Center. These teachers returned to the district and offered summer workshops to train their colleagues. As a result, all science teachers in the district (grades 6-12) have been trained to use inquiry-based instruction in the classroom. Many elementary teachers have also received this training. This work stems from the feedback the school received from colleagues of the Tri-State Consortium who visited the science program. Weston Public Schools is a member of the Tri-State Consortium, which brings together educators from schools in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey with the goal of sharing best practices in teaching and learning. Teachers from neighboring districts are invited to observe teaching and learning at Weston High School.

Teachers at the school commonly share their expertise with colleagues. The Technology Champion program matches one teacher to every department to assist colleagues with integrating innovative technological and digital resources. Our teachers often share best practices with colleagues in the district and beyond. For example, math teachers shared strategies for using the SmartBoard as an instructional tool with district colleagues. Another math teacher presented to a national audience at the annual meetings of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Association of Teachers of Mathematics. His presentations focused on successful strategies for using the graphing calculator.

English, world language, math, and science teachers regularly share best practices with their colleagues at the middle school. Each year high school teachers spend time teaching model lessons at the middle school which helps assure articulation and alignment of the curriculum.

A great deal of time and energy has been expended over the past four years in conjunction with our AIM initiative to ensure that our students are prepared to thrive in the twenty-first century. Through a collaborative process that involved teachers, administrators, and “critical friends” from Teachers College, Columbia University, the staff came to a common understanding of twenty-first century skills. A skill matrix, lesson-design protocol, and scoring rubrics were developed to frame the work. All students across the disciplines are given opportunities to develop these skills and to demonstrate their proficiency. The work that Weston High School has accomplished through the AIM initiative has been shared with schools both regionally and nationally.

4. Engaging Families and Communities:

Weston High School uses a multi-faceted approach to engage family and community members in its efforts to improve and promote students’ success. The personalization that the school provides to its students extends to the wider community. Ongoing communication about how school initiatives align with its core beliefs fosters an environment of support for student success. Parents access their students’ academic progress through the electronic student information system. A monthly newsletter, containing updates ranging from the latest projects on which students are working to the co-curricular programs in which they are involved, is sent to all families and posted on the website.

During the budget development process, the principal creates the needs-based budget that is presented to the Board of Education, which is then videotaped and presented to the community on the educational access channel and on the district’s website on demand. She addresses the parents at Back-to-School Night via a video clarifying the school’s goals; the video is also posted on the website. Emails regarding upcoming events are sent out weekly. Subscriptions to the school newspaper are available for the community, and articles written by students and staff appear in the local newspaper.

Major planning processes consistently include representation from all major stakeholders. For example, the District Strategic Planning Committee brought together students, parents/guardians, community members, and District and Town employees and officials. When the school engaged in its self-study process, parents and students participated on various committees. The school works with community organizations that fund many programs: The Weston Education Foundation and school PTO award grants for new initiatives; The Weston Gun Club Foundation donates technology to enhance instruction; Weston Arts refurbished the auditorium; and The Weston Boosters Club, Gridiron Club, and Diamond Club contribute to athletics. These connections are sustained through this personal approach with administrators presenting to organizations about how their contributions benefit the students and their constant networking and creating pathways of outreach.

Parent and student input are gathered in different ways. Student focus groups, surveys, and end-of-course assessments are part of the school’s reflective practice. Parents are surveyed on different issues. During the recent review of key policies, families and community members were asked to complete an online survey. After every sports season, parents express their opinions via online surveys. This information is analyzed and then used as part of the improvement process.

The school welcomes the community's participation: the entrepreneurship program matches students with community business mentors; the internship program connects seniors with career opportunities; community groups frequently use the facility; a genealogy class uses the library; and the school hosts Special Olympics and the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. The school is the emergency shelter for the community, which has been activated during recent hurricanes and severe winter storms that have temporarily devastated Weston. Services of food, lodging, electricity, Internet access, and water have been made available to the residents, as well as opening the auditorium to run free films for the community all day during these difficult times. This commitment to serving the town garners incredible community support of and pride in this exceptional learning cooperative.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

The school's curricula are purposefully designed to ensure that all students achieve each of the school's twenty-first century learning expectations. Weston High School worked collaboratively with Teachers College, Columbia University, and designed a matrix of twenty-first century skills as part of the AIM initiative. This matrix along with the school's learning expectations and accompanying rubrics serve as the curricular foundation for all disciplines. A rigorous and dynamic curriculum is continuously refined by our teachers under the guidance of curriculum instructional leaders. The school's ongoing objective is to ensure that twenty-first century expectations are embedded in each subject. Academic departments have identified specific learning expectations by course, and instructors provide feedback to students on those expectations using a scale of exemplary, proficient, emerging, and limited based on the school-wide rubrics on a bi-annual basis.

