



## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2018 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any 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.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2012 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 55 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 11 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 16 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 82 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban
  - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	0	0	0
<b>1</b>	0	0	0
<b>2</b>	0	0	0
<b>3</b>	0	0	0
<b>4</b>	0	0	0
<b>5</b>	0	0	0
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	92	84	176
<b>8</b>	73	103	176
<b>9</b>	77	83	160
<b>10</b>	70	85	155
<b>11</b>	57	84	141
<b>12 or higher</b>	78	71	149
<b>Total Students</b>	447	510	957

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 10 % Asian
  - 4 % Black or African American
  - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 71 % White
  - 5 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report 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.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 school year: <01%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 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, 2016	951
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<01

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %  
0 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 15 %  
Total number students who qualify: 145

8. Students receiving special education services: 1 %  
14 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>4</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>1</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 13
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	53
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	146
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	97%
Enrolled in a community college	3%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

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

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2012

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

West Shore Junior/Senior High School creates a nurturing secondary learning environment that provides students with unique experiences for intellectual development, academic achievement, and preparation for life’s work.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Students choose to apply for admission to West Shore through a blind lottery drawing held each January for the following school year. Prior to our annual lottery, informational meetings about our instructional program are held for interested applicants. Due to the nature of our accelerated academic program, interested parents and students are encouraged to carefully weigh their option to apply as students are expected to meet and maintain on grade level performance as evidenced by grades and standardized assessments. Applicants for our lottery have grown significantly over the past ten years due to the sustained success of our program and the college admission success rates of our graduates.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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West Shore Junior/Senior High School is located on the Space Coast of Florida in Brevard County. With close proximity to the Kennedy Space Center, our school benefits from a wealth of businesses connected to the exciting public and private space industry. There is a high concentration of engineering and technology companies throughout our district such as Northrup Grumman, SpaceX and Blue Origin. At West Shore, home of the “Wildcats”, our mission for student success is clear, focused, and unwavering. We believe that all students deserve a challenging, rewarding, and relevant curricular experience in a safe, nurturing and positive learning environment.

We are a public School of Choice and serve 950 students in grades 7th-12th. Students gain admission to our school through an application/lottery system and must agree to certain criteria in order to attend. West Shore is a considered a center for excellence and the design of the school accommodates acceleration opportunities with a strong college preparatory curriculum. In order to receive the West Shore Diploma of Distinction each student must complete 28 high school credits, 25 hours of service learning each year and a demonstrated leadership experience through clubs, sports, or activities. Additional graduation requirements include acceleration in at least three courses (one in middle school and two in high school) and the successful completion of a Senior Project. Students also maintain a competitive post-secondary admissions portfolio to include career and personal goals and must be eligible for at least one scholarship.

West Shore parents are expected to support their students in meeting the school requirements, as well as, provide 20 hours of service to our school per year. Through these parent volunteer hours, our school receives enormous support and it encourages all parents to be an active participant in their child’s education. In fact, all West Shore parents and stakeholders share a true partnership with our staff as we pursue excellence. Families, alumni, and staff, affectionately referred to as the “Wildcat Nation”, all have a vested interest in the collective success of our students and our school.

Recently in 2015, West Shore implemented a change to our traditional school day schedule. “Power Hour” is a one-hour lunch period in which students can use the time as they wish. Along with time to eat and socialize, Power Hour allows students the opportunity to participate in clubs and activities during the school day. Teachers also use this time, through established “office hours”, to be available for student tutoring, make up tests and club meetings. On Wednesdays each week, the lunch schedule changes to a different one-hour format. All students have a 30-minute lunch and then attend a 30-minute Small Learning Community (SLC) homeroom class. In SLC homeroom, the students and teachers follow a specific curriculum geared toward supporting the students’ social-emotional needs which promotes teamwork and bonding.

