



HILLTOP SCHOOL NEWS

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Winter 2004

Allow Us to Introduce...

As our school year is well underway, our Westmont Hilltop School District has been blessed with the addition of ten new faculty members, one long-term substitute teacher, and two new administrators in the year 2004. Three others have assumed new positions or have transferred to new buildings for the first time this year. We would like to give you an introduction to these new members of our educational community, along with a quoted message from each of them regarding their reactions to their new positions.



Mrs. Carole Kakabar

Mrs. Carole Kakabar, Principal of the Westmont Hilltop Middle School, earned her bachelor's degree in chemistry and biology, and her

master's degree in education and educational psychology before receiving principal's certification from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She acquired teaching experience in grades 8-12 at Central Cambria High School until 1997 when she was named Senior High School Assistant Principal and Athletic Director at Ferndale Area High School. She was subsequently hired as Junior-Senior High School Principal of Blacklick Valley in 1998. Recent leadership experience includes the following:

- creation of a middle school concept in the Junior-Senior High School
- expansion of the K-6 Reading Program through the 8th grade (Developmental Reading and Accelerated Reader)

- initiation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in grades K-8 in her former district
- implementation of an effective alternative education program for disruptive students
- creation of a Student Service team (students serving other students in the school)
- election to the PIAA District 6 Athletic Committee by Athletic Directors and Principals from member schools in 7 PA counties
- nomination as chairperson of PIAA District 6 Athletic Committee Sportsmanship Award of 2003-2004
- election as President of Cambria County Secondary Principals Association from 1999-2002, Director of the Admiral Peary Curriculum Council
- election as President of Western PA Athletic Conference (WestPAC) 2002-2003
- coordination of an in-service program for all schools in the IU8 to address the PSSA in August 1998 and again for Reading Across the Curriculum in January of 2004

Mrs. Kakabar reflects on her new position as follows: *"Westmont Hilltop Middle School provides a tremendous education for the middle level student. I am in awe of the curriculum and the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the staff here. My vision is to build on the excellent curricular foundation through a 'systems thinking approach' and teacher teaming...I believe that affective learning is as important as cognitive for this age group. Community*

and parent involvement also play a key role in supporting and enhancing the whole child."



Ms. Nicole Rombaugh

Ms. Nicole Rombaugh, Middle School Assistant Principal, earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh and her principal's

certification and master's degree from Gannon where she graduated with highest honors. Her experience prior to her arrival in our district includes seven years of classroom experience through which she developed school-wide implemented programs including a Grade 5 literature-based reading program, science curriculum aligned with standards, a program entitled, "On Your Own Reading," and a K-12 program called "Save a Kid." She has worked for the Community Outreach Center at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown where she taught children during the weekends and in the summer. She also taught for the University's LEARN program and has served as a Classroom Plus tutor.

Ms. Rombaugh writes: *"My goal as assistant principal is to support the teachers at the Westmont Hilltop Middle School as they continue to provide a well-rounded, holistic education which encompasses the diverse needs of the student population. My goal regarding academics includes opportunities for tutoring assistance, as well as*

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enrichment, as students are molded by our staff to become life-long learners. I would also like to be instrumental in partnering with the local community to provide students with the tools necessary to become outstanding citizens, while fostering a strong set of values and leadership qualities."



Mr. William Aurandt

Mr. William Aurandt attended the Pennsylvania State University to earn his Bachelor's Degree in English/Communications. He taught at Blackhawk High School as an English teacher for two years prior to accepting the position in our district. He served as yearbook advisor and sophomore class advisor and as track and football coach at the middle school level at Blackhawk. Mr. Aurandt sends the following message: *"Greetings Westmont Hilltop! My early experiences within the district have been extremely positive. I am excited about my future with the district and look forward to being able to contribute to the entire Westmont Community."*



Miss Heather Berresford

Miss Heather Berresford is a graduate of Kutztown University of Pennsylvania (1997) with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary and Early Childhood Education. She earned her Master of Education Degree in Counseling at West Chester University of Pennsylvania in 2000. Her previous experience includes Selinsgrove Intermediate and Elementary Schools, where she served as guidance counselor and gained experience in peer mediation and the Instructional Support Team Process. Heather is working to develop an innovative support program in our district which is funded through an Accountability Block Grant as proposed in the fall by the Leadership Team of the

district. Miss Berresford observes, *"I feel incredibly fortunate to be working for a district that is as supportive of education as the Westmont Hilltop School District. The children that I work with are a daily reminder of why I chose the field of education. They are willing, ready and eager to learn! I am thankful for the opportunity to be a part of their educational growth, and thoroughly enjoying it, too!"*



Mrs. Patricia Buchkovich

Mrs. Patricia Buchkovich completed her undergraduate work with a Bachelor's Degree in elementary education and certification in Special Education. Subsequently, she earned her Master's Degree at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in Educational Psychology. Her previous classroom experience includes the Central Cambria School District where she was an elementary and special education teacher and the Intermediate Unit 08, where she served as a special education teacher. Mrs. Buchkovich observes: *"I am currently teaching kindergarten and English as a Second Language (ESL). As a parent of Westmont Hilltop students, I have always been impressed with the faculty of Westmont Hilltop School District. As a teacher, I am amazed at the dedication that the faculty, staff, and administration have for their students. I am proud to be associated with the Westmont Hilltop School District."*



Mr. Evan Cornell

Mr. Evan Cornell completed his undergraduate work at Northern Arizona University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education and a minor in Library Science. He graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a Master's Degree in Library Science. He served as Public Service Librarian at the College Level (University of Pittsburgh and Chatham) from 1991 through 2004, where he

initiated and carried out several excellent library programs for children before coming to Westmont Hilltop as our librarian for grades K-8. Mr. Cornell is a published author in four academic journals. He recently reflected on his decision to enter the realm of K-12 public education as follows: *"I greatly enjoy working with all the kids in K-8. They are well mannered, polite and truly seem to enjoy school. That makes each day special for me. I am impressed with the involvement and friendliness of the entire community."*



