

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Westmont High School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 909 Oakwood Drive
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Westmont State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60559-1073

County Dupage County

Telephone (630) 468-8100 Fax (630) 654-2758

Web site/URL https://www.cusd201.org/whs/index E-mail jbaldermann@cusd201.org

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* Mr. Kevin Carey E-mail kcarey@cusd201.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Community Unit School District 201 Tel. (630) 468-8000

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. Laura Coyle
(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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	48	49	97
10	43	45	88
11	56	40	96
12 or higher	49	45	94
Total Students	196	179	375

*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
 - 4 % Asian
 - 8 % Black or African American
 - 20 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 64 % White
 - 4 % 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: 5%

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	11
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	386
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

Spanish, Arabic, Czech, Ukrainian, Polish and Jamaican

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
15 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 41 %

Total number students who qualify: 153

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
60 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>5</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>5</u> Developmental Delay | <u>18</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>9</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>13</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</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: 9
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	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	27
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 15:1

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	96%	95%	93%	94%	94%
High school graduation rate	99%	100%	99%	99%	98%

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	107
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	53%
Enrolled in a community college	31%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	7%
Found employment	5%
Joined the military or other public service	3%
Other	1%

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.

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

For some "Whatever it Takes" is a saying, for Westmont it is our way of life. We built our school on the commitment that every student is sacred. We focus on what we can do versus what is out of our control. If students are not learning, then we come together and provide whatever students need to help them achieve. Our mission is not to teach students, but to ensure all students learn. We want our students to: Be compassionate. Work hard. Dream big.

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.

The 2020-2021 school year has been a roller coaster of a year, especially when it comes to operations. This year our school started with all students being completely remote. In order to balance the active learning/synchronous minutes with the asynchronous minutes and activities and considering the screen time for students, our building administration along with our teacher leadership collaboratively built a brand new schedule to address the unique learning situation. After a full quarter of full remote learning, our school/district attempted to move to a hybrid model of learning, giving families an option to have their students come into the building a portion of the week. About 60% of our families chose to try the hybrid option, wherein our school utilized an alpha splice to divide students into manageable groups that allowed for social distancing. All students and staff were provided personal protective equipment and CDC guidelines were in place with strict adherence to safety. Unfortunately, due to increased positivity rates in the community that our school services, hybrid in the fall and winter only lasted three weeks. After the small window that hybrid was attempted, our school and district continued with remote learning until January of 2021. Small groups of students - our SPED and most at-risk students - were allowed in the building for learning opportunities while the remaining students operated under a full remote model. After winter break, mid-January of 2021, our school and district have returned to a hybrid model for learning. The students operate under a new schedule, as a means to eliminate lunch, and

our teachers/staff stream their classes simultaneously to the remote students at home. It is by no means a perfect system, but it has allowed for all students, whether in person or remote, to receive consistent and relevant high quality instruction. Nonetheless, the operating systems in our school and district are fluid, and we continue to be flexible and adapt as we are asked to do so. As we begin Quarter 4 of this 2020-2021 school year, it is our hope and plan to return to a longer in person school day and that we can get more students and staff into the building. We will continue to operate with the safety and wellbeing of our students and staff at the forefront of our decision-making. Also, we want to ensure that higher quality instruction is occurring every day and that students are learning. Our students, staff and community have been extremely supportive and understanding as we navigate the uncharted waters of education at this time.

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

Westmont is a village in DuPage County, Illinois with a population of approximately 27,000 people. The racial makeup of Westmont is 75% white, 6% African American, 12% Asian and 8% Hispanic and it is located 18 miles west of Chicago, Illinois. Westmont did not experience commercial or industrial growth until the 1950s. The village of Westmont began to grow in earnest in the 1960s and 1970s and Westmont High School opened its doors in 1974, because new subdivisions and multiple family housing units led to the tripling of the population. The median income for a household in this middle class community is approximately \$54,000. People in Westmont know each other, and this has led to a true tight-knit family where members of the school community look out for each other and are unusually friendly and positive.

Westmont is a small town in the western suburbs of Chicago and Westmont High School is relatively small compared to neighboring high schools. We have a diverse community and high school that is peaceful and welcoming. We rarely if ever have physical confrontations in our student body. The character of the Westmont High School Community is best described as very hard-working, compassionate, and humble, with people who want what is best for each other.