Our sincere belief is that excellence can be achieved and that it provides a foundation for success. The class of 2017 is just an example of the fantastic results that we have achieved every year since our inception in 1998. We had 147 graduates and every one earned a West Shore Diploma of Distinction. In the class of 2017, there were 14 National Merit Commended Scholars and 3 National Merit Scholar Finalists. 22 Early Admission students attended college full-time during their senior year and 11 of those students earned an Associate of Arts Degree from Eastern Florida State College concurrently with their West Shore diploma. Along with 100% graduation rate, all of our seniors planned to attend a postsecondary institution. In addition to acceptances to many highly selective colleges and universities, the Class of 2017 had scholarship offers totaling \$5,000,000!

West Shore is extremely proud to have received the National Blue Ribbon Award in 2004 and 2012. We certainly fly our National Blue Ribbon flag each and every day outside of our school building. According to the 2017 Best High School rankings released by US News and World Report, West Shore was once again a gold medal school being ranked 32nd in the nation and 5th in the state of Florida. We leverage this spotlight of our recognized expertise to serve as a beacon of excellence to our district and state community. Given our standing as proactive advocates for innovation, we successfully prepare our students for entry into their chosen colleges and careers. Our growth in STEM and STEAM efforts partnered with our local high-tech community has garnered additional support from our business and industry partners. National Blue Ribbon

has provided us the tangible credibility to be a highly respected and sought after program.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

West Shore's challenging college preparatory curriculum includes increased graduation requirements. Students must earn 28 credits rather than the standard 26 credits to graduate. Students strive to earn a West Shore Diploma of Distinction, which includes four credits each in the areas of language arts, science, mathematics, social studies and three credits in a foreign language sequence.

Always evolving to meet increasing requirements for college and career readiness, the West Shore Reading/English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum empowers student ownership of learning and cultivates group collaborative skills through vertically aligned units. In each course, students analyze and synthesize complex texts with a focus on academic language, reading, writing and speaking grounded in text-based evidence. The Reading/ELA courses offered at West Shore include middle school English, high school English and culminate with AP Language, AP Literature or AP Capstone. In the AP Capstone program course sequence, AP Seminar and AP Research courses equip students with the independent research, collaborative teamwork, and communication skills that are increasingly valued by colleges. It cultivates curious, independent, and collaborative scholars and prepares them to make logical, evidence-based decisions. By consistently building knowledge through content rich fiction and non-fiction works, our students are prepared for the demands of college level reading and writing.

The West Shore Mathematics curriculum offers many rigorous required courses and electives to prepare students to succeed in the future. Students must complete four high school level math courses in order to graduate with the Diploma of Distinction. While most of the 7th grade students begin their math courses with Pre-Algebra, some students are able to accelerate the required math sequence by taking Algebra 1 Honors in middle school. In that same vein, many high school students are able to complete a college level course by taking College Algebra and College Trigonometry on campus to earn Dual Enrollment credits. West Shore also offers AP Calculus (AB), AP Calculus (BC), AP Statistics, AP Computer Science Principles and AP Computer Science (A). Middle School Robotics and High School computer science courses provide students with constant opportunities to solve problems. The combination of utilizing engineering principles and dealing with software problems and solutions creates a dynamic learning environment. These courses allow students the opportunity to use math, engineering, physics, and logic. Developing these skills, within the context of projects, ensures that our students are ready for any challenges in their future college courses and careers.

West Shore's Science Department offers a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, based on state and national science standards, which has been vertically aligned from 7th through the 12th grade. The net result for students include minimal overlap of material and more comprehensive in-depth instruction that prepares students for college level courses in science. Acceleration opportunities for Advanced Placement are available in Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, and Research. Our science AP scores consistently surpass state and national averages. Quality instruction is also a key component to student success. Science is taught through active, engaging classes where students develop understanding of the importance of critical thinking, objectivity and problem-solving skills. Content is reinforced through labs, projects, high level questioning, technology, and inquiry. Scientific literacy is promoted through the reading of scientific current events, scientific research papers, as well as science-based fiction and non-fiction novels. Experimental Science classes and performance at District, State, and International Science and Engineering Fairs is one of the best indicators of the quality of our science program. Students develop original ideas, design their own experiments, analyze data, and present their original work for judging. West Shore students continue to excel at all levels of Science Fair including achieving many first places at State and International level competitions.