Mrs. Kellie Cover

Mrs. Kellie Cover earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary and Kindergarten Education at Penn State University in 2001. Kellie has served very successfully in various long-term substitute positions at both the elementary and middle schools prior to her assignment to a permanent position beginning in the 2004-2005 school year. In addition, she has served and continues to serve as junior high cheerleading advisor for the past three years. She reflects on this experience as follows: *"I am absolutely thrilled to be teaching third grade at the elementary school! After serving as a substitute for the district for three years, this year has proven to be worth the wait."*



Mr. Timothy Harrigan

Mr. Timothy Harrigan earned his Bachelor's Degree in Health and Physical Education at Shepherd College and completed his graduate work for Level II Certification at Penn State University. In addition to teaching physical education in three different educational facilities prior to his arrival at Westmont Hilltop School District, Mr. Harrigan's experience includes twelve years as a social studies teacher at Bishop McCort High School. He has been named to Who's Who Among America's Teachers. While at Bishop McCort, Tim served in the following athletic

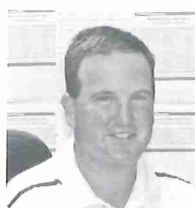
capacities: head junior high football coach, head junior varsity football coach, assistant varsity football coach, weight/conditioning coach, administrator of the football program, and athletic equipment manager. Tim has also coached football at Windber, and both wrestling and girls' basketball at GJCTC. Mr. Harrigan notes, *"I am very impressed with the students, faculty, and administration in the Westmont Hilltop School District. I consider myself fortunate to be part of such an outstanding school district."*



Mr. Paul Knupp

Mr. Paul Knupp was employed by the WHSD for seven years as middle school physical education teacher until 2004 when he became high school physical education teacher at the start of the current school year. His service in the athletic realm has included assistant junior high football coach, head junior high wrestling coach, assistant varsity baseball coach, and varsity baseball coach, a position which he has held since 2001. Mr. Knupp recently expressed complete satisfaction with his decision to transfer to the high school as he noted, *"It has been an exciting new start me for at the High School. The faculty and staff have been very helpful in my transition. I couldn't be happier."*

Mrs. Jan Layton is a graduate of the Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Secondary Social Sciences and Anthropology. In addition, she received Certification in K-12 Family and Consumer Sciences in 2004. Jan has served as a long-term substitute in the Blacklick Valley and Greater Johnstown School Districts. She is filling the one-year sabbatical of Mrs. Meg Horn and enjoying almost every minute as she states, *"I am thrilled to be working in the Westmont Hilltop School District. The students have created some wonderful projects thus far, and I am certain upcoming projects will be fantastic."*



Mr. Darren McLaurin

Mr. Darren McLaurin has been employed by WHSD for 15 years, including this year, as he begins his new assignment fulfilling a long-term dream to serve as Athletic Director. Prior to this new challenge, Mr. McLaurin served as high school business education teacher for ten years, as high school assistant principal for two years, and as middle school principal for two years. His previous service in our athletic programs has included assignments as varsity assistant football coach for twelve years, assistant track coach for twelve years, assistant girls' basketball coach for one year, assistant baseball coach for two years, and junior high basketball coach for two years. Reflecting on his new assignment as well as his past connections with the WHSD, Mr. McLaurin states, *"I have been involved with Westmont Hilltop Athletics for the past 15 years. I look forward to working with the players, coaches, and parents as I make the transition into my new position."*



Mrs. Patricia Molnar

Mrs. Patricia Molnar received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Mathematics Education from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. During her previous teaching experiences, she taught at both the high school and adult education levels in courses including Calculus, Trigonometry, Algebra I and II, Geometry, Problem Solving, Applied Math, Business Math, and Math Applications. She was named to Who's Who Among American Teachers. Mrs. Molnar writes: *"I am thrilled to be teaching at Westmont. The students have made me feel at home. My decision to join the staff here at Westmont Hilltop has probably been the best decision of my career."*



Mrs. Diana Smeal

Mrs. Diana Smeal needs no introduction, having been employed by WHSD for 20 years, counting this year. She served as middle school librarian from 1986-2003, middle school and elementary librarian, 2003-2004, and now serves as high school librarian. Mrs. Smeal knows our library curriculum from kindergarten through grade 12 as a result and now serves on the Curriculum Subcommittee of Strategic Planning, through which we are working to establish a well integrated cross-grade-level process in the development of research skills. Mrs. Smeal reflects, *"It has been an easy transition from the middle school to the high school library. I've enjoyed discovering how my former middle school students have matured and are doing so well academically and athletically. I still miss all the students in K-8 and look forward to their arrival at the high school."*



Mrs. Beth Stem

Mrs. Beth Stem is no stranger to the district, serving in long-term substitute positions as a counselor in both the high school and middle school before arriving at her permanent counseling position at the high school. Mrs. Stem completed her undergraduate work at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown in Speech Communications before graduating from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with her Master's Degree in Counselor Education. Past counseling assignments have included Bishop Carroll Senior High School, Indiana Senior High School, and Richland Senior High School. Mrs. Stem has extensive experience in career counseling and has served as an instructor at the Allegheny Highlands Community College (then the Cambria County Area Community College). Mrs. Stem writes: *"It is my pleasure to return to Westmont Hilltop School District as*

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high school guidance counselor... Prior to becoming a school counselor, I worked for ten years in college admissions at UPJ and later became the Director of Admissions at Cambria County Area Community College when it first opened. My experience at the college level has been invaluable as I counsel students toward post-secondary opportunities. I am excited to be at Westmont Hilltop High School, and I look forward to working with the students and parents of this district."