While we are best characterized as a middle-class, regular high school, our performance measures up with the most affluent schools in our state and the nation. Our students and families are willing to go above and beyond in their daily work to overachieve. This is a distinguishing trait.

Westmont High School has become the most improved high school in Illinois and perhaps the nation, and one of the top performing high schools in the United States. Our passionate commitment to Learning for All, a Collaborative Culture and a Results Orientation includes a history of outstanding student achievement gains and performance. If selected for the National Blue Ribbon Award in the High Performing High School category; Westmont will have the highest percentage of students living in economic poverty of any regular high school in Illinois to earn this honor in the last 20 years. Westmont's graduation rate since 2014 is a genuine 99%. 100% of our African-American and Latino students have graduated seven years in a row with not one student from these categories dropping out.

In 2020, Westmont High School was named the Best Professional Learning Community in the United States by winning the DuFour Award. This award included a rigorous 27 step process, vetted by 15 top educational leaders and authors and included one of the largest financial awards (\$ 25,000) in the country.

Our Advanced Placement program is the most improved in the nation according to the U.S. News and World Report Best High Schools rankings and the Washington Post/Jay Mathews Challenge Index. We currently (2021) rank number 1 for regular high schools in Illinois (number 2 overall) as the most inclusive and rigorous school in this national ranking and are featured in Jay Mathew's new book "An Optimist's Guide to American Education" (2021). In a list dominated by magnet schools, charter schools and affluent schools Westmont stands out (number 154 in the country) as a middle class school overachieving and producing exceptional student learning results. We went from 4 A.P. Scholars to 67 and from 29 passed exams to 304 passed exams with the same resources, enrollment and demographics. What did change was our belief that all students will succeed when we practice collective teacher efficacy, provide support systems and celebrate genuine success.

Our scores on the state mandated exam (S.A.T.) leads all schools in our economic sector. We outperform most schools with far less students living in economic poverty (source: Illinois School Report Card). Westmont has been named an "Exemplary" school, the highest rating, every year since the Illinois State Board of Education started rating schools. Once again we have the highest percentage of students living in economic poverty to earn this distinction of the regular high schools three years in a row.

GreatSchools.org, which gives a rating of 1 to 10 to every public school in the United States, currently has Westmont as a 10 with the most diverse student population to earn this honor among regular high schools in Illinois.

Dr. Anthony Muhammad, one of the nation's leading authors and speakers on school culture and equity writes "the gains at Westmont High School, especially for students of color and students of poverty, should be studied by scholars nationally and internationally as a beacon of hope for schools striving to produce equity."

On the state mandated 5 Essential Survey administered by the University of Chicago and taken anonymously by students, parents and teachers to measure the quality of school climate and culture, Westmont High School has some of the best performance results overall in Illinois.

How did we achieve these gains and student learning increases?

For some "Whatever it Takes" is a saying. For Westmont it is our way of life. We built our Professional Learning Community on the commitment that every student is sacred. We focus on what we can do versus what is out of our control. We live the ideal that every minute spent complaining is a minute that should have been used to help solve a problem. If students are not learning then we come together and provide whatever students need to help them achieve. Our mission is not to teach students but to ensure all students learn.

We are driven to see that all students learn at high levels. Our teachers collaboratively analyze student performance information, and we constantly include our students in progress monitoring. Providing additional time and practice is deeply embedded in our culture.

The passionate care and professional commitment of our entire staff has led to an incredible culture and environment for all our students. We are clear that our main focus and purpose is to work with our students so that they grow as compassionate leaders who give service back to their community. The purpose of gaining knowledge is to support all people. We rarely have significant discipline issues or suspensions because our mission and vision are known by all members of the school community. We continue to work extremely hard and are always looking to improve our skills and services to students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

At Westmont High School, there is a relentless commitment of our staff to Learning for All. Our team never gives up on students while holding them to high expectations. If students are not learning, then we come together and provide whatever students need to help them achieve. Our mission is not to teach students, but to ensure all students learn.

We have worked school-wide, departmentally, and at the classroom level to refine and improve our curriculum, specifically in the core curricular areas. In turn, our teams ensure that all students have access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Specifically, our teachers have worked collaboratively to create specific learning targets based on standards for each of our courses in every core content area. From these targets, teachers work to create assessments clearly aligned back to those targets. The targets and assessments are then organized unit by unit under a larger essential question that encompasses the shared mission and collective commitments of our school. Our teachers have protected time to meet weekly to collaborate and review their curriculums as well as the correlating student performance information that is elicited as a result of this ongoing collaborative process.