Weston High School offers a comprehensive program of study consisting of over 120 courses. Sixteen Advanced Placement courses in math, science, social studies, English, and world language are provided. World language students may choose from a course of study in French, Latin, Spanish, and Chinese. The school is known for its broad offerings in fine arts, with technology-based courses such as contemporary media design, music composition, and videography. Three different music ensembles are offered during the school day and two different jazz bands in the evening. The school supports two orchestras and two choirs, one of which meets in the evening. The visual arts program includes drawing, painting, photography, ceramics, sculpture, crafts, and experimental art and design. The health curriculum reflects a vertical alignment with different concepts determined by the grade level of the student. The physical education curriculum is characterized by student choice between team sports and individual fitness training, all with a focus on lifetime fitness and wellness.

The school adopted the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) pre-engineering program as the foundation of the technology department four years ago. Courses in this program include Introduction to Engineering Design, Computer Integrated Manufacturing, Principles of Engineering, and Civil Engineering, and Architecture.

Reading is approached with cross-disciplinary collaboration, and teachers work with their English colleagues to create learning tasks designed to improve students' abilities to read for information. Health, science, social studies, and visual arts teachers are involved in this work that aligns with the state reading assessment in the sophomore year.

New course offerings reflect the school's efforts to prepare students with the skills necessary for college and career readiness. They include Principles of Engineering, Computer Integrated Manufacturing, Entrepreneurship Seminar, Web Design, iMapping, TV Production, Economics, Mandarin Chinese, and Music Composition. The team building program of a ropes course and wall climbing challenge, Project Adventure, is incorporated into the physical education program.

Other authentic experiences that enhance the academic curriculum are the Weston-China Sister School Exchange, the WHS Community Garden, and a variety of traditional out-of-school field trips including Ellis Island, Hyde Park, and State Latin Day. The Senior Internship program affords seniors the opportunity to explore potential careers for the last five weeks of school. In the Entrepreneurship Seminar, students are partnered with community mentors and design business plans around a project of their choice. This seminar has a blended-learning approach with an online component. The final assessment is a presentation to a panel comprised of these professional mentors. Sophomore health students are required to complete the "Baby Think It Over" project where they must care for a computerized infant for two days.

Weston High School's emphasis on real-life experience is also reflected in class enrollment. Over 75% of the courses are comprised of students from two-to-four different grade levels. This type of heterogeneous grouping assists students in their ability to work together with classmates of varying ages and maturity levels while strengthening their communication and collaboration skills in preparation for the world beyond high school.

2. Reading/English:

The English department's goal is to empower students through the development of comprehensive communication skills. Extensive reading experiences in all genres, related research, a multiplicity of corollary writing experiences, and integrated visual literacy support students in mastering the skills and work ethic necessary to ensure future success in academia and in life.

Teachers collaborate in devising and implementing units using the Understanding by Design process. Common Core goals and essential thinking skills are selected, and essential questions are posed.

Students, both individually and collaboratively, explore various texts, and through close reading and annotation, develop their reading, writing, and communication skills. They engage in literary analysis, insightful questioning, writing experiences, classroom discussion, corollary readings, research, and related viewings of film.

Teachers' collaborative and professional development focuses on creativity and differentiation in promoting twenty-first century learning. Independent summer reading is required. Special events are incorporated in the program based on emerging issues. In order to promote visual literacy, students participate in a cross-graded "Film Festival" mini-unit where they all view a selected film during their scheduled classes in the auditorium. A group of students prepares daily questions focusing on themes, characters, and the director's visual choices in the film, and leads the other students in discussion.

