

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Aristian Torregano
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name West Point Middle School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 705 Barry Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City West Point State DD Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 10996-1196

County Orange

Telephone (845) 938-2923 Fax (845) 938-2568

Web site/URL https://www.dodea.edu/westpointMS/index.cfm E-mail Aristian.Torregano@dodea.edu

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Donato Cuadrado E-mail donato.cuadrado@dodea.edu
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Americas Mid-Atlantic Tel. (910) 907-0240

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Heather Evangelista
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

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

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature 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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 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.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
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

Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 14 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 8 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 2 K-12 schools
- 26 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

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	31	34	65
7	21	41	62
8	30	35	65
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	82	110	192

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 4 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 82 % White
 - 12 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 9%

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.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	10
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	20
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	213
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.09
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

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

Spanish, German

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %

3 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 3 %

Total number students who qualify: 5

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %

13 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>2</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: 1

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school 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.

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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 2020.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
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. 2011

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

To provide an exemplary education that inspires and prepares all students for success in a dynamic, global environment.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

West Point Middle School opened school year 2020-2021 in the brick and mortar setting and is holding strong in this setting. In partnership with the West Point Garrison Leadership and out of an abundance of caution, WPMS shifted briefly to remote learning due to COVID-19 travel and safety concerns within the community. The shift occurred after winter recess with no incidence of concern. Throughout the year, students who have had to be restricted in their movement (i.e., quarantined) with their families have access to Google Classroom. Using that format students can access their learning materials, submit work, and receive help from teachers to continue their education.

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

PART III - SUMMARY

West Point Middle School is a Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) school located amidst the historic buildings on the grounds of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. The student body is composed of children of service members and civilians who reside on the post, and many whose primary responsibility is to work with the cadet population. Many of the parents serve as professors at the United States Military Academy and hold at least a master's degree. The collegiate environment fosters intrinsic academic motivation in students and creates a highly focused, professional community environment in which to learn. Students benefit from 21st Century teaching practices while attending classes in a 1934 vintage building, and are taught by a dedicated staff. The school's roots date back to 1821 and was established for the children of service members, making it the oldest continually-run school in DoDEA.

The DoDEA mission to "Educate, engage, and empower each student to succeed in a dynamic world" is realized in the vision statement of West Point Middle School to "Ensure highest achievement for all learners." Several support options are in place to make this vision a reality, including additional time before, during, and after school to provide students with individualized support at the highest levels. The administrative team (to include the principal, school counselor, nurse, and school psychologist) monitors student progress on a weekly basis to quickly identify and address performance concerns. Strong partnerships with parents and the community foster a team approach to ensure all learners perform at the highest level. West Point Middle School consistently ranks as a high-performing school in DoDEA on annual standardized assessments. The faculty is steadfast in its commitment to serving military connected children. The consistency of the faculty has been the cornerstone of providing excellence in education to our students. This school year, three additional team members were welcomed, to include the current principal, a math teacher, and district professional learning specialist. Teacher turnover is minimal, as teachers have established roots and commitment on West Point. The consistency that this provides the school allows for a stable learning environment for students, as well as supports teachers' growth.

At West Point Middle School, "[where] partnerships maximize success (WPMS)." This remains to be true for the school and community. In the planning phases of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution, on-post partners at Keller Army Community Hospital (KACH) kept the school at the forefront of their action plan. They ensured that WPMS were allocated vaccines for staff, executed a plan for administering, and then completed the two rounds of doses flawlessly. Our district leadership supported this action plan by allowing an early release for students to ensure that all faculty and staff could receive the vaccine in a timely and efficient manner. These actions demonstrate the supportive nature of the WPMS community and the shared commitment to serve our military connected families. Out of an abundance of caution, WPMS shifted briefly to remote learning due to COVID-19 travel and safety concerns. The shift occurred after winter recess with no incidence of concern. WPMS takes pride in our resilient students, supportive families, dedicated teachers, as well as community partnerships that maintain a strong tradition of excellence. Our on post partnerships further support our efforts during Parent-Teacher Conference (PTC) days by allowing parents time in their work (i.e., duty) day to attend PTC meetings on WPMS campus.