Mr. Michael Thomas earned his Bachelor's of Music in Music Education in 2001 and his Spanish certification to teach K-12 in 2003. His previous experience in our district included long-



Mr. Michael Thomas

term substitute assignments in both Spanish and Music classrooms. Last year, Mr. Thomas taught Spanish in the Forest Hills School District. His extra curricular involvement from 2000 through 2004 included Marching Band Assistant at Bishop McCort. "Overall, I am very impressed with the Westmont Hilltop School District. It's great to work with such a competent faculty and respectful students. I also enjoy being part of such a strong foreign language department. Regarding foreign language, I truly feel that Westmont students have an advantage as they enter college or the work world."



Miss Ashley Washburn

Miss Ashley Washburn completed her undergraduate work at Chatham College, while earning her Bachelor's Degree in Secondary English. She is working toward her Master's Degree at Duquesne. Her leadership experiences have included an involvement in theater. In order to share this talent with our students, Miss Washburn has accepted an extracurricular appointment as Drama Coach. She writes, "I am so happy to be a part of the Westmont Hilltop School District. I have never been exposed to students who are so enthusiastic, attentive, and bright. They challenge me as an instructor, and there is nothing that makes the day go more quickly or feel so rewarding."

Act 72 Property Tax Relief

This article is intended to help our residents better understand the recent mailing you received to apply for a potential reduction in your real estate tax. School districts in Cambria County and across the state have mailed homestead/farmstead applications to property owners as the first step in complying with the Homeowners Property Tax Relief Act (Act 72). More than three million property owners in all counties except Philadelphia will receive an application for the Act, which potentially may provide property tax relief to homeowners through gaming revenues.

Owner-occupied residential property and agricultural property owners have received an application from the school district which must be filled in and returned to the county. Rental properties are not eligible. The first opportunity to return the Homestead/Farmstead application was presented to the residents of the Westmont Hilltop School District in October.

A second opportunity will follow in December in case the first application was inadvertently discarded. We encourage you to complete this

application and send it to the county assessor for approval. The deadline for submission of homestead/farmstead applications is March 1, 2005. The completed application should be mailed to the Cambria County Board of Assessment Appeals, 200 South Center Street, Ebensburg, PA 15931-1947.

It is important to note that if an application is not filed by the appropriate deadlines, property owners **will not be eligible for any reduction**. The district will neither gain nor lose funding according to the number of applications returned, but individuals who fail to return their applications will not benefit from any reduction.

The amount of property tax relief our district receives will depend on the amount of revenue generated by the .1% earned income tax, any increases to the .1% earned income tax that have been approved by the voters of the school district, and the number of "eligible" properties. All taxpayers who qualify for a tax reduction will receive the same amount of reduction regardless of the assessed value of the property.

Act 72 will present complex decisions to the district and voters. The process

should be considered redistribution in the sense that some residents would **actually pay more** in earned income tax whereas others would benefit from a modest reduction if our district chooses to participate. If the district chooses to implement the provisions of Act 72, assuming that 500 million dollars of gaming revenue is available for property tax reduction, each resident homeowner in the Westmont Hilltop School District would receive a property tax reduction of only \$122 of which \$61 is from gaming revenue and \$61 is from a tax shift from property to income tax.

The chart at the top of the next page illustrates this point at various income levels. During the first year of implementation, it is estimated that households earning \$40,000 will see a modest tax decrease of \$42. Households earning in excess of \$122,000 will see an increase in their annual tax obligation.

In future years, in order for school districts to remain eligible for state gaming money, the Act further authorizes additional earned income tax or personal income tax increases in order to meet minimum homestead/farmstead

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Impact of Tax Reform on Homeowners

Year 1 @ .1% EIT Increase	Income	Income	Income	Income
Earned Income Tax	\$200,000	\$122,000	\$80,000	\$40,000
Homestead Exclusion	\$122	\$122	\$122	\$122
Additional Earned Income Tax @ .1%	(\$200)	(\$122)	(\$80)	(\$40)
(Cost)/Savings	(\$78)	(\$0)	\$42	\$82

(INDICATED INCREASE)

exclusion levels. The chart below illustrates the estimated potential impact of additional income taxes and an increase in the homestead/farmstead exclusion at the same income levels. Under this scenario, it is estimated that households earning \$40,000 could see a tax decrease of \$191. Households earning in excess of \$68,000 could see an increase in their annual tax obligations.

least the 2006-2007 school year or later and will be realized only after the State certifies that it has enough gaming revenues to make payments to districts which will require \$900 million: \$400 million in reserve and \$500 million for distribution.

2) As is usually the case with any form of state funding, the income level of the district is factored in, resulting in a

Year 5 @ .68% EIT Increase	Income	Income	Income	Income
Earned Income Tax	\$200,000	\$122,000	\$80,000	\$40,000
Homestead Exclusion	\$463	\$463	\$463	\$463
Additional Earned Income Tax @ .68%	(\$1,360)	(\$830)	(\$544)	(\$272)
(Cost)/Savings	(\$897)	(\$367)	(\$81)	\$191

At the maximum exclusion level, earned income taxes would be even higher.

Following the application process, School Boards must decide by May 30, 2005 if the district will participate in Act 72. The state funds plus the revenue raised by new mandatory income taxes of at least .1% would provide the property tax relief. Following that process, the potential property tax reduction will appear on tax bills for owner-occupied properties that have approved homestead/farmstead applications.