Moreover, our teachers rely heavily on the student performance information to refine instruction. As a main component of their practice, teachers embed collaboratively-built common formative assessments through each unit. Moreover, each assessment is reviewed and calibrated with appropriate levels of organization, questioning and rigor. From these common assessments, our teachers gather data that is then brought back to the collaborative team to review ~ through review and collaboration comes revision. Teachers work together to adjust their units based on the fresh, relevant data. Collaboratively, our teachers also make intervention plans for students - plans that include intervention both in and out of class.

Common Assessments are essential to our work. Our common assessments provide us with the data that our teams need in order to review student performance information - student by student and target by target.

Specifically, our Science team has created custom learning targets based on the Next Generation Science Standards - these targets are focused on skills/essential standards that they as a team agreed are seen and taught in all of the Science courses that we have at the high school. From these custom targets, they then worked together to create three varied common assessments aligned to the targets. They also created differentiated components to account for the varied levels of performance. They use Mastery Connect to “grade” the assessment and to see the data immediately. The team is also able to share the data with students right away, so they always know where they are strong and where they need to get stronger. From this data, the team is able to work together to make the necessary changes and adaptations to improve student learning.

This collaborative work is also seen clearly within other teams. Our English and Social Studies teams created and implemented a school-wide writing common assessment. All students in our building complete the school-wide writing assessment - three times a year. Teachers use the data right away to provide to students about their performance. This immediate feedback provides our teams with the ability to build our students’ writing skills - and to be able to do that across disciplines as well.

Similarly, our Math team bedrocks their curriculum, instruction and assessments in this same process as a part of their PLC work. Our Math team utilizes an integrated approach to mathematics. In turn, clear vertical articulation is required, and then necessary yearly revision, to ensure that there aren’t any gaps in student learning and that all students have the framework and foundation for success at the next level. Our Math Team builds all assessments for each math level collaboratively. They ensure that all assessments are standards-aligned and that each question or problem directly ties to what is actually taught in the classroom. After students complete a math assessment, the students and teachers review, correct, revise and reteach/re-learn. Together, students and teachers complete a reflection and determine what standards students are strong in, and which standards require more time and attention. This process is completed for each and every assessment and more importantly, is differentiated by course, teacher and student. Our Math team

ensures personalized learning for students. Each student gets what he/she needs to be successful. Inasmuch, this approach is similarly used and solidified with our school-wide assessments.

Our school also uses a school-wide standardized common assessment. We administer practice SATs to our students several times throughout the school year. As this is the tool that we as a school are accountable to, all of our teams are invested in the process and in the data it elicits. In turn, we administer practice assessments from the SAT suite to all students - all staff play a role. The student work is graded with GradeCam in Mastery Connect. The scores and mastered standards are there immediately. Then, our teams create individual student and standard reports. All teachers from all teams are shared on this data. The data is then used by the teams right away as they determine appropriate instruction to help support meeting the standards and creating interventions.

In turn, when the pandemic hit, Westmont High School had to rethink the way that we ensure continued access to our guaranteed and viable curriculum and more importantly - that our students continued to grow and learn. Our teams used remote planning days to collaborate, adapt and plan. Together the staff worked with new learning tools, vetted digital products and resources, and provided internal staff development. Staff prioritized finding avenues that still allowed them to benefit from their common formative and summative assessments. Staff created digital/remote opportunities for these assessments. Also, staff would bring in small groups of students to work with, support and progress monitor them. The data has indicated that very little learning loss has occurred due to the relentless efforts of our staff to continue to engage students and support their learning. Nonetheless, one would find that these changes to the curriculum and methods of instruction continue to evolve; and with that, our staff continues to adapt and change as well. The one thing that has not changed and continues to be paramount to everything we do is - Learning for All; and this is evidenced in our outstanding results.

