



HILLTOP SCHOOL NEWS

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Winter 2006

Allow Us to Introduce...

Our Westmont Hilltop School District has been blessed with the addition of new faculty members. 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.



Miss Jodi Hillegass

Hello, Westmont Hilltop! I am extremely proud and honored to have become the newest member of the Westmont Hilltop Middle School faculty. I am happy to be able to serve as a sixth grade Reading and English teacher, in addition to being the coach for both the varsity girls' basketball and junior high volleyball clinic teams. I am anticipating a busy and successful year as a new teacher. Before coming to Westmont, I graduated as salutatorian from Ferndale Area High School. I earned my dual certification from Elizabethtown College, where I was a member of Kappa Delta Pi. My past experiences in the district include serving as a sixth grade long-term substitute teacher for Mrs. George, along with substituting at the elementary and high schools. Other teaching experiences include a multitude of capacities from multi-age pre-school up to fourth grade. Mrs. Kakabar, Mrs. Kuzmiak, and the staff at the middle school have all been very welcoming. The sixth grade team has been very helpful and has

been a joy to work with so far. I'd like to thank them all for what they do and have done! In closing, I was encouraged by the support and spirit of this community in our quest for the girls' basketball state title last season. It is my hope that this encouragement will continue as I strive for the same success in my classroom.

Miss Jodi Hillegass



Mrs. Jan Layton

Mrs. Jan Layton is teaching Family and Consumer Sciences at WHHS. She is a graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She served as a long-term and day-to-day substitute teacher at Westmont Hilltop, Blacklick Valley, and Greater Johnstown School Districts. She also worked as a day-to-day substitute in the Richland and Forest Hills School Districts.

Mrs. Layton is our new Key Club Advisor. She looks forward to working with our dedicated Key Club members in a variety of community service projects now underway. Highlights of Key Club service projects and other clubs' service projects will appear in the 2006 Summer Edition of the Hilltopper Highlights.

Mrs. Layton comments, "I am thrilled to be back this year. My experience here last year was quite rewarding. WHHS students are intelligent, awesomely talented, polite, and conscientious. Our staff is very welcoming and supportive. This is truly an exemplary school district

and I am extremely proud to be a part of such an outstanding organization."

Mrs. Jan Layton



Miss Jessica McHugh

Miss Jessica McHugh earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown in May 2004. She is a member of the Chancellor's List, meaning that she is honored for outstanding academics as being among the top one percent of graduates at our nation's 3,000 colleges and universities. In addition, she is a University of Pittsburgh University Scholar, which means that she graduated in the top two percent of all University of Pittsburgh students majoring in elementary education, earning a QPA of 3.96 and a core QPA of 4.0. She is a member of several academic honors societies, including Phi Eta Sigma, Pi Lambda Theta, and Phi Kappa Phi. Currently, she is enrolled at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania in the reading specialist and Masters of Literacy graduate programs. Jessica was a long-term substitute at Forest Hills Elementary School last school year. She reflected on her experience at Westmont Hilltop Elementary thus far:

"I am ecstatic to be teaching second grade in such a wonderful school district! It feels amazing to be teaching the same grade I student taught in two years ago. It is truly a dream come true."

Miss Jessica McHugh

District Level Initiatives

Strategic Planning 2001-2006

In the fall of the 2000-2001 school year, the Westmont Hilltop School District entered into Strategic Planning to develop a six-year plan to guide our process in serving the needs of our students through 2006. Our Strategic Plan was based on an analysis of internal and external needs that led to the establishment of priorities and action plans. The planning process involved community members, business leaders, students, educators, and school officials in this vital effort. Within this collaborative partnership, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and its subcommittees charted a course of action to ensure that ample and appropriate consideration be given to the educational needs of every student in the district.

Our purpose throughout the accomplishment of the goals of the plan has been the reinforcement of a collective commitment to the continual upgrading of our educational offerings. This is accomplished through the setting of high expectations for all students while providing the necessary structures and supports to ensure the achievement of our educational goals.

The fulfillment of the plan has involved all members of the district in all curricular areas as we worked together to optimize learning opportunities for the students of the Westmont Hilltop School District. The plan reflects our commitment to the present and future success of our students and the collective responsibility we assume for ensuring that success.