At this point, the Westmont Hilltop School District has not decided whether to participate. Local school districts are required to either opt in or out of the plan by May 30, 2005. If a district does not participate, state property tax relief funds from gaming licenses and operations will not be paid. **However, it is important for taxpayers to understand the following:**

1) Property tax relief will not be immediate to property owners. State payments to school districts for property tax reduction are not anticipated until at

least the 2006-2007 school year or later and will be realized only after the State certifies that it has enough gaming revenues to make payments to districts which will require \$900 million: \$400 million in reserve and \$500 million for distribution.

2) As is usually the case with any form of state funding, the income level of the district is factored in, resulting in a reduced benefit for our district compared with others. For example, the allocation of gaming revenue to schools with a \$500 million total allocation results in a property tax reduction of 28.4% for the Greater Johnstown School District, an 11% reduction for the Richland School District, and an 8% reduction for the Westmont Hilltop School District. The list of school districts illustrates the Gaming Allocation for Cambria County.

Strategic Planning Mid-Point Review

During the 2000-2001 school year, community members, parents, students, teachers, and administrators were part of a collaborative venture that resulted in the Westmont Hilltop School District's Strategic Plan for the years 2001 through 2006. The plan prioritized five areas of focus for our district. These included safety, curriculum, technology, staff development, and community partnership initiatives.

In September of 2001, we submitted our Strategic Plan for the years 2001-2006 to the Bureau of Curriculum and Academic Services of the Pennsylvania

Allocation of \$500 Million In Gaming Revenue

School District	State Allocation	Percent of Reduction
Blacklick Valley	\$ 142,060	29.4%
Cambria Heights	\$ 425,384	28.8%
Central Cambria	\$ 334,259	17.5%
Conemaugh Valley	\$ 224,978	27.7%
Ferndale Area	\$ 255,000	28.4%
Forest Hills	\$ 647,470	26.9%
Greater Johnstown	\$1,146,995	28.4%
Northern Cambria	\$ 263,805	29.0%
Penn Cambria	\$ 390,573	23.2%
Portage	\$ 281,829	28.7%
Richland	\$ 200,633	11.0%
Westmont Hilltop	\$ 259,687	8.0%

3) Districts can still raise property tax millage rates up to the index rate set by the state.

4) Districts will be required to adopt their preliminary budgets in February beginning in 2006. This is three months earlier than now required. **Therefore, in our attempts to budget responsibly, the district will face many "unknown" factors,** such as the amount of revenue expected from the state, the enrollment figures, and corresponding staffing requirements.

This decision is an important one that will affect the district for years to come. For that reason, we are planning educational forums to help our residents assist us in this decision. We will inform residents via the Tribune-Democrat when dates for public meetings have been set.

Additional information regarding Act 72 is available at the following link: <http://westy.jtwn.k12.pa.us/users/sja/Act72.htm>.

Department of Education. The plan was approved without any required revisions and has served the district well to date.

The Board of Education and all members of the Leadership Team are now engaged in carrying out the plan as specified. In February of 2004 (the midpoint of the plan) all members of the 2000-2001 Strategic Planning Committee were invited to a progress assessment meeting. The purposes of the midpoint meeting were as follows: 1) to assess our progress to date, 2) to set priorities for the remaining action plans to be

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Strategic Planning

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addressed, and 3) to update the plan to include any new legislation that has taken place subsequent to the submission of our plan in 2001. The midpoint review was held on Monday, February 23, 2004, at 6:30 PM in the middle school library. Seventy-five percent of the original committee was available to assess our progress to date, an added measure of accountability that we highly value.

The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed progress in each of the five goal areas of the Strategic Plan and made recommendations for necessary addendums. They assessed whether or not the plan is being carried out according to the original intent of the

subcommittee, whether accountability measures were adequate to facilitate successful completion from midpoint to end, and whether overall pacing and progress were reasonable relative to the midpoint.

New needs were identified by the committee and were developed into additional priority goal areas. These goal areas were further developed into new Action Plans in accordance with the structure of the original Strategic Plan. Included are new Action Plans for the enhancement of each of the following: provisions for CPR/AED training, early childhood education, gifted education, ESL/ELL planning, and provisions for a new Staff Development Needs Assessment. A new Act 48 Professional Development Plan was submitted along with a new Teacher Induction Plan.

A presentation was designed by Mr. Matthew Thomas, High School Dean of Students, in conjunction with each of the subcommittee chairs, to indicate which Action Plans had been established to the committee's satisfaction, which were under development, and which had yet to be designed and implemented. The presentation was shared with the faculty. The Strategic Plan is linked to the district's web page and available to the community.

We remain grateful to the members of the Strategic Planning Committee for their dedication of time and expertise during the planning phase. Their efforts have resulted in meaningful educational opportunities designed to significantly advance the goal of providing high quality educational experiences for students. 📖

Students Exceed No Child Left Behind Requirements

Westmont Hilltop's Grades 5, 8, and 11 students once again exceeded the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements on the PSSA during the Spring 2004 testing. Students in Grade 3 took the test for the first time, but those results have not yet been released by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

District students scored above the state average in both reading and mathematics at all three grade levels. Grade 6, 9, and 11 students were also assessed in writing, but the Department of Education has released only the Grade 11 scores. Our Grade 11 students also scored above the state average in writing.

Pennsylvania established Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Goals prior to the Spring 2002 PSSA assessments. The Spring 2004 AYP Reading target goal was set at 45%, and the Mathematics target goal was 35%. The chart also indicates yearly target goals through the spring of 2014, at which point 100% of students tested are expected to score at the proficient and advanced levels, according to current Department of Education expectations. For 2004, districts were meeting AYP Goals if 45% of students at each grade level tested scored at the proficient or advanced levels on the Reading Assessment and

35% scored at the proficient and advanced levels on the Mathematics Assessment. As the accompanying chart reveals, Westmont Hilltop students exceeded both Reading and Mathematics AYP target goals at all three grade levels that were tested. Two other important No Child Left Behind targets are PSSA participation rates and student daily attendance. 100% of Westmont Hilltop students took the PSSA in 2004. The state set 95% as the minimum acceptable standard for the PSSA participation rate. Our average daily attendance rate of 96% exceeds the state minimum target of 90%.