In the Social Studies curriculum, emphasis is placed on higher level thinking skills and questions that develop an understanding of why historical events have unfolded in specific ways. Texts and supplemental readings are used to help students analyze the reasons for historic events and happenings. Students consistently work with primary and secondary source documents to help them develop the background

knowledge needed to analyze both historical and current issues. West Shore Social Studies courses range from middle school Civics to AP courses in United States History, World History, European History, Human Geography, Psychology, Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, and U.S. Government. Students are encouraged to conduct in-depth research on particular topics in history and then present their findings through student driven presentations. One example of this is through the annual “Meet the People” history fair. Middle school students research a famous person from history and then “become” that person during the fair in the school gym. Then guests which include teachers, students and parents attend the fair and visit each person who has a presentation prepared. The participating students are dressed as their historical figure and answer questions about their person.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

There are a number of elective courses offered for students to explore depending on their interests and future career paths. These exciting course options allow them to build skills outside of the core curriculum and encourage collaboration, critical thinking and artistic expression. With the exception of a few upper level courses, electives are open to all grade levels which gives students the opportunity to pursue their passions.

In the Visual/Performing Arts arena, West Shore offers electives in music, graphic arts, visual arts, drama, and musical theatre. Students are placed in courses based upon their skill level, not age or grade level, allowing talented students to earn honors credit in their middle school and high school years. There are several AP courses offered, such as Music Theory, Art/Drawing, Studio Art 2D and Studio Art 3D. Our art, music and drama students regularly earn district, state and national awards. West Shore was recently presented the 2018 Secondary Enrollment Award by the Florida Music Educators Association. Schools receiving this award are considered models of quality programming, recruitment, and retention of students. This award is given to music programs that demonstrate an effective curriculum and high enrollment in music courses. The standard to receive this award is 35 percent of high school students and 45 percent of middle school students must be enrolled in a music course.

The Physical Education curriculum is based on the developmental characteristics and needs of the students. The P.E. courses allow students to understand the benefits of leading a healthy, active lifestyle and provide opportunities for self-expression. Activities offered in Middle School focus on knowledge of fitness concepts and development of motor skills. High School Team Sports, Volleyball, Basketball and Weight Lifting are courses offered to help students assess their own personal fitness levels and goals. Each P.E. course is designed to enrich the students disposition which in turn allows them to achieve life-long health, wellness and physical fitness.

The World Languages department at West Shore offers three Foreign Languages: Spanish (level 1 through AP Spanish), French (level 1 through AP French) and Latin (level 1 through AP Latin). All West Shore students are required to complete at least three consecutive years of one language to ensure mastery. The Foreign Language classrooms are equipped with 21st Century technology where wireless listening and voice thread equipment allow for authentic communication. Students study extensively about the countries and cultures of various regions of the world which extends their learning into other disciplines.

Technology electives are an important component of our school due to our surrounding high tech community. All students can take electives in robotics, digital design, TV production, journalism and computer science. Our award winning Journalism program is consistently ranked among the top in the nation. Students not only produce a daily TV news broadcast, but also create an online digital newspaper, and a school magazine four times a year. The West Shore “Arcadia” yearbook has garnered numerous awards in recent years including a superior rating at the 2018 Scholastic Press Awards.

One unique course that is available to West Shore seniors is called Advanced Communications Methodology. This elective allows students the opportunity to work on their Senior Project components throughout the school year. The students, under the guidance of the Senior Project coordinating teacher, draft and refine their research paper, prepare their portfolio and practice their presentations. All West Shore seniors must enroll in either Advanced Communications Methodology, Science Research or AP Capstone

Research. In all three of these courses students develop critical college level skills such as: researching, understanding credible sources, building a defensible argument and presenting their findings to an audience.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