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

At Westmont High School, our goal is to ensure that all students are college and career ready. That is not to say that all students go on to four year universities or other higher education, but that all of our students are prepared to take their next steps in life - whether that be a college or university, a technical school, a trade, a branch of the armed services, or the workforce. Inasmuch, the tools, courses and connections that we offer our students while they are with us, make all the difference in providing successful pathways to our students' futures. For a small school, we do our best to provide entry points for every student to explore what college and career readiness means to them. Specifically, we provide a "College Readiness" course - this course is designed for students who are considering a pathway that includes a college or university. This co-taught course provides a framework to support students in preparing for college entrance exams, as well as the skills necessary to succeed in college courses. In addition, WHS has a robust Advanced Placement (AP) program. Our school offers twenty-two different AP exams, and eighteen different courses. WHS has an open-door AP policy, and any student, regardless of "track", can pursue AP coursework. The majority of our students take at least one AP course during their four years here. Similarly, WHS offers courses and connections that open alternative doors for students' futures. We are able to offer dual credit, CTE, apprenticeships, and licensure to our students through our strong partnership with the Technical College of DuPage. The partnership with TCD provides our students with trade-related coursework (Fire Science, Automotive, Culinary, Early Childhood, Construction, etc.) and in turn opportunities for dual-credit, apprenticeship, and licensure. These hands-on classes give our students exposure to fields of study and experiences that our small high school may not otherwise be able to do. Lastly, WHS recently included INCubator as a course/class offering for our students. INCubator is a program that allows our students to brainstorm, invent and build their own products and businesses. Students are able to carve their own pathways with this course, and create a framework for a future career. All in all, WHS provides as many opportunities as possible for our students to build the best and brightest futures possible.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Despite Westmont High School's small size, our students have many opportunities to explore courses and learning opportunities outside of the core curricular areas. Moreover, in order to successfully graduate from WHS, our students need to achieve credit in various areas beyond just English, Math and Science. Our goal is to ensure that our students' diverse needs are met, and that they are well-rounded, prepared young people that can positively impact the world around them.

Physical Education/Health is a four year requirement for our students. Our P.E. curriculum provides various activities and offerings for our students to support them in leading healthy lifestyles. Students learn how important physical activity and nutrition are to their overall health and wellbeing and are supported in building positive habits throughout high school that hopefully carry them throughout their lives. Inasmuch, during this school year, all departments had to find a way to pivot and do their best to meet the ever changing needs of the students and the school. For P.E./Health classes, our teachers and staff filmed themselves creating daily workout videos, had students MapMyRun, and encouraged students to film themselves as evidence of continued promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Fitness and nutrition are extremely important at WHS and despite not being able to be together, our teachers found a way to revamp their curriculum to continue to support our students at home.

Similarly, with regards to our other curricular areas or Electives, our goal is to provide our students with as much variety and exposure to possible areas of interest as we can. Our students are encouraged to take a variety of courses in the areas of: World Language, Fine Arts, Business, Civics, Family Consumer Sciences, and Technology. Yet, each area has its own credit requirement toward graduation - ensuring that students have a well-rounded education. In turn, specifically, our Elective teachers not only work to ensure our students meet the content/course standards and requirements, but work collaboratively and individually to provide students with many project-based learning and real-world learning opportunities. Our teachers build interdisciplinary, cross-curricular units that support continued interest in the fields of study and help to foster connections. When the pandemic hit, our teachers/staff had to alter their methods and adjust course content and materials accordingly. Where some of our Electives, World Language, Technology, and Business were able to pivot digitally to address the changing needs of the students and address remote learning, other Electives, had to think more outside of the box. For example, our Foods teacher had to post video demonstrations online for students and then put together physical "care packages" of cooking materials/ingredients for students to pick up and cook at home. The same is true for our Art teacher; she packaged up individual bags of art supplies and dropped them off at student homes to ensure they could still have a "real" art experience. The staff has gone to great lengths to ensure our students have authentic, worthwhile learning experiences.

Lastly, to ensure that our students are afforded access to all essential learning, WHS has partnered with community and educational organizations to broaden the scope of classes/coursework that we can offer. We have connected with other local high schools, the Technical College of DuPage and the College of DuPage as well as fostered internship opportunities with local businesses/agencies. WHS prioritizes providing our students with a well-rounded, diverse educational experience.

3. Academic Supports:

Westmont High School is focused on student learning and achievement. As a school we are committed to a results orientation and working to see that every student meets his/her/their full potential. Our faculty and staff do whatever it takes to ensure that every student succeeds, and that includes tailoring instruction, providing interventions, differentiating instruction and assessments, and taking into consideration individual student needs as well as the diverse student population needs that we service in our school/community.