Additional data was provided to school districts to enable educators to address the special needs of various

subgroups within the school community. Subgroup data is provided in the following categories (when subgroups consist of 10 or more students in one grade level): White, Black, Latino/Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Multiracial, IEP (Individual Education Program), LEP (Limited English Proficient), Economically Disadvantaged, Migrant, Male, and Female. According to present state guidelines, schools can fail to meet AYP if one or more of these subgroups fall short of the target goal as illustrated in the chart on page 7. The district is working toward continual improvement for each of our subgroups and for all students in order to maximize individual potential. 📖

2003-2014 PSSA Target Goals - Percentage of Students Proficient and Advanced

Targets for Spring of:	PDE Goal for AYP	Percentage of WHSD Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced			PDE Goal for AYP	Percentage of WHSD Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced		
		5th	8th	11th		5th	8th	11th
2003	45%	64.4%	79.5%	69.0%	35%	67.3%	72.1%	62.9%
2004	45%	72.0%	81.0%	74.0%	35%	70.0%	75.0%	62.0%
2005-2007	54%				45%			
2008-2010	63%				56%			
2011	72%				67%			
2012	81%				78%			
2013	91%				89%			
2014	100%				100%			

Collaborative Safety Planning in District Buildings

As part of the district's ongoing safety planning, meetings with local fire department personnel were conducted in late October in each of the three district buildings. Local firemen Anthony Stumpo and Chris Wyant organized the planned meetings, held on location at the three buildings. Floor plans, emergency gas, water, and electrical shut-off locations, and emergency building entry procedures have been the primary focus of these meetings.

The district continues its efforts toward uniform, comprehensive safety planning in conjunction with local and county-wide emergency management officials. Meetings such as the ones scheduled this fall and the quarterly Cambria County 9-1-1 meetings allow district administrators to plan for a wide range of potential crisis situations.

In addition to the aforementioned topics, the locations of fire alarm and automated dialing systems, sprinklers, and flammable liquid and chemical storage areas were shared with the local fire departments. Crisis management plans were discussed. With the addition of AED (cardiac defibrillator) devices in each building (2002-2003 school year) and the inclusion of shelter-in-place and lockdown procedures in the crisis management plans (2003-2004 school year), those emergency personnel (fire, police, and ambulance) which serve the district must be kept current with all school procedures. We welcome their request for involvement and intend to continue to expand our coordination efforts. We thank Facilities Manager Dan Ream for his efforts in providing access information for crisis management personnel and clearly marked maps of key areas in all three buildings. 📄

PSSA Group Data

Tested Students Who Scored Proficient and Above	Grade 5 Reading		Grade 5 Math		Grade 8 Reading		Grade 8 Math		Grade 11 Reading		Grade 11 Math		Grade 11 Writing	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Overall	72%	128	70%	128	81%	141	75%	142	74%	145	62%	145	86%	146
White	71%	126	71%	126	81%	136	74%	137	74%	139	62%	139	86%	140
IEP	45%	11	36%	11	-	-	20%	10	41%	22	14%	22	45%	22
Economically Disadvantaged	56%	25	52%	25	64%	25	48%	25	61%	18	50%	18	67%	18
Male	70%	71	75%	71	80%	79	73%	80	68%	72	64%	72	79%	72
Female	74%	57	65%	57	82%	62	79%	62	79%	73	60%	73	92%	74

The Class of 2004 and the SAT I

SAT I preparation will be a focus of attention for our district as we are committed to providing students with the best chance possible for admission to their schools of choice. It is noteworthy that over 92.5% of the Class of 2004 took at least one SAT examination. This is a much higher percentage than most districts

experience—evidence of the high value students in our district place on their post-high school aspirations. 📄

	District	PA	National Average
SAT I Verbal	501	501	508
SAT I Math	507	502	518

Westmont Hilltop School District Endowment Fund

A new resource to support the needs of our students and community is available through the Westmont Hilltop School District Endowment Fund. The Endowment is supplied by tax-deductible donations that are invested to earn interest. Gifts may be designated by alumni, community members, and faculty for specific purposes that are important to them. Alternatively, gifts may be undesignated and available for use as needs arise.

The Class of 2003 was the first to contribute as a class to the Endowment, donating a gift that will extend the resources of the Westmont Hilltop School District in perpetuity. Class

reunions have highlighted the Endowment in order to bring awareness to our alumni. We thank our faculty members and administrators who have contributed through payroll deductions and gifts.

The fund is administered through the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies. Donations can be addressed to the Westmont Hilltop School District Endowment Fund at their new address at 116 Market Street, Johnstown PA 15901 or placed online at <http://www.cfalleghenies.org>. For more information, call the Central Office of the Westmont Hilltop School District at 255-6751. 📄

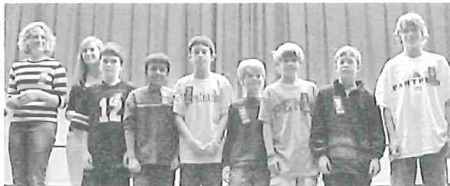
Senior Residents Have V.I.P. Status

Senior residents are reminded that one way the district can acknowledge and support the contributions and support of our senior residents is through our V.I.P. (Very Important Person) passes which allow residents who are 62 years and older to enjoy free admission to all school-related athletic

events with the exception of hockey games played at the Cambria County War Memorial and the annual musical. If you are a senior resident, you are eligible for a V.I.P. pass. To obtain one, please contact the district office at 255-6751. 📄

Red Ribbon Week

Have you noticed the red ribbons proudly displayed in almost every window of the middle school each fall? Red Ribbon Week was October 25-29 in our middle school. The week-long activities are promoted annually by our SAP (Student Assistance Programs) Team. Team members are: Mrs. Carole Kakabar, Principal; Ms. Nicole Rombaugh, Assistant Principal; Mrs. Teresa Mrozowski, Guidance Counselor; Mrs. Peggy Antolik, Nurse; Mr. Joe Makosky, Teacher; Mrs. Diane Skoner, Teacher; and two representatives from MH/MR.