A midpoint review for purposes of accountability was accomplished in February of 2004 with the same committee that created the plan. We are pleased to announce that the plan will successfully conclude, having served five priority goal areas as follows: curriculum, safety, staff development, technology, and community partnerships.

A Few Highlights and Accomplishments

Whereas the accomplishments of the past five years would take more than a single publication to list, all are ultimately attributable to the outstanding commitment of the faculty and students of the Westmont Hilltop School District in partnership with the leadership team and community; therefore, we wish to emphasize these for our community. A few highlights of accomplishments during the course of the plan are as follows:

Curriculum



- Planned Courses were aligned with state standards and published by all faculty members followed by on-line publication, allowing district-wide access to all courses of study.
- Cross-Grade Level Alignment was undertaken and included recommendations for differentiated instruction across all departments.
- PowerSchool is in its fifth year of implementation and provides online access to grades and progress updates for students in Grades 5-12, and Grade 4 is planning a pilot project to be announced soon. The system of parent/teacher conferences is still in effect and highly valued for our elementary students. We thank Mr. Joseph Molnar, Mr. Matthew Thomas, and Mr. Roger Cowder for their individual contributions in this initiative.
- PowerSchool will be piloted at the elementary school in Grade 4 under the direction of Principal Peggy McDonald. A local assessment for the PSSA was developed at the high school level under the direction of Principal William Marshall.
- An online system of monitoring progress is now being piloted at the middle school under the direction of Principal Carole Kakabar.

- A system of recognition of student scholarship, service, and achievement was developed and carried out at the board level, through recognition certificates presented in each building, and culminating with the Hilltopper Highlights, a summer publication exclusively dedicated to student success.
- An online student registration format has been implemented for grades 8-12.

Safety



- An Emergency Response Plan was implemented and has been updated annually. We continue to monitor the effectiveness of our safety planning through the Pennsylvania Youth Survey and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. We acknowledge Director of Education, Mr. Steven McGee, for his leadership in these initiatives.
- The Student Assistance Program was extended to the elementary grades and is now in effect from K-12. Those programs have been enhanced through several community partnerships, including mental health services and others included in the Community Resource Directory published through the Office of Community Health.
- We have installed Automatic External Defibrillators (AED's) in all three buildings and committed to cyclic training in the use of them as well as training in Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). An AED is a compact and portable machine designed to assist first responders in treating a person who is experiencing sudden cardiac arrest.
- The Administrative Team worked with the Special Emergency Response Team to address a variety of preparedness scenarios, and we have reviewed memoranda of understanding with police, ambulance, fire, and health agencies.
- Emergency Broadcast radios and walkie-talkies have been purchased,

and updates of new technology and procedures are provided annually.

- Building Maps and Key Locations have been provided to local emergency response teams thanks to the initiative of Facilities Manager Mr. Daniel Ream.

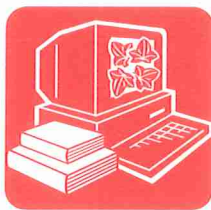


Staff Development

- An Act 48 (teacher staff development process) was put in place and has been implemented.
- Technology-based staff development offerings have included PowerSchool, Web Quests, and an Electronic Calendar/Homework program.
- Safety programs have included sessions for all staff in mandated reporting and confidentiality, non-violent crisis intervention, first aid, CPR/AED use, and emergency situation information.
- All teachers have been provided with a Crisis Response Handbook that includes emergency numbers and school policies and procedures for a variety of emergencies.
- Bullying prevention initiatives continue in grades K-8, and information regarding harassment and a series of informative sessions on Positive Peer Interaction have been carried out at the high school level.
- All faculty and staff regularly engage in HIPAA training (in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act).
- Administrators, key faculty members, and guidance counselors have been engaged in a review of the special education process.
- District administrators have hosted faculty from other districts in observations of the block schedule, differentiated supervision, and the Everyday Mathematics Program.
- Elementary and fifth grade middle school staff have been involved in a collaborative effort with the Ferndale faculty in which the type and timing of balanced literacy instruction has been the focus. Principals Peggy McDonald, Carole Kakabar, and Assistant Principal Nicole Kuzmiak have provided leadership for our district.
- A process of differentiated supervision

(through which teachers participate in a variety of self-directed and collaborative offerings, depending on their level of professional development) was formally adopted by the board during the course of the current Strategic Plan, following a two-year pilot prior to that adoption.