A graduation requirement is the Sophomore Research Project, which involves researching a topic of personal interest, and writing a creative short story that incorporates that research. Students have the opportunity to take honors courses as well as AP courses in their junior and senior years. Students may choose a range of electives including creative writing, journalism, public presentation, drama, and film studies. Advanced readers are encouraged to enroll in additional English courses, and there are seniors who study AP Literature and Humanities. Students have the opportunity to develop an independent study project, studying genres of interest with an advisor. They may engage in an online course with prior approval of the department and administration.

Struggling readers are supported in a variety of ways. English teachers utilize diagnostic data to determine high-impact interventions. Appropriate reading improvement strategies are developed through the school's Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI). They include a reading intervention class designed to meet individual needs, the Center for Academic Support and Enhancement where students receive additional academic support, and Special Education support classes. English teachers, as all teachers, provide office hours to confer with individual students based on their needs.

3. Mathematics:

The mathematics department strives to develop students' confidence and perseverance in solving a variety of problems including open-ended, non-routine, and real-world situations. Teachers endeavor to create this environment through the purposeful development and implementation of each unit. Rather than presenting each concept as a single entity, teachers blend the development of skills and concepts into problem solving while creating environments for students to be reflective learners. The teacher takes on the role of a facilitator. Through a blended learning approach, the students' understanding of skills and

concepts makes more sense when put into a real context where they take a more active role in the learning.

Collaborative groups and self-assessment using a school-wide problem solving or analytic rubric are part of every unit. Formative assessments occur frequently so that both the instructor and students can check for understanding and mastery. Students acquire foundational mathematical skills using a real-life situation. For example, a lesson on quadratic functions begins with a video of a student athlete performing a dive. Students are grouped in pairs. The teacher begins by asking, “What path did the diver take entering the water?” Some students want to see the dive again; it is played back several times at different speeds. A brief discussion occurs; pairs of students generate drawings of possible pathways, and the general consensus is an upside down J. The teacher asks students to generate questions to investigate. How long did it take the diver to enter the water? How far above the water was the diver at her highest point? Questions are posted, and the necessary skills and concepts to answer these questions are introduced, to be answered as the unit progresses. A final performance-based assessment requires students to model a situation using a quadratic function.

The school supports students who struggle with math in a variety of ways. Teachers encourage students to access online resources at home, either websites such as Kahn Academy or teacher-generated mini-lessons allowing students to revisit the day’s lesson. In the Center for Academic Support and Enhancement, a math teacher works in a small group setting with regular education students identified as needing additional math support. Special education support classes provide additional support. Math teachers have scheduled office hours, and any math student can access individual help with any teacher that is available at that time. The school also provides algebra and geometry sections with an enrollment of fewer than 15 for struggling students who benefit from intense differentiated instruction. A rich offering of courses is available for advanced students, such as AP Statistics, Discrete Math, Probability and Statistics, and AB and BC Calculus. It is common for students to enroll in more than one course simultaneously when possible.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

Social Studies is a curricular area that places a great emphasis on providing students with challenging, authentic learning experiences, creating a challenging environment that encourages academic risk taking and inquiry-based learning. Teachers believe that social studies can and should be used to create opportunities for students to collaborate, solve problems, and apply the information they have gained to real-life situations. These beliefs are closely aligned with the school’s mission and the district’s AIM initiative.

One of the areas of study, which is a model for both the AIM initiative and teaching students essential skills, is the American Government course. This required course contains three problem-based learning units, each of which explicitly teaches essential skills. These problem-based units call on students to use content knowledge and inquiry-based learning to tackle problems that face our government today. The first is the legislative unit in which students take on the role of a member of the United States Senate. They conduct thorough research on their State and the issues facing that State. Students research current bills before the US Senate and select one to endorse. Through both written and oral communication, the students attempt to guide their bills through committee and to the open floor where they present their bill. Within this unit, students are explicitly instructed in collaboration and communication, skills on which they are assessed. The second problem-based unit focuses on the Presidential Cabinet’s response to a national emergency explicitly teaching and measuring the essential skills of analysis and real-world problem solving. The final unit is a simulation of the United States Supreme Court in which students argue current cases from the Supreme Court’s docket. Within this unit, the students are explicitly taught the essential skills of applying information and evaluating and justifying a position.

Social studies teachers have identified two essential skills for each course in the department. These skills are explicitly taught and evaluated. Each course engages in problem-based learning and performance

assessments as illustrated in the Franchise Simulation and Federal Reserve Assessment in Economics.