We start off the week with a kick-off assembly on Friday, October 22. The assembly involves our High School SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) Club. SADD members talk to our students about the history of Red Ribbon Week and share stories about destructive decisions that they know have been made. They also distribute Red Ribbons to our student government representatives to promote awareness and participation in the program.

Each student in the middle school is given a red ribbon to wear for the week. Each window in the middle school boasts a large red ribbon with an anti-drug slogan on it. These ribbons are created by our own Westy's Angels under the supervision of Mrs. Denise Cunningham and assisted by Mrs. Barbara Miltenberger. The showcase across from the guidance office is decorated by the students who have chosen the related arts elective, "Bulletin Board," guided by Mrs. Jennifer Harnett. This group met with Mrs. Mrozowski and planned a bulletin board to showcase Red Ribbon Week. The SAP



From left to right: Breanne Slocum (TJ Keklak - 8th Grade) Ann Kmetz, Jill Schroeder, Casey Litvin, Amy Hartland and Melissa Marlowe. We are proud to announce that there are 105 members of SADD.

team also has an essay contest and slogan contest related to the theme.

Wednesday is cookie day. The cafeteria staff gives a cookie to each student who is wearing a ribbon to show support for this week. Thus, the entire building community is involved in various activities - from HAT (Hilltop Action Team) to the cafeteria staff, teachers, and administration. Thanks to all for a successful Red Ribbon Week. 🍪



Serving the student body

Westmont Hilltop Student Council
200 Fair Oaks Drive
Johnstown, PA 15905
(814) 255-8726 Fax: (814) 255-4390

Vice President: Allison Virus
Treasurer: Jill Schroeder

President: Grant Rozich

Secretary: Elyse Mendelson
Sponsor: Toni Callahan

November 30, 2004

Dear Community Members,

My name is Cara Pozun, and I am a senior at Westmont Hilltop High School. I am currently serving as a Senior Class Representative for Student Council, where I am also the chair of the Public Relations Committee. This year, I am leading a project called "Operation Recognition," to give war veterans who did not receive a high school diploma because they were serving in World War II, an opportunity to receive an honorary diploma and graduate in June with Westmont's Class of 2005.

The Student Council of Westmont Hilltop High School would like to recognize any World War II veteran who left high school prior to graduation to serve in the United States armed services and, therefore, did not receive a diploma. We hope to honor veterans by bestowing a diploma at the Westmont Hilltop Class of 2005 graduation. Can you help us? If you are able to provide the names of any veterans from any high school, please contact Cara Pozun at Westmont Hilltop High School at 255-8726.

Sincerely,
Cara Pozun

Making High School Count

One of the toughest transitions young people face is the transition from the middle school environment to the high school environment. Not only is there a major change in the structure of the schedule; i.e. traditional versus block scheduling, but there are also many major social changes.

We believe at WHHS that steps can be taken to make this transition for incoming ninth graders as stress-free as possible. We begin communicating and discussing this transition with parents and students in the spring of their eighth grade year through a meeting held at the middle school. This meeting is followed with our ninth grade orientation, which is held at the high school the week prior to the start of the new school year. Middle school and high school principals coordinate efforts with the guidance counselors of both buildings to ensure a smooth transition for students.

The final step in the process involves an assembly program for ninth graders during the first month of their high school careers. The assembly, "Making High School Count," is sponsored by Monster.com and is accessible to the school district at no cost. This year, the program was held on Wednesday, September 15. The focus of the program was on the students and the choices they will have to make socially and academically during the course of their high school careers. More importantly, the program emphasizes the ways in which the outcome of early high school choices can impact students' futures. Also addressed in the assembly are several key organizational topics for students such as time management, note taking skills, and self advocacy.

We believe this assembly emphasizes the essential qualities and characteristics needed by our incoming freshman to be successful in our high school environment. We thank Mr. Marshall, high school principal; Mr. Thomas, Dean of Students; Mr. McLaurin, Athletic Director; and former Middle School Principal and Guidance Counselors Mrs. Deborah Chuba, Mrs. Teresa



Mrozowski, and Mrs. Beth Stem for facilitating the transition process this year.

Following the program, several students were interviewed about their reactions to the messages contained within the program. Representatives of the Freshman Class of 2006 responded

to the "Making High School Count" program as follows:

Marianna Campagna – *The program was pretty cool. The presenter was lively and talked about how getting good grades is important.*

Allison Eanes – *The speaker reminded us that we should not waste our freshman year. It is a year that we can build upon for the future.*

Ashley Heslop – *It was a good program. There were activities that made us think about our future.*

Andy Schroeder – *The presenter explained that the freshman year is an important time in our lives that will affect what we will do for the next 10 to 20 years.*

Stephen Shadid – *The speaker emphasized how important it is to work during your freshman year, which is just as important as the sophomore, junior, and senior years.*

National Current Events Team

The fifth and sixth grade Current Events Team works hard each year from September to April. They come prepared to discuss the latest news. They grow in their understanding of world events. In that respect, they were all individual winners in the Current Events Competition. As a team, they were amazing. In 2003/2004, the team score for the final meet was the **third highest** among sixth grade teams in the nation. Their final cumulative score (the total of four tests) placed them 6th for the year. They were inadvertently omitted from recognition in the Hilltopper Highlights summer edition and are, therefore, being recognized now.