Specifically, we have both systemic and classroom level supports in place to ensure exceptional student learning outcomes. These supports are a direct result of implementing Professional Learning Community (PLC) concepts in our school and district. As a part of our PLC model, our teachers meet almost daily to review fresh student learning data, collaborate, review curriculum and assessments and provide interventions for our students. Our faculty and staff use student

performance data to find out where students are strong and where they need to get stronger. They use that data daily in their classrooms as a part of instruction and assessment. They use that data regularly throughout the week to provide intervention and remediation for students when and where necessary.

Similarly, in conjunction with PLC concepts, WHS students and staff are supported by a school-wide Data Team. This team meets weekly to review student performance information as well as attendance, discipline, SEL concerns, and teacher/staff referrals. The team consists of: administration, social worker, counselors, psychologist, speech therapist, and the SpEd department coordinator. The team reviews the data together and makes recommendations, provides interventions and communicates with students, teachers and families about any additional resources or tools that can or should be put in place. The Data Team plays a vital role in ensuring that all students are on-track for graduation and that they are receiving the tools and support that they need to be successful.

Interventions are provided at both the school-level and the classroom-level. At the school-level students are referred to a weekly intervention class/block that is structured and supported by various core content teachers and teaching assistants in the school. Teachers/staff work with students during the intervention or ASAP time to fill in gaps in learning and to provide remediation as needed. This time may include opportunities for redos or retakes for students. In addition, WHS offers an Academic Support class. This class is scheduled every day to provide a small group of students with time to work on their core content classes and to work on necessary executive functioning skills. This class is guided by a certified staff member and includes both individual student and small group support. There is clear, consistent embedded support(s) in our school day.

When looking specifically at some of our various student populations, our interventions and supports become even more tailored and specific. This is seen clearly with our Special Education students. Our Special Education students' needs vary dramatically - to best support these students we strategically assign case managers and student support specialists. In addition, most Special Education students receive a Resource period in their schedules to support them in progress toward their goals. Moreover, we offer many general education classes that are co-taught with a special education teacher and/or with the support of a paraprofessional to create the most inclusive environment possible for all students. Within our classrooms work and activities are differentiated, modified and/or designed with an accommodated approach in mind. Our teachers ensure that all students have the same access to the rigorous courses and curriculum. Similarly, we provide extra curricular support(s) with our Best Buddies programming, in-district reading mentor program, and Sentinel Pride; all of which provide Special Education students with opportunities to feel supported and included in all we do here at Westmont High School.

This same approach is taken with our ELL student population. While our ELL students only make up less than 5% of our student body, our school still works to ensure that they receive the appropriate levels of support and intervention to help support student learning and success. For our ELL students, the school utilizes both a push-in and pull-out approach. There is a separate ELL class for students that provides English elective credit and students take in addition to their "regular" English classes. The ELL teacher pushes into students' classes throughout the day to help support them in a more inclusive environment and to provide differentiation when and where appropriate. Also, our ELL students are provided with extensions on their technology, talk-to-text software, textbooks and novels in their native languages, and extended time on assessments. Our school does all it can to ensure that our students have all the support that they need to be successful.

Even when our students may not live or stay in our district, we ensure that they have all the tools,

resources, and support needed to be successful. Currently, our district has the highest homeless/migrant population in all of DuPage County. Nonetheless, we take our responsibility seriously in ensuring that all students that enter our doors have whatever they need to thrive. For example, we provide transportation outside of regular busing to get students to and from school. We supply hot spots to ensure connectivity for our homeless/migrant students. Tutoring is available to support students and address any learning loss that may occur when a student is bounced around from school to school. In addition, we work to ensure basic needs are met; our school provides free breakfast and lunch, we run a weekly “Backpack Program” to send home supplies to families, and have built a partnership with the People’s Resource Community Center. We know and understand that a student’s most basic needs need to be met first before any additional support or intervention can occur.

Lastly, at the end of the day, it is the work of the teachers and teaching assistants in the classroom with the students that makes the most difference and truly impacts our students’ success and our school’s success. Our staff works tirelessly to create learning opportunities for students that help them get the tools that they need to be successful both in and out of the classroom. They not only close learning gaps through connections with students, differentiation and intervention/remediation, but do everything that they can to eliminate the gap completely. Overall, it is clear that Westmont High School’s multi-tiered approach to academic support(s) has allowed our students and our school to achieve much success.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Westmont High School begins the student engagement process by establishing exceptional relationships with all of our students. We did not achieve incredible results without good relationships. It is made clear to our students that we love and respect them not only with words but through actions. We leave no doubt that they are sacred to us.