West Shore instructors utilize a myriad of instructional approaches based on student skills and proficiency demonstrated on diagnostic and formative assessments throughout the year. Any interventions employed make use of student strengths and assist students in not only mastering the concepts they may have missed, but developing the tools they need to acquire the information more readily the next time. Many teachers scaffold their instruction in a spiraling manner, providing opportunities for discovery learning, assessing progress, analyzing areas for growth, and circling back to reinstruct and reinforce in an effective and efficient manner. In this way, teachers gain valuable information needed to differentiate their instruction, maximize learning opportunities in their classroom, and increase the chance for student success. Other instructional approaches used at our school focus on different ways that students can develop the 21st century skills of communication, collaboration, and research. This includes both problem-based and project-based learning and allows students to explore and investigate topical issues and develop possible solutions to local, national, and global problems. They collaborate with their peers to gain a clear understanding from multiple perspectives of the positive and negative consequences for possible solutions. Students then communicate that information to colleagues, teachers, and community partners through Socratic seminars, philosophical chairs, formal and informal presentations, and multi-media products.

Because our school offers an accelerated curriculum focused on developing the most appropriate and aggressive college admission portfolio for each student, we must offer interventions to support students in the process. One intervention that is available to all students is Power Hour academic support. Each day, all students are released from their 4th period class and have approximately 60 minutes to eat lunch and visit with teachers for help. Our teachers are required to hold office hours twice each week for half of the Power Hour. Office hours are scheduled by department and remain the same for the entire year, allowing students to schedule their own intervention times based on need. Many of the teachers remain open every day to build relationships with their students, making it more likely that they will come in for support. This time can also be used to do homework, make-up assignments or tests, or work on long-term projects. Additionally, our Mu Alpha Theta club students offer math tutoring twice each week for any level of mathematics from 7th grade math advanced to AP calculus.

While teachers rely on diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to drive the instruction in their classrooms, they use state testing data to assist in preparing and designing activities to remediate and to enhance student learning. Using this data, teachers create homogeneous or heterogeneous groups for instruction, hands-on activities, or projects to take advantage of student strengths. They also design differentiated products, such as verbal explanations, modeling, and hands-on demonstrations to ensure that students have the ability to show mastery. They refer to all of this assessment data when having conversations with students and parents regarding student progress. All of this is possible because our teachers see their students as more than just data points and are able to show stakeholders how valuable that information is in designing interventions.

As a high-performing school, we take a measured approach to maintain the performance of our students. We are a model Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone school and will administer over 1200 AP exams this spring to approximately 600 high school students. Our school offers students the opportunity to earn a Diploma of Distinction which carries additional requirements over the standard diploma, including 2 more credits prior to graduation, a three-consecutive year sequence in a foreign language, and a minimum of 25 community service hours per year. We have made a concerted effort to increase SAT scores across the board. We administer the PSAT/NMSQT to all 11th grade students, which is paid for by our school district, and to all 10th grade students, paid for by our Parent Teacher Association (PTA). These students have all linked their College Board accounts to Khan Academy, which uses their PSAT results to develop targeted remediation that will assist them in increasing their SAT results. Through quality teaching, classroom and school-wide interventions, and a focus on high achievement, our teachers are empowering tomorrow's leaders.



## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

Our school administrators set high standards and consistently model student engagement and motivation strategies. They address the students, along with most of the parents, by name and consistently speak with the students in the halls, cafeteria, or the Media Center to discuss their classes, activities, competitions, or programs in which they are involved. Administrators give students positive feedback and encourage them to take ownership of their learning and to seek tutoring if needed. This positive attitude and desire to help students pervades the entire school culture. The Guidance Department's open door policy encourages students to immediately address any academic or social issues and to resolve them quickly. Our Guidance department also schedules individual meetings throughout the school year with students and their parents to review future course selection and to address any special needs or concerns. Classroom teachers, all of whom have received training in student engagement and motivation, incorporate specific strategies into lessons to enhance student involvement. Teachers are leaders of learning and encourage students to take ownership of their learning.

West Shore's positive culture is felt throughout the school, especially during Power Hour. This is an hour long lunch period that gives students time during the school day to seek academic support from teachers, speak with guidance counselors, or participate in study groups. During study group sessions, students review difficult material or prepare for upcoming tests and truly take control of their studies. Whether the students drop by to make-up a test, seek help with difficult topics, participate in club activities, or just enjoy eating lunch with a few friends in a comfortable environment, teachers' classrooms are full of students during Power Hour. Power Hour is another avenue to support students, create a positive social environment and promote emotional growth.