Each year, one student is awarded a medal for having the highest total score for the year. Last year that student was **Daniel Wolfe**, who was then in grade five. We look forward to his continuing efforts in global awareness throughout his middle school years. Congratulations, Daniel.

Certificates of Distinction:

Grade 6: **Juliana Bukoski, Julie Mercik, Christine Weidner**

Grade 5: **Zachary Drennan, David Pepley**

Certificates of Participation

Grade 6: **Margaret Atterbury, Ashley Irwin, Kelsey Layton, Nathan McHugh, Sara Rogerson, Michael Rudnac, Aaron Stonecypher, Kayla Vliet, and Rachel Wozniak**

Grade 5: **Christina Atterbury, Kasey Azar, Luke Gonzalez, Santino Jaber, Andrew Kilpatrick, Aaron Seigh, Joseph Seigh, Eleanor Wells, and April Yanko**

Outdoor Odyssey Mentors at Westmont Hilltop

During the summer of 2004, several Westmont Hilltop students participated in a mentorship program at Outdoor Odyssey, an adventure camp near Jennerstown, PA.

The primary focus as a student mentor is to bond with younger children in order to positively impact their lives. Outdoor Odyssey staff help make this happen by planning, facilitating, and supervising all activities. Individuals attending high school or college in Blair, Cambria, Indiana, Somerset, and Westmoreland counties are eligible to serve as mentors.

Mentorship begins with the Outdoor Odyssey Leadership Academy, a rigorous week of training and adventure

for more than one hundred potential mentors from thirty-five school districts. Held in early June, the Leadership Academy helps prepare students for work with children and provides an opportunity to assess individual potential as a role model. Prospective mentors participate in all of the outdoor activities that student campers will experience.

Major General T.S. Jones, USMC, Executive Director and founder, provides the training curriculum and instructs hands-on leadership ideals for the mentorship program. Mentors chosen from the program schedule an additional week to return to camp with two student campers from the mentor's

home community. Following the initial training, mentors meet with their student camper team at least twice a month, every month through May.

Westmont Hilltop High School students participating in this program were Darin Brownlee, April Bukoski, Christine Cliatt, Frank Eanes, Amanda Partsch, Danielle Pozun, Jessica Sadvari, Travis Seth, Shannon Shaffer, and Emily Zawalish. These individuals currently serve as mentors for fourteen student campers in the Greater Johnstown area. We support the efforts and enthusiasm of our Westmont Hilltop High School mentors, and we believe that their dedication and service sets an excellent example and positive role model for other students to follow. 🍷

RESPECT Program

The RESPECT program at Westmont Hilltop Middle School is taking on a new look. RESPECT stands for:

Remember, Every Single Person
deserves Equal Caring Treatment

Each grade level has adopted a focus for programs and advisor/advisee meetings. Grade 5 will continue implementing the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program as will Grades 6 through 8 with added explorations in these grades. Grade 6 will analyze stereotyping and tolerance. Grade 7 will study peer relationships and decision-making, while Grade 8 will focus on anger management and the establishment of healthy relationships.

Large group meetings and presentations by outside professionals in various fields will be scheduled with meeting and presentation topics revolving around each grade's area of focus. We hope to be able to offer a field trip that promotes teambuilding for our fifth graders as a bonding experience for these children in the new middle school setting. A core team of teachers has been organized to guide the programs and promote opportunities for the students in each focus area.

Our RESPECT program had its origins four years ago in the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, sponsored by the



Child and Adolescent Health and Wellness Council. Through the program, students learn to value individuality and include everyone equally because each has something to offer. All teachers were trained in the tenets of the program, and they and their students bring it to life each Friday during time scheduled for RESPECT meetings.

Our gratitude is extended to our teachers, who set the tone and climate for RESPECT, and to our middle school administrators, Mrs. Carole Kakabar and Ms. Nicole Rombaugh, who have made the commitment to continue to support and further develop our bullying prevention program, and to Mr. Steve McGee, Director of Education and Student Support Services, who served as district liaison with the Child and Adolescent Health and Wellness Council when the program was introduced in Westmont Hilltop in the fall of 2000. 🍷

Health Fair

Westmont Hilltop Elementary School has sponsored our first annual Hilltopper Health Fair this fall. The fair is funded by a grant from Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA).

PANA's mission is to develop an environment to support and promote active lifestyles and healthy food choices among our youth by involving schools, parents, and the community. This is a statewide effort to combat the ramifications of children becoming overweight and sedentary.

More than 75 local community professionals and organizations were invited to participate in our health fair. The focus of the health fair is physical activity and nutrition. Through the health fair, we hope to give our families the opportunity to learn more about the wide spectrum of health services available in the Greater Johnstown area. The health fair was held on Tuesday, November 16, from 6-8 PM at the Westmont Hilltop Elementary School located at 675 Goucher Street. 🍷

Young Marines Program Offering

The Young Marines program is designed to promote a healthy, drug-free lifestyle and to educate children about the dangers of drugs. The program advocates respect for self, adults, and academics and emphasizes high standards of honesty, fairness, courage, respect, and dependability. Coordinated by our new assistant principal, Ms. Nicole Rombaugh, the program will be offered to area youth between the ages of 8 and 18.

"Strengthening the Lives of America's Youth" is the Young Marines' motto, and the program's mission is to educate and inspire youth within our community by promoting a healthy and drug-free lifestyle through instructional and adventurous activities that encourage character-building, physical fitness, and discipline.