We build on strengths, see the best in each other, and celebrate every genuine success - be it large or small. When students make mistakes we treat them with compassion and work together to see how we can learn and grow. When students struggle socially, emotionally or academically we are all in with a deep dedication to their well-being. We remain a cohesive and student-centered team because we will not be distracted from providing the best for our students. Adult drama is not tolerated in our culture because it distracts from giving the best to our students.

While we insist on providing the best for our students we also ask them to be members of a community that requires the best from them in the way they treat others and the effort they give in their work. We are clear in our message to all our students - you may not be the valedictorian, perform the best on standardized tests, be the top athlete or artist in your class, but you can be the most compassionate person who gives an excellent effort and that is the best way to measure success. This emphasis on compassion, giving back to others, and hard work makes it possible for every student to be engaged and to find real success. This leads to a powerful, caring and collaborative community where every student feels they can be successful so they want to be engaged.

We celebrate team success often. We emphasize to our staff that excellence is built in the daily interactions they have with students. We focus on growth and not just gaps. Twice a month we hold all school assemblies focused on compassion, our S.M.A.R.T. goals, the Growth Mindset and supporting each other.

A key to our successfully engaging students is that teachers lead by example and go above and beyond for students. While we insist on high expectations and academic excellence, we believe that enjoying each other and having fun is also essential and must be fostered. By celebrating our entire team's effort and accomplishments and giving back to others, we are all a part of something bigger than ourselves. Our students engage at high levels because they know they are cared for, respected, expected to be compassionate and valuable members of a positive and successful school community.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The successful partnerships we've developed with Westmont families, community members and local businesses have significantly contributed to our student achievement and school improvement. Specifically, our joint-committees provide opportunities for our community stakeholders to collaboratively develop goals and strategic plans that focus on student learning, our school climate, bi-lingual family services, and our overall communication. These joint-committees develop S.M.A.R.T. goals that drive our decision making processes for continuous growth in each area. Parents, community members, local business leaders all contribute to the mission and vision of each joint-committee. Some success stories linked to the work of our joint-committees include: improved results on the 5Essentials Survey, increased community awareness of our mission and vision, collaboratively developed S.M.A.R.T. goals, and community celebrations for student learning and our achievements as a school. Our bi-lingual parent advisory committee has proven to be a safe place for bi-lingual families and community members to engage in our school and have a voice in our Westmont community.

During the pandemic, we've utilized online video software (Zoom) to connect with our families and local community. We've sent our families Google Forms to gather input related to school safety and remote, hybrid, and in person learning that have been analyzed to help determine the best student-centered action plan. Surveys pertaining to family and community needs are shared frequently to help provide necessary

support systems for our struggling families. Our administrative team has conducted more than one hundred home visits this school year to provide Wi-Fi hotspots, Chromebooks, gift cards, groceries, social/emotional support, transportation, and encouragement. Home visits have been our most effective strategy in building positive rapport, support, and motivation for students and families to engage in the learning process. These home visits have increased attendance, improved student grades, and supported a community partnership for student success.

The People's Resource Center is a not for profit organization that chose Westmont High School as the first junior executive board to address poverty and hunger within our community. Our students provide communication, organization, and distribution within the Westmont community to help support our struggling community members. We've also partnered with the Westmont Police Department for opportunities to mentor students who are struggling with attendance and/or with their family dynamics. This partnership has proven to be successful based on the number of students who stay in school and graduate on time. 360 Youth Services is a local agency that Westmont High School partners with for students who need outside support for housing, social/emotional learning and substance abuse prevention. The Westmont Chamber of Commerce provides annual scholarships for Westmont High School students who are both excellent in the classroom and in the community.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

We developed a shared vision for distance learning with our teachers that was practical and student-centered. Increasing the collective teacher efficacy at Westmont High School has been carefully considered by our team as we transitioned from distance learning to hybrid. We've held faculty meetings and team meetings to determine areas for growth and teacher needs in preparation for distance learning. Teacher efficacy within our school is strongly correlated with student achievement. Staff development specifically targeted teacher efficacy and the areas for growth previously communicated by our faculty.