Along with students, teachers are valued, supported, and appreciated. Monthly faculty breakfasts, luncheons and dinners are provided by curriculum departments, parents, and administrators to provide opportunities for faculty bonding and to maintain high morale. Administrators consistently highlight teacher accomplishments during faculty meetings, support the "Wildcat Winner" program where teachers nominate others who have done a good deed, and encourage teachers to attend training sessions that will improve teaching techniques. Because of the positive culture, teachers feel a high level of responsibility for the school. This is evident by the fact that every teacher serves on multiple committees, sponsors a club, or volunteers for special duties.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

West Shore strives to have excellent communication with all stakeholders every day. Since our previous National Blue Ribbon Award in 2012, we have built new pathways through digital and electronic communication tools to reach out to our families, community, and local business networks. We are aware that the world is rapidly changing and we make it a priority to evolve with the most up-to-date communication methods available to our school.

Our goal is to provide timely communication with our families and school community. We boast more than a half-dozen forms of connecting with our parents and community base. Our Peachjar network is a web-based program that allows instant messages, flyers, or documents to go out immediately to any electronic device that has been added to our school network. Additionally, we use the Blackboard Connect automated phone messaging system to send informative recorded voice messages to all stakeholders. We also use more traditional forms of communication, such as a monthly school newsletter, our school website, Facebook, and the school's online newspaper. We work hard to reach out and communicate with school and community members wherever they may be on the digital or traditional print spectrum.

In reviewing our work with our local businesses, West Shore has many sustained partnerships of reciprocal

value that help build positive relationships for our school. We are able to showcase the work and talents of our students in various business settings each year. One concrete example would include our annual Barnes and Nobles night. Our students attend this special event at the local store in the evening and display their collective works and talents in Science Research, digital arts, music and drama. Another example is our partnership with Raytheon Corporation and their assistance in our Robotics and STEM programs. Engineers donate their time to assist students with coding and programming robots. This interaction with actual engineers helps to bridge the gap between theory and practicality.

As the culmination of the Senior Project program, seniors present their projects to a board of judges. Over 120 parents and community professionals serve as judges for the Senior Boards each year. These volunteers include a diverse array of professionals such as engineers, military personnel, business leaders, school and district administrators, judges, attorneys, scientists, physicians and journalists. These community professionals not only receive a first-hand look at our students' work but also are also privy to how we are preparing the future generation of employees in their fields. West Shore's Senior Project Program could not have achieved the success it has earned without this crucial support from our parents and community members.

### **3. Professional Development:**

Teachers at West Shore strive to improve their teaching methods on a regular basis. The efforts of administration in providing for the needs of the faculty revolve around a couple of key concepts. First, we meet the needs of our teachers so they can meet the needs of their students. Second, create or identify professional development opportunities that improve student performance and enhance school culture. Every member of our faculty is trained in Project CRISS (Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies), and they continually model the effective use of those strategies in their classrooms. Within the scope of CRISS, we utilize the Webb's Depth of Knowledge Continuum to create professional development opportunities for our teachers. They participate in site-based and district trainings dedicated to best practices that engage students in the learning process.

One focus of our school improvement plan is to increase the use of high-order questioning in lessons. This year we have worked on pre-scripting those higher-level questions prior to instruction so that students are addressing essential understandings embedded within the standards being taught and ensuring that deep connections are made. This approach allows students to transfer the knowledge gained in the classroom to solving real-world problems. This instructional focus dovetails nicely with our school's efforts to address the social emotional wellbeing of our students. Teachers work in collaborative groups and participate in regular on-site workshops to design, develop, and implement the Small Learning Community (SLC) curriculum. The SLC curriculum allows students the opportunity to practice applying their problem-solving skills in the areas of team building, reading, character education, service, and college/life skills. Participation in SLC grade-level collaborative instructional development is essential to the effective implementation of the curriculum and ensures that our students' have the ability to manage social-emotional issues.