Students enter the program through a "boot camp," an experience that has been offered to some of our middle school students in November, and will be offered again in the spring and/or summer months. In addition to community services, Young Marines participate in camping, hiking, bowling, a nationally sponsored Space Camp,

Canadian Cadet Challenge, and more! Leadership, self-respect and self-discipline are all modeled and encouraged during these unique opportunities.

Weekly meetings are held on Tuesday evenings and special events occur on weekends, during the summer and possibly during the week as well. Special allowances are made for students who are involved in sports, as the Young Marines encourage participation in athletics. Families are encouraged to be actively involved, and "family days" are held monthly.

If you and your children would like to be invited to hear a presentation that further explains the Young Marines program, we will be offering an informational meeting in the near future. Please contact your child's respective building administrator listed below if you have an interest in attending the meeting.

Mrs. Peggy McDonald - Elementary School Principal

Ms. Nicole Rombaugh - Middle School Assistant Principal

Mr. Matthew Thomas - High School Dean of Students

SPARK

This year, a quality physical education program is offered to students as part of the general curriculum at Westmont Hilltop Elementary School. Mr. Benford, the elementary physical education teacher, will be using game-based conditioning activities, different warm-up activities, and parachuting activities from the SPARK Physical Education Program.



Elementary Students Engaged in SPARK Activity

SPARK (Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids) of San Diego State University is an Exemplary Program of the United States Department of Education. The curriculum has evolved from a National Institute of Health study; SPARK has been proven effective by objective research on thousands of elementary age students.

One class goal will be to actively engage children in sufficient amounts of moderate to vigorous physical activity to improve and/or maintain their physical health and well being. Another goal will be to encourage children to apply the skills and knowledge they acquire during class and to seek opportunities to be active outside of school as part of a healthy lifestyle. Additionally, instructional units are planned to develop motor, personal, and social skills.

Parents attending the October 16 PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) meeting had the opportunity for a hands-on look at the SPARK program. Mrs. Donna Wehner from the Child and Adolescent Health and Wellness Council demonstrated many of the techniques and strategies used in the program. Mrs. Wehner wrote the grant, which ultimately led to the opportunity to incorporate the SPARK program in several Cambria County schools. Mrs. Peggy McDonald is coordinating the PANA and SPARK programs for our school.

Sources of Funding

During the 2004-2005 fiscal year, the Westmont Hilltop School District will receive funding from federal sources, required to be publicized, as follows:

FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES	2003-2004	2004-2005
Title I Part A	\$92,449	\$85,891
Title II, Part A, Class Size Reduction	\$44,534	\$43,272
Title II, Part D, Technology	\$ 2,175	\$ 2,028
Title V, Part A, Innovative Programs	\$ 6,755	\$ 4,822
Safe and Drug-Free Schools Grant	\$ 5,126	\$ 5,518

Title I, Part A provides our kindergarten Title I program. **Title II Part A** Class Size Reduction provides a portion of an extra teacher's salary in the elementary school.

Title II Part D contributes toward in-service training for faculty. **Title V Part A** allows us to acquire technology hardware for classroom use.

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools Grant contributes toward the salaries of aides and compensation for tutoring services.

We will receive funding through the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** in the amount of \$192,963 that has allowed us to retain a new special education teacher and aides for a second year.

Westmont Hilltop School District Board of Education

Mr. Mitchell G. Azar: President
Mr. George P. Wolfe: Vice-President
Dr. Daniel R. Meenan: Treasurer
Mr. Ronald P. Carnevali, Sr., Mrs. Marian F. Feath
Mr. John M. Khuri, Mr. Thomas R. Kirby
Mrs. Diana L. Schroeder, Mr. Scott D. Watson
Mr. Gregory T. Sanford: Secretary (non-member)

District Administrative Staff 2004-2005

Dr. Susan J. Anderson, *Superintendent*
Mr. Steven D. McGee, *Director of Education & Student Support Services*
Mr. Gregory T. Sanford, *Business Manager*

Building Administrative Staff 2004-2005

Mr. William Marshall, *High School Principal*
Mrs. Margaret McDonald, *Elementary Principal*
Mrs. Carole Kakabar, *Middle School Principal*
Miss Nicole Rombaugh, *Middle School Assistant Principal*
Mr. Matthew Thomas, *High School Dean of Students*

Administrative Offices


827 Diamond Boulevard • Johnstown, PA 15905
Phone 814-255-6751 • Fax 814-255-7735
Email: sja@whsd.org

Mission Statement

The mission of the WHSD, in partnership with our community, is to prepare each student to be an informed, ethical, responsible adult in a changing and competitive global society through high expectations and a challenging educational program offering knowledge and skills within a safe, nurturing environment.

Civil Rights Statement

The Westmont Hilltop School District, an equal opportunity employer, will not discriminate in employment, educational programs or activities, based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, ancestry, or disability. Publication of this policy in this document is in accordance with state and federal laws including: The Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Title IV, Title VI, Title VII, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Sections 503 & 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992.

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Holiday Greetings

School Cancellations Will be Posted on the Web

Visit the main web page of the district at <http://westy/> for district status and information. School cancellations and closings will be posted at that location on the web if possible. This information will also be broadcast through local media sources. In the event of school closings, five snow days have been designated in advance and will be taken in this order if needed: February 21, March 24, March 28, April 15, and June 10. If cancellations do not occur prior to each of the designated snow days, then those dates will be vacation days for students and teachers.

We remain in a consortium with six other districts, and we follow a common calendar. The need to cancel school in several districts results in closing for all; therefore, school closings are more likely than they have been in years past. The revision of built-in snow days in the calendar this year is intended to avoid a situation in which snow days are tacked on to the end of the year resulting in the need to move the date of commencement repeatedly, in uncertainty for upperclassmen regarding the start of summer employment dates, and in conflict with pre-scheduled vacations. We hope that this format will prove more convenient for our educational community.

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