These are merely two highlighted classes; however, similar performance assessments are ongoing in all social studies classes as part of the department's commitment to the students' acquisition of the essential skills and knowledge required to meet the school's learning expectations.

5. Instructional Methods:

Weston High School teachers are committed to differentiating instruction, while supporting the diverse needs of many different student subgroups. Teachers continually adjust instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using different formative assessments, strategically differentiating, purposefully scaffolding learning tasks, and providing additional support and alternative strategies within the classroom. Student choice is a key component of instruction, and multiple opportunities across disciplines exist for students to choose when working on performance-based assessments, projects, papers, and learning tasks. Every teacher has specific office hours for extra help opportunities, both before and after school, designed to address students' individual learning needs. These one-on-one opportunities for student-teacher interaction reflect Weston's commitment to personalizing instruction.

The school's instructional philosophy is that students should be placed according to their individual needs with mixed grade-level enrollment in over 75% of the courses. Different levels of courses within the same section are also a common practice in order to ensure that students are able to access a rich academic program. This practice is common in the intermediate and upper-level world language courses, and world language teachers are adept at differentiated instruction. French IV/IV Honors, and Chinese III/III Honors, Chinese IV/IV Honors are taught in the same class. Advanced Latin has both Latin III/III Honors and Latin IV/IV Honors in the same section with related readings alternating every year. When building the master schedule, the assistant principal strives to offer certain courses at the same block to facilitate student access and choice and correct placement: AP Studio Art and Advanced Photography are in the same block, for example, so that any students who wish to include photography pieces in their portfolio are able to access that course in the adjacent room; Painting and Advanced Painting students are in the same section; and Music Technology and Drama have both beginning and advanced levels together as well.

Technology is used to support differentiated instruction at all levels. Every classroom is equipped with a SmartBoard and five teacher "technology champions" have the responsibility of working with staff to integrate its use and other technological tools effectively into instruction. World language teachers use the language lab constantly as a way to maximize student engagement and differentiate between honors and standard level in mixed classes. Teachers of Special Education support classes and Reading Intervention embed the use of the SmartBoard as well as specific software such as Read Naturally and Lexia into their programs. Graduation requirements include one credit in technology, and courses that fulfill this requirement are designated in the Program of Studies. Representative examples include the Project Lead the Way program, Videography, TV Production, iMapping, and various independent study options.

6. Professional Development:

Weston High School draws on the expertise of school and district personnel in supporting the professional growth of its staff. Teachers and administrators work collaboratively to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment in a culture where intellectual risk-taking and professional growth are highly valued.

Professional growth opportunities are job-embedded and frequently facilitated by high school teacher leaders.

Priorities for professional development are delineated in the district's strategic plan and are aligned with the school's improvement plan. These priorities include guiding teachers in the development of a standards-based curriculum consisting of rigorous and authentic learning activities. Professional

development also focuses on teaching the curriculum through evidence-based instructional strategies and assisting teachers with strategies to assess students using a variety of formats. Priorities are also determined through the analysis of student assessment data and from information resulting from frequent classroom walk-through visits.

Many examples of how targeted professional development in these areas has supported student achievement have been evident across disciplines. Curriculum instructional leaders have led the periodic review and refinement of curricula with high school teachers to align our programs further with current research and standards. A cadre of technology champions has regularly conducted professional development to support the integration of technology in their respective departments, and this integration has resulted in increased use of technology to support the learning process. Teachers have also benefited from a multi-year partnership with Teachers College, Columbia University, which has further developed teachers' abilities to teach and assess high priority twenty-first century skills, such as critical and creative thinking.

Professional development occurs on an ongoing basis at the school. It happens through the professional conversations that take place during common meeting times, department meetings, and faculty meetings. Full-day and partial-day professional development sessions are also scheduled throughout the year for teachers to work in small groups for continuous improvement in teaching and learning. At the conclusion of each professional development workshop, high school teachers complete an evaluation form to provide the high school and district administration with feedback on these training sessions. This feedback is used in the planning of future professional development offerings as part of a feedback loop. In addition, professional development funds support teacher attendance at state and national conferences with the expectation that they share their new learning with their colleagues upon their return.