By giving our staff the tools they need to meet the social-emotional needs of all their students, teachers can develop positive relationships with them. These relationships are key to building trust between teachers and students and are valuable when students are struggling with their content. As students embrace their rigorous coursework, with their teacher as an ally, the effectiveness of instructional strategies used by the teacher increases. Additionally, understanding that there is always room for improvement, administration continues to identify areas where gaps in achievement offer growth opportunities. As teachers develop a solid foundation from which to work, administration can gather important data that is needed to improve student achievement each year.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

West Shore has earned a solid reputation as a school with tremendously high standards for excellence combined with a student-centered, nurturing culture. Our collective leadership philosophy is multi-faceted and focused on teacher leadership and school community building. Additionally, our school is laser focused on using student performance data to drive instruction, make personnel decisions, and plan for improvement. The principal serves as the visionary lead by inspiring staff to take risks in new educational pedagogy and challenges staff to be leaders of learning. Teachers are actively engaged in a shared-leadership model that empowers them to add knowledge and expertise to all decisions that impact school and stakeholder buy-in and growth.

From a construct standpoint in the area of administrative staffing, West Shore has a principal and two assistant principals who assist in guiding the implementation of school goals and objectives. One assistant principal oversees all curriculum and master class schedule and the other manages our facility, master calendar of activities, and student services. Each academic department has a lead teacher that we refer to as a Curriculum Resource Specialist (CRS). Each CRS is given information on district and state educational initiatives and expectations. They are then charged to disseminate this information to the teachers in their department at monthly department meetings. Departmental highlights on instructional curricular best practice, procedural efficiency measures, and current happenings are reviewed at these monthly meetings. Connections to information presented are progress monitored through direct and informal observation by administration and lead teachers.

Another unique vision, developed by the administration team in 2007, has been the proliferation and evolution of our Small Learning Communities (SLC). Given the huge local, state, and national focus on the social emotional growth of children, our school leadership is driven by the whole child connection concept. With that concept in mind, the SLC program was developed to foster deep meaningful connections throughout the entire school. This is achieved through a unique aspect originally built into the homeroom design. The SLC teacher assigned to students in 7th grade will be their mentor throughout their time here at West Shore. This allows 6 years for significant relationship building and encourages positive connections between teachers and students and teachers and parents. These powerful bonds have become a huge part of our school culture and have profoundly enhanced student learning across the school.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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Focused on the social-emotional needs of students, our Small Learning Communities (SLC) foster an environment of caring and commitment. Each teacher serves as a mentor for one group of students and he/she stays with them from 7th grade through 12th grade. Throughout the school year, each SLC group will complete activities in five major focus areas: Team Building, Reading, Character Education, College/Life Skills, and Community Service. These weekly lessons and activities are instrumental in nurturing the whole child, helping students realize that they are valued members of a community, and cultivating academic success.

Weekly SLC meetings allow students and teachers time to form strong relationships. Students quickly realize that their SLC teacher and classmates will be their “family” for six years. Team building activities, such as designing homeroom flags or competing in grade level talent shows or Brain Bowl type events allow students the opportunity to bond, network, and build support groups that last far beyond their time at West Shore. SLC Team building provides positive, intrinsic learning experiences that extend to the regular classrooms and also motivate students academically.

Reading and Character education activities focus on different grade level themes. For example, for the theme of compassion and empathy, students read stories and complete activities about seeing issues from different perspectives. Other themes include respect, fairness and responsibility. As a result, positive behavior is celebrated throughout the school and students set examples for others to follow.

College/Life Skills activities require students to complete aptitude and interest inventories, plan a path for college success, understand how skills that they are learning in high school are applicable to college courses, and research future careers. Students also create high school resumes, write college applications, and receive lessons about internet safety.

Students learn to conduct themselves professionally through our Community Service requirement. Each student must complete 25 service hours per year to meet the West Shore Diploma of Distinction requirements. As seniors, many students have acquired the skills necessary to handle significant events or projects such as organizing a Relay for Life event. Some students have the confidence to tackle significant fundraising projects. For example, our \$400,000 pavilion addition was a project designed, organized and conducted by students.

We believe that our SLC program provides a very special educational model for students and is one of the most powerful and instrumental factors in our school’s continued success.