We created an environment where teachers feel safe to take risks. We want our teachers to try new things and share their successes. We identified informal leaders within our building who have strengths in these areas for growth to serve as models and these informal leaders presented their effective classroom strategies during faculty meetings. Our faculty's confidence and morale increased significantly by seeing concrete examples from colleagues who have found success. Specific examples of the professional development include: One teacher provided training for effective online teaching strategies. Another spoke about online assessment for students and a third teacher provided support for distance learning. We've offered workshops during preplanning and throughout the distance learning experience at which teachers could receive individualized tech support from a team that included technology specialists, instructional coaches, and other, more experienced teachers.

Another way to support teachers' sense of efficacy and feeling valued is by attending to their emotional states. When we moved to distance learning last spring, we sensed teachers were feeling overwhelmed, so we formed a committee of building leaders that included teachers and administrators to collect teacher concerns and we responded to these concerns at our faculty meetings. We turned our faculty meetings into opportunities for learning and as an additional support system.

We celebrate our teachers by publicly recognizing their efforts and offering praise for small successes. We constantly remind teachers how important they are and we listen to their concerns. We show our teachers that we care about them and their families by making decisions that will help them feel as safe and secure as possible. Student assemblies include recognitions of our faculty and the excellent work they do on a daily basis. Our administrative team advocates for our teachers with the district office and within our community. We do our best to create a learning environment where neither students nor teachers feel left behind.

4. School Leadership:

Westmont High School lives by the belief that the more leaders the more powerful the organization becomes. Shared, distributed leadership is at the core of all we are and do. We believe that all members of the staff have leadership responsibilities. Our teachers lead our collaborative, data teams that drive the work

of increasing student learning. The teachers lead the meetings, develop their norms, create the team S.M.A.R.T. goals, unpack standards and build their own student-friendly learning targets, create the assessments used to increase student confidence and learning, and develop and monitor interventions and measure student learning increases. The teachers are the leaders in providing evidence of student learning growth.

Our strongly held belief and practice is that by collaboratively building a shared mission, vision, values and S.M.A.R.T. goals that all team members become mission driven. They are not told to do the work or held accountable by the administration. They want to do the work, are driven and excited to do the work and that we hold each other mutually accountable for student success.

In anonymous survey taken by the faculty year after year over 90% of the staff reports that they feel respected by the administration. We are visited by schools from every region in the country and from educational leaders from other countries (Japan and Australia) to learn about our collaborative leadership practices.

Several researchers and writers have observed our school and rated it as a model for professional collaboration. The author of the book "Supporting New Teachers: A How to Guide for Leaders" devotes almost an entire chapter to Westmont High School and how we are highly collaborative and the most improved high school in our state. A top PLC researcher from MIE University in Japan, selected and visited our school. He wrote that "Westmont is the best high school" he had ever observed.

While the administration provides leadership, we believe that all members of the school community must be trusted, mission driven and be supported to flourish as leaders to gain the greatest student achievement results.

Leadership is not just for the professionals in our school. We expect our students to be leaders in this process through their efforts on a daily basis. We make it clear that every day, in the way they act and the work they do, they are serving as leaders and role models in the collaborative work we do as an entire team and school community. We learn together, improve as a team and lead together to reach peak performance in our sacred work.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Westmont High School services a student population and community with diverse needs and backgrounds. Because of this, it is important to us, as a school, to ensure equity, cultural awareness and respect in the classroom and the school. We know and understand that the world around us is constantly changing, and it directly impacts the students that we service. In turn, WHS works to adapt, change, and grow to meet the evolving needs of our community and to best support our students. As a school community, we understand that learning for our students must go beyond just teaching the learning standards or scoring well on state exams; we must teach our students understanding, tolerance, and compassion. We must teach our students to be champions of change.

Inasmuch, our faculty and staff teach the standards and work to ensure that all students are college and career ready, but more importantly, they know and understand the importance of teaching our students to be good citizens; we work to ensure that our students are kind, compassionate people. The teachers at WHS have the autonomy to build curriculum and lessons that address students' diverse needs and backgrounds. In addition, the teachers embed social-emotional learning and character development into what they do in the classroom. Teachers work to incorporate literature, materials and resources from a variety of sources, and they ensure that all different types of voices are represented. Also, our teachers provide opportunities for students to discuss and learn from current events and social movements. They provide a forum for students to have respectful conversations/discussions and present opportunities to develop new ideas.