The school's professional development approach also provides for differentiation based on teachers' individual stages of their own professional growth. Each year, teachers identify a personal professional focus aligned with Weston's teacher performance rubrics and carry out an action plan designed to improve student achievement. Consequently, Weston High School's approach to professional development takes into account school and district priorities, as well as individual teacher needs.

7. School Leadership:

The leadership structure of Weston High School promotes cooperation between administrators, curriculum instructional leaders (CIL), and teachers/staff with the principal possessing commensurate authority delegated by the superintendent and Board of Education. The school administration is comprised of a principal, two assistant principals, and an athletic director. In the recent New England Association of Schools and Colleges self-study report, the high school faculty identified one of the school's strengths as the principal, who plays an active role in every aspect of the school and whose visionary leadership has helped to maintain WHS as a world-class high school. The entire administrative team is perceived as one that is supportive and encourages risk-taking and innovation on the part of both students and staff. This leadership is also illustrated by the distributive site-based model, where teachers oversee both academic and co-curricular programs that seek to increase student engagement in the school community.

Emerging issues and the rapidity of change in the world require the school to continuously reflect, review and revise, as needed, policies, programs, and resources. Communication among teachers, CILs, and administrators centers on instruction; it is dynamic and fluid. Five years ago the school conducted a study of student engagement in instruction, and over 1500 Classroom Walk-Throughs were conducted in three semesters. Administrators and teachers analyzed the data, and their focus became how to increase and sustain the level of student engagement and ensure that students are prepared for an evolving, global future.

The principal, CILs, and teachers from various disciplines synthesized research from the Tri-State

Consortium visit, the partnership with Teacher's College, Research for Better Teaching (RBT), and the Partnership for Twenty-First Century Skills. The result was the development of the school's new core beliefs, learning expectations, and the AIM initiative. This work has fostered creativity and improved performance-based assessments, driving positive changes in increased student engagement and achievement.

All decisions about programs, funding, policies, and practices are made through this lens of positive engagement and enhancing educational success. When new courses are presented, they are evaluated using this framework. Examples include the Project Lead the Way pre-engineering program, introduction of Mandarin Chinese, and the Entrepreneurship Seminar. The open-campus privilege was reviewed and resulted in raising the GPA required for this privilege.

The administration is committed to the personalization of every student's experience. The school's leadership philosophy is based upon empowering students as engaged, productive learners, and fostering daily connections among students and adults. Before each school day, the principal routinely greets students by name as they arrive to school. Building administrators have an open-door policy, and students and staff know that they can approach them with concerns. The advisory program builds positive relationships between students, teachers, and administrators and promotes collaboration and involvement in school. Space in the school is purposefully designed to promote a welcoming environment with student art work and comfortable seating in the main lobby, learning commons, courtyards, and hallways. Student achievement, accomplishments, and kindness are honored with personal postcards, breakfasts, and recognition programs.

The leadership of Weston High School has facilitated the extraordinary school culture that has resulted in the "home away from home" environment for our students; these young adults are considered part of our extended family.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 10

Test: CAPT

Edition/Publication Year: 3rd, 2007

Publisher: CT Board of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Goal / Advanced	85	86	85	87	82
Advanced	52	54	48	38	48
Number of students tested	187	201	182	196	215
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	12	13	15	16	18
Percent of students alternatively assessed	7	7	8	7	8
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Goal / Advanced	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	
Advanced	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	
Number of students tested	4	2	7	3	
2. African American Students					
Goal / Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Goal / Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Goal / Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested	12	13	15	16	18
5. English Language Learner Students					
Goal / Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Goal / Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					
Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					
Connecticut does not require results to be presented for fewer than 20 students. Data available from www.CTreports.com					

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STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 10 Test: CAPT

Edition/Publication Year: 3rd, 2007

Publisher: CT Board of Education

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
Goal / Advanced	86	85	88	82	83
Advanced	45	49	50	52	54
Number of students tested	186	199	184	197	217
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	12	13	14	18	19
Percent of students alternatively assessed	7	7	7	8	8
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Goal / Advanced	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	
Advanced	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	
Number of students tested	4	2	4	3	
2. African American Students					
Goal / Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Goal / Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Goal / Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested	12	13	14	18	19
5. English Language Learner Students					
Goal / Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Goal / Advanced					
Advanced					
Number of students tested					
NOTES: Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested. Connecticut does not require results to be presented for fewer than 20 students. Data available from www.CTreports.com					