The needs of the military child and family have exponentially increased this past year. The world is operating in unprecedented times, and educators are reimagining the way forward. While coping with the challenges of a COVID-19 learning environment, our students experience numerous deployments, housing challenges, and uncertain work schedules of parents. Despite these challenges, WPMS continues to provide an academically challenging, rigorous, yet nurturing, school environment. Our faculty continues to maximize digital resources to meet the needs of all students by utilizing Google Classrooms and other approved software.

West Point Middle School has been honored on two occasions as a National Blue Ribbon recipient (1998 and 2011). A focal point for families is the education of their child(ren). Parents often express concerns and relay past experiences regarding the education of their child(ren) in other duty locations. When parents learn of WPMS's excellence in education, every day, everywhere for every student, the choice is clear to live on post to have access to this caliber of education. The National Blue Ribbon seal of academic excellence has

helped families make the determined decision to reside on post for their child(ren) to receive an education that exceeds standards.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

West Point Middle School’s core curriculum is steeped in rigor, and is based on the Department of Defense Education Activity’s College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). Instruction rooted in these standards highlights the commitment to provide seamless transitions and consistent expectations for the military-connected, highly mobile community of students served at West Point Middle School and across DoDEA. The core curriculum includes English, math, science, and social studies. Use of DoDEA’s curricular materials and resources, aligned with both instruction and assessment, provides for clear progress-monitoring to ensure highest achievement for all learners. Instructional decisions are data-driven using formative, summative, interim, and local assessments schoolwide to meet students where they are, to plan and apply tiered interventions as appropriate, and to plan for and measure growth for every student. This is further enhanced by WPMS’ faculty with differentiation to reach all learners, as well as embedded practices to include research-based instructional strategies that foster collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking.

WPMS implements the College and Career Ready Standards for Literacy (CCRSL). The curriculum provides students rigorous and culturally diverse programs that address literacy skills in the domains of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. The standards-based curriculum specifies the literacy skills needed for college and career readiness across disciplines including history/social studies, science, and technical subjects while creating a unified vision of what it means to be a literate person in the 21st-century.

The English Language Arts program utilizes an integrated model of literacy that encompass research and media skills in order to meet the CCRS for ELA. In addition to the ELA content standards the CCRSL anchor standards guide instruction. A focus of the CCRSL are the 3 Literacy Shifts. These shifts highlight, regular practice with complex text and its academic language, reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational, and building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction. Students engage in both fiction and nonfiction texts, and write for a variety of purposes. Speaking and listening standards allow students to develop a broad range of oral communication and interpersonal skills.

The DoDEA College and Career Ready Standards for Mathematics (CCRSM) curriculum consists of both Standards for Mathematical Practice (SMPs) and Grade Level Content Standards. The content is designed around specific learning evolutions that connect mathematical domains. Students develop models to investigate problems, justify thinking around mathematical concepts, and develop strategies to analyze processes and solutions. The CCRSM are designed to be applicable to real-world situations extending application to be successful in both college and career.

The Social Studies program provides students with a rigorous scope and sequence, content standards and CCRSL anchor standards to provide a rich learning experience. Through the- College, Career and Civic Engagement Framework (C3), and implementation of the Core Six strategies to support standards aligned instruction, student’s progress from studying the Eastern Hemisphere through geography in 6th grade to economic development and culture in 7th grade to tracing the human experience from Reconstruction to present day in 8th grade. Speaking and listening opportunities are aligned to the standards to create active and engaged citizens with requisite skills for college and career readiness.

DoDEA College and Career Readiness Standards for Science offer students real-life science understanding and connections occur as a result of cross-cutting concepts. Hands-on labs and inquiry-based learning following the Engineering Design process facilitate authentic learning experiences in both conducting and designing investigations to model and/or understand real-life issues and applications while integrating science, technology, engineering, art, and math.

Teachers in all content areas develop their standards aligned instruction, utilizing the Understanding by Design model to meet the diverse needs of students. These lessons are based in the DoDEA Instructional Framework of 20/60/20 which includes an opening, work session, and closing. Teachers collect formative

and summative data through classroom, local, and district assessments to drive instruction. Instructional approaches are varied and flexible to maximize the use of class time, to meet the learning objectives, and – most importantly – to meet the needs of individual learners. As the school transitioned during COVID, teachers continued to provide instruction using strategies and interventions to meet the diverse needs, as appropriate in a remote environment. To include one-on-one support, choice of assignments, additional time, and/or increasing/decreasing visual stimuli of assignments.