More specifically, there are very tangible strategies that are used to address equity issues, especially those issues related to LGBTQ and race in our classrooms and our school. Our teachers/staff have clear and intentional conversation surrounding LGBTQ and race. Those conversations are not only included as a daily interaction, but also a part of the curriculum. In English and Social Studies classes there are state standards that are met through the units/lessons. Our classroom and school libraries house books and resources readily available to students and staff to help support a more inclusive and equitable environment. Also, we have outlets and alliances in our building that specifically support the LGBTQ community and racial issues. Our school has an open-door policy for our LGBTQ Alliance Club and our African American Culture Club (AACC); both clubs are opportunities to have safe spaces to address issues, concerns and collaborate on how to make positive change in the world. All students are welcome. Our teachers and school also take every opportunity to help celebrate Pride – pride in ourselves and in how we address and accept our differences. Lastly, as a school community, we promote – “calling in” – wherein we address insensitive comments right away, using norms and working through issues together. Our teachers and staff truly set the tone in our school in how to best support learning while still ensuring equity for our students.

Similarly, on a more macro level, our school community held district forums and learning labs for administrators, teachers, staff, and students to be able to discuss current issues and movements, as well as brainstorm and problem-solve ways for our school community to move forward together. One specific example of our school and district efforts to address these issues and changes is the collaboration with a local community activist group, “Hope for the Day” in directed, virtual bi-monthly conversations and lessons surrounding race, privilege and equity. The conversational format of the sessions were intended to provide a safe space for sharing one’s personal experiences, offer opportunities to listen, reflect and have dialogue leading to opportunities for understanding and collaboration. As a result of these opportunities, we hope to grow together as a district and community through the process; and ultimately, we hope that we can utilize the tools and resources learned, in our classrooms to improve student learning and enhance our abilities to continually address the ever-changing world around us. Overall, WHS is a diverse community of learners, at all levels (students and staff alike), who prioritize the varied learning experiences that help us all grow to be kind, compassionate, respectful people - learning more than just the state standards and test-taking skills.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Westmont High School's most impactful strategy for academic success is our intense commitment to being a Professional Learning Community. We collaboratively built and gained a genuine, passionate agreement for implementing P.L.C. concepts, and it has led to substantial growth in academics, the quality of instruction, curriculum, assessment, student achievement and the social-emotional welfare of our students.

Our efforts resulted in Westmont being named the best Professional Learning Community in the United States in 2020 (the DuFour Award – please view Westmont High School DuFour Award 2019 and 2020 on YouTube for more information). Considering that a conservative estimate is that over 20,000 schools in the country are involved in some way with PLC work, being named “the best” through a very rigorous process was most rewarding.

We start with an uncompromising commitment to learning for all students. The results in graduation rates, tests scores, Advanced Placement achievement, state and national rankings, acknowledgements from several highly respected authors and researchers and excellent survey results on climate and culture are just some of the indicators of the success of our PLC commitment.

We collaboratively built and gained a passionate commitment to our S.M.A.R.T. goals. We spent months of careful and open discussion to ensure all voices were respected, and in the end gained near unanimous approval through an anonymous vote of our entire staff. As stated in “Learning by Doing” we “focused on a few very specific goals” and followed through with tenacity as a truly collaborative team. We continue to revisit our S.M.A.R.T. goals and the progress our students are making through open, all staff discussions that are rooted in an intense commitment to continuous improvement.

We shifted our focus to formative assessment. Instead of assessment being geared toward grading, ranking and evaluating, we collaboratively analyze student performance, include students in the reflection process, and use assessment information to build student confidence that leads to more learning for students and teachers.

Our teacher-led data teams have become model teams that use norms, S.M.A.R.T. goals and common formative assessments. Westmont teams understand the essential nature of collaboratively analyzing relevant data student by student and skill by skill. They use this information to implement interventions focused on improving learning. They also follow through to measure how effective the interventions have been for individual students and the school as a whole. We celebrate growth and learn from areas where we can get stronger.

Westmont High School's dedication to seeing all students succeed, working as a cohesive and collaborative team, and focusing on making student learning gains and not excuses has led to our school becoming one of the most improved and top performing in the nation.