- All teachers met the Pennsylvania Department of Education's requirement for continuing professional development.



Technology

- Under the direction of Technology Director, Mr. Joseph Molnar, a replacement cycle was established and implemented for the upgrading of all servers, printers, and work stations in the elementary, middle, and high schools.
- A wireless lab and an expanded computer lab in the middle school library have allowed for specialized instruction and achievement monitoring in an online forum.
- Digital Light Processing equipment was added in strategic locations including labs and large group instruction classrooms to assist in delivery of curriculum and access to multimedia presentations.
- A new website that offers information specific to individual building levels (elementary, middle, and high schools) and provides a variety of district-wide announcement opportunities has been established.
- The District's Acceptable Use Policy was updated to reflect changes in new technology and safety monitoring to address new vulnerabilities and threats that schools face when providing internet access. Students and parents review and sign these at key transition points including entry into school and at two transition points thereafter.
- A "Help Desk" (an electronic means of requesting help from maintenance and technology personnel) was established to provide teachers and administrators with the opportunity to post needs and concerns that are immediately accessible by technology

personnel as well as those responsible for buildings and grounds. This access enables personnel to address needs and concerns earlier than previous methods.

- An online facilities calendar has been published, giving the public access to our calendar of events for events related to scholarship, the arts, and sports.
- A three-year technology plan was designed, based on the Strategic Plan, and was approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- Accelerated Reader, an online reading assessment database, was expanded and redeployed through the eighth grade.
- An additional bank of computers in the high school library was needed to accommodate the high school students' increasing needs for access and utilization. A new fully functional lab for student and faculty use was established at the high school.
- New industry standard technology hardware and software applications have been employed (such as state-of-the-art computers, a Microsoft Exchange Server, and Internet Security Acceleration Server, and a PeachTree Accounting Software).
- Our Wide Area Network was upgraded to a full one gigabit per second, which increases efficiency and speed of communication among buildings. This has resulted in a much more reliable network and doubled the speed of our internet connection from one to two megabits per second.
- Network controls, web filtering, and monitored quotas have been employed to maximize efficiency and reduce cost.



Community Partnerships

- The district is building upon existing collaborative ventures while initiating new ones in an effort to broaden students' experiences beyond the classroom. The district is committed to supporting students in service-oriented projects that have

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benefited organizations such as the Salvation Army, Women's Help Center, the Remembering Adam Foundation, and Outdoor Odyssey. Some examples have included Connecting with Kids, hosting community programs such as ACRP at the elementary school, and the Salvation Army Kettle Drive and Soup Kitchen.

- Partnerships are in place with the Child and Adolescent Health and Wellness Council, the Student Assistance Program, local Police Departments, and the Department of Emergency Services. Services are extended through MH/MR-CYS, ACRP, and Victim Services.
- Students have contributed services and/or participated in educational programs with Carnegie Mellon, Johns Hopkins, the Second Mile Challenge Program, the Twin Lakes Drug & Alcohol Center, Highlands Reenactors of the Civil War, the Cambria County Court House, Remembering Adam Foundation, Women's Help Center, and many others.
- Student Assistance meetings regularly involve representatives from MH/MR and the County Drug and Alcohol Program. Other partnerships have included community outreach and education programs sponsored by our Key Club and National Honor Society.
- Kyrus Lunchbox is an online service that provides parents with daily updates on lunch balances and potentially provides for parental control over student lunch selections.
- Student Teacher exchanges take place regularly with the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, St. Francis University, and St. Vincent College.
- A Community Resource Manual is published through the Office of Community Health and is housed in Central Administration, providing phone numbers and access to community resources on an as-needed basis.
- High School Students engage in work/study release with a variety of local businesses.
- A new partnership has been established with the Pennsylvania Highlands Community College for dual enrollment, and concurrent enrollment opportunities with local colleges are

also available upon administrative review.

New Strategic Planning