An integral part of instruction at WPMS is the provision of consistent feedback based on ongoing formative and summative assessment directly to the student. District, school, and classroom assessments provide data that guide all instructional decisions and supports student’s self progress monitoring. This data is also used in weekly focused collaboration (FC) groups to determine and support literacy and math SMART goals. The DoDEA CAS assessments address these critical skills and provide data that the teachers utilize to guide their instruction.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

WPMS implements DoDEA College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and focuses on college and career readiness in all courses. Students have the opportunity to earn high school credit in Algebra I, Living Environment (biology), and Spanish. WPMS provides a variety of programs that support students in these courses of rigor. Examples of these courses include Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Career Pathways, Choices360 and the 8th Grade High School Transition. CCR standards are assessed using assessments within the DoDEA Comprehensive Assessment System (DoDEA CAS).

WPMS has an active student government and National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) where students engage in volunteer service learning projects and develop leadership skills. Student government and NJHS provide opportunities for students to apply their understanding of the tenets of CCRS to include: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Examples of projects include revising the school’s dress code, organizing spirit weeks and talent shows, and sponsoring school dances through fundraising opportunities. Students showcase their leadership capacities by upholding the tenants of the WPMS Bulldog Honor Code of being responsible, fair, caring, trustworthy, respectful, and good citizens in their daily interactions with peers and faculty.

COVID-19 presented many challenges that were bravely met and exceeded by the students and faculty. The instructional space changed but the quality of instruction did not falter. Teachers and students utilized multiple forms of technology as they figuratively moved through their classes and extracurricular activities in the remote learning environment. The schedule for remote learning was seamlessly integrated and the use of digital platforms and resources supported this transition. Moving forward, as global citizens in the 21st Century, leveraging the use of technology in a meaningful way will be essential to preparing students for college and career readiness.

1b. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

WPMS offers robust elective course selections to ensure all students are actively engaged in new and challenging areas of study to include Career Technical Education (CTE), fine arts, physical education, research project, and the world languages. Essential skills such as persuasion, social and emotional learning, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and use of digital tools and multimedia resources are hallmarks of these well-planned courses.

The Fine Arts offerings include band, art, and chorus are offered at every grade level, while drama and guitar are reserved for grades 7 and 8. The curriculum for each course is based on the National Core Art Standards (NCAS) with standards organized around four artistic processes: creating, conceiving, and developing new artistic ideas and work; performing, presenting, and producing; understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning; and connecting artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and

external context.

Physical Education is offered to grades 6-8 and is guided by the National Physical Education Standards. The goal is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity. Students learn skills necessary to participate in a variety of physical activities, know the implications and benefits of regular involvement in various types of physical activities, are physically fit, and value physical activity and its contributions to a healthy lifestyle.

The Spanish world language is offered to students in grades 7 and 8 as a two-year sequenced class for a high school credit. The coursework is based on the College and Career Ready Standards for World Languages (CCRSWL), and prepares students to meet the challenges of an interdependent global community. CTE courses empower students to acquire necessary academic, technical, and employability skills to enter, compete, and advance in their education and prepare them for careers in a global economy. Courses include: computer applications (grades 7 and 8), applied technology (grade 6), and video production (grades 7 and 8).

Research Project is a quarterly class offered to sixth grade. The course provides students the foundational knowledge for developing research skills. Through this exploration, students are instructed in the ethical use of information, how to access information efficiently, and to critically assess resources. The Safe Return to School Committee developed guidelines and adaptations for classrooms based on DoDEA guidance. Universal adaptations include maximizing digital resources to facilitate communication and collaboration. The Fine Arts and other curricular areas were directly impacted. Traditional group work was limited due to spacing considerations. Choir was removed from the school schedule based on safe return guidelines. Band performance continued through the use of cohorts, limited playing time, additional Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions strategies and the creation of a non-performance based curriculum to support and enhance the band curriculum. Physical education eliminated high intensity and close contact activities.

3. Academic Supports:

West Point Middle School (WPMS) provides a multitude of social, emotional, and academic support services for our highly mobile military-connected population. Support efforts begin in Focused Collaboration (FC) the professional learning communities designated by grade levels. Weekly FC meetings are held to review grade level progress towards goals aligned with the school improvement plan. Students demonstrating academic and/or behavioral challenges may progress to a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). The model encompasses four tiers and students receive assistance based on their individualized needs. Tier one supports begin in the classroom and students can move fluidly between tiers one and two depending on the learning targets. When the frequency and duration become consistent and intensive for the general education environment, teachers may refer to the Student Support Team (SST) for additional supports, such as counseling and reading/math support may be implemented during Extended Learning Period (EXL) to aid the student in meeting grade level expectations. This 45-minute class period allows time for teachers to provide individual/small group learning opportunities to students who are experiencing academic or behavioral challenges. The team engages in progress monitoring at each level (MTSS I and II) and interventions are continued/discontinued based on the student's rate of success towards the specific learning targets. After appropriate interventions have been implemented and the rate of progress is reviewed. If appropriate, the student is referred to the Student Support Team (SST) as a final step of intervention. If previous intervention attempts prove unsuccessful, the student is referred for consideration of a 504 plan or special education as appropriate.

The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) elective course offers an opportunity for first and second-generation college bound students to bridge gaps in their learning as they prepare for college and career success. This course provides students the additional academic, social, and emotional support that will help them succeed in their educational program.

Students with diverse cultural backgrounds are provided English Language Learner (ELL) services

to mitigate the cultural and/or language difficulties associated with assimilating into an English-speaking culture.

Prior to COVID, an after-school tutoring program, “Bulldog Learning Academy” was offered weekly. In this program students were individually invited by teachers to receive specific academic support identified as an area of challenge. All faculty members were actively engaged with students and families to ensure the student’s success. This allowed for teachers to provide students with consistent feedback as they worked through their assignments. WPMS plans to analyze and adjust this type of support for next school year according to the safe return guidelines.

If a student demonstrates advanced academic skills, teachers differentiate by offering rigorous learning opportunities to supplement classwork. Students are also offered advanced courses in math, world language, and science that provide opportunities to earn high school credits. Students are also supported through the Advanced Academic Program and Services (previously referred to as Gifted Program) which offers grade level focused enrichment activities.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

West Point Middle School engages, motivates, and supports students' academic, social, and emotional needs. A dedicated and caring faculty, along with a diverse array of classroom and extra-curricular activities, clubs, and sports, makes WPMS an enjoyable school community. To ease the transition for newly enrolled students the school holds an open house before the school year begins. The Ice Cream Social is designed to engage families, faculty, and staff in a relaxed school atmosphere and is the highlight of summer's end. For students that enroll later, families are given a tour of the school, by the principal, to provide a warm welcome. New students are connected with a student ambassador who serves as the "buddy" offering peer support. Another tradition is the administrator's intentional efforts to learn every student's name. These welcoming practices have been helpful for our military-connected students in ensuring they feel supported and comfortable.

WPMS ensured student engagement during remote learning by adapting communication with families through the use of technology. Across the curriculum students were able to engage with their peers, faculty, staff, and principal in a remote learning environment. Google Classroom provided the platform for maintaining continuity of education. In addition to this, WPMS utilized a variety of resources such as Google Forms to create assessments, exit tickets, and opportunities for feedback. Google Meets were the meeting platform for teachers to hold class and individual sessions as well as office hours to meet with students. Teachers adapted lessons for increased student engagement while meeting remotely. Examples include virtual field trips, student presentations, and the annual speech competition.

The daily morning meeting continues to be the "potluck" for the student body for all to convene and connect in a comfortable, family type environment. During this time celebrations such as Bulldog Bravo (school level award for outstanding student conduct), birthdays, and accomplishments are enjoyed by all.

The SNAP (Students Need Assistance and Praise) form was implemented by the school counselor to increase early intervention at the student's request. Wellness breaks benefit students' mental and physical health during remote learning. WPMS shifted to a block schedule which allowed for fewer classes per day with shorter live sessions lessening the stress on students and families.

WPMS offers diverse clubs. In response to COVID, clubs meet virtually or outdoors such as: outdoor art, dance, hiking, gardening, student government, and National Junior Honor Society (NJHS).

2. Engaging Families and Community:

West Point Middle School values strong relationships "[where] partnerships maximize success (WPMS)." All stakeholders intentionally share in fostering relationships for overall enrichment and support to the students, families, and faculty. The military child is a member of a community of learners, each student is rich in diverse thinking, unique cultural experiences, and tradition. Every student becomes empowered with self-learning and self-advocacy mindsets ensured by WPMS partnerships and mentorships, creating "relationships for a life-time."

WPMS is a collaborative team with an open dialogue between families, students, and faculty members. The parent and student portals of our online grading system along with Google Suite communicate immediate updates, academic progress, and electronic portfolios. WPMS hosts in-person and virtual events including performances, student-led celebrations of learning, parent/teacher conferences, open house, and awards and promotion ceremonies. District instructional support specialists facilitate region-wide meetings to share successful teaching strategies and resources with job-alike colleagues. Parents play an active role in the academic, emotional, and social development of students through coaching, guest lecturing, and other volunteer opportunities.

The Parent-Teacher Organization fundraises annually to extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom

through study trips.

WPMS fosters strong partnerships with local business, industry, and universities. The unique proximity to the United States Military Academy at West Point (USMA) affords a wide range of mentorship and collaborative events with USMA professors, Garrison members, and Community Organizations. To establish Health Protocols during COVID-19, WPMS co-planned operating procedures with Army public health and The Emergency Response Team for brick and mortar instruction. Speakers such as the local NCAA Athletic Director, representatives from the Department of Civil and Mechanical Engineering, and West Point Band joined students in school to enrich the learning environment with real-world applications. While in remote learning, guest speakers co-taught curricular topics to include The Smithsonian Institute partnering with the English Department and the West Point MWR Chief of Operations. Partnerships from IBM and area hospitals spark innovative approaches to problem solving through hands-on experiences.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The professional culture of West Point Middle School (WPMS) has made an impact through the use of shared leadership between administration, faculty, and staff. Hallmarks of the administration include: an annual climate survey, shared and balanced leadership opportunities, and acknowledgement of best practices. The administration values input, consensus and buy-in from stakeholders, and actively cultivates a culture of quality relationships and shared leadership. Administration encourages faculty and staff to participate in ongoing recognition of colleagues through the use of a Joy Journal. The Joy Journal allows employees to recognize best practices of their colleagues and to highlight them during weekly faculty meetings.

The initial shift to remote learning happened quickly. To facilitate this rapid transition, there was a focus on professional learning and support. Professional support was provided through time for becoming familiar with digital resources, collaboration with school and district support, as well as communicating the plan with all stakeholders. For example the educational technologist held mini PD sessions to facilitate how to set up and use Google Classroom. Best practices were highlighted through a district symposium where teachers shared successes and challenges in the remote environment.

Instructional system specialists (ISS) actively engaged with teachers and staff to facilitate a positive transition to remote learning. Based on ongoing feedback, the learning schedule was revised to meet the needs of all stakeholders. The remote learning schedule also provided dedicated times for professional dialogue. In addition to office hour opportunities for students, teachers were able to meet with school support personnel to receive support with technology and share best practices. During remote and brick and mortar learning the administrative team engaged in a professional dialogue while maintaining open communication to ensure the latest updates are communicated in a timely manner to ensure that continuity of education is provided every student, every day, every where.

Upon returning to brick and mortar for SY 20-21, the shared commitment of the principal and the Safe Return to School Committee enabled the faculty and staff to re-enter school safely which contributed to the overall positive school culture. Throughout the school year, the positive culture and shared leadership empowered the faculty and staff to preserve and remain committed to the mission and vision of DoDEA and WPMS.

4. School Leadership:

West Point Middle School leadership's philosophy is centered on nurturing a positive school climate and culture. WPMS experienced a change in leadership mid-year in SY20-21. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, previous school leadership worked to provide guidance, resources, and continuity as teachers transitioned to remote instruction. District leaders, administrators, and Instructional Systems Specialists have provided support to teachers to assist with ensuring the continuation of procedures. School leadership works diligently to communicate information (and continues to be) effectively, using multiple methods with all stakeholders. As WPMS transitioned to a new principal, leadership continued to embrace the tenet of shared leadership especially through offering teacher voice and choice. Even during COVID, the expectation

of performance appraisals of all faculty and staff continued and new leadership used a coaching cycle. As part of this engagement, the administrator and educator walk together through active reflection in the cycle of continuous improvement. Intentional time was scheduled to engage pre and post conferences. This allowed faculty and staff to work in tandem with the administration to critically reflect upon the performance elements and standards. The move from a macro to micro focus, targeted specific areas for each teacher increasing potential areas for growth. The continuous dialogue created a positive culture and allowed faculty and staff to feel comfortable and confident in the performance evaluation process.

The overall health and safety of all continues to be a top priority. School leadership continues to emphasize to students the importance of following the school's 'Honor Code,' supporting teachers with appropriate consequences for students. Committees were created in response to COVID-19 (e.g., Safe Return to School Committee) to ensure a safe and successful return to school plan was created/implemented effectively. The committee, under the guidance of administrators, reviewed DoDEA guidelines to create a systemic approach to ensure the safety of all stakeholders. This detailed plan was instituted throughout the school which created a positive culture as all stakeholders embraced returning to school. The principal engaged with students and staff throughout the day by being present in class, at recess/lunch, school-wide events, being visible during transitions, community events, and hosting principal's coffees using the school's Facebook page.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

West Point Middle School's mission is, "to provide an exemplary education that inspires and prepares all students for success in a dynamic, global environment." This fosters a climate that ensures diversity, equity, and inclusion. This is accomplished through a school-wide display of multicultural awareness, morning slideshows, social media presence, multicultural clubs, and student government. Examples of active engagement throughout the year include when students create informative and celebratory displays focusing on such things as cultural heritage months and discussing cultural celebrations around the globe. WPMS partners with the community to provide opportunities for stakeholder engagement. Examples include when the West Point Cadets, West Point Spouses' Club, and community members share their cultures and experiences with the students.

DoDEA courses continually promote cultural awareness and understanding by implementing responsive curriculum materials that encompass current social and cultural events. Faculty seeks opportunities to make connections for student's experiences and cultures to be celebrated as a community of learners. Examples of these include socratic seminars that focus on the topics such as racism, gender inequality, gender identity, civil rights and corporate government in which all students' voices are welcome and encouraged. Another example is the entire 6th grade student body participating in a two day lesson, analyzing the inaugural poems of notable poets who both address historical and current struggles and promote a call to action to unify America with equality for all. Music and art programs weave the cultures of our world in community concerts and artistic displays that encourage the conversation and awareness of current as well as historic events that are relevant to the student body.

The faculty and staff at WPMS provide many outlets for the academic and socio-emotional support of every student. The counseling team lead small groups discussions on current events and culturally responsive topics in a collaborative environment. The tenets of the honor code; fairness, caring, respect, trust, responsibility, and good citizenship helps promote caring and civic minded individuals.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

When considering the single most important practice West Point Middle School implemented and embraced, during the transition to remote learning due to COVID-19, the focus was placed on the students, families, and stakeholders to develop a schedule that created a successful learning environment. The issue of ‘time’ was one that became evident at the onset of the transition. It was paramount that the continuity of education be upheld. Initially WPMS followed the brick and mortar, seven period daily bell schedule. Feedback from all stakeholders required that the faculty review the amount of screen time for learning activities. Students struggled to sustain learning centered on engagement with a screen for the duration of the school day (i.e., 0730 to 1415 hours). The team reviewed learning targets, appropriate screen time, socio-emotional aspects of remote learning, time for individualized support, and family allocation of resources while in remote learning. The result was the creation of a rotation block bell schedule that included daily student check-ins, learning activities (synchronous and asynchronous), teacher office hours, intervention support, student-parent conferences, and professional learning time for faculty and staff. Professional dialogue and collaboration was key; the effective usage of digital tools became essential. The schedule provided opportunities to meet with teachers; the school counselor, school psychologist and paraprofessionals to support the student’s overall wellness. The faculty modeled this well which set the tone for students to engage in this practice with their peers using Google Meet and other digital tools.

At the close of school year 2020, to celebrate student success during remote learning, the faculty gathered at the school building as families drove past teachers cheering for the academic success as well as the reconnection of personal contact that had been limited during this time. This has become apart of the WPMS school culture.

The schedule continued to be a focal point in the transition back to the building for school year 2020-2021. It provided flexibility for student centered learning. The usage of the digital tools and resources, were continued, as these were now seamlessly woven into the instructional practices and procedures at WPMS. Google Classroom continues to be used as a communication tool for students who are in school or out, due to a restriction of movement. These elements, utilized to support teaching and learning, are now part of the time that students engage in their academics and progress towards college and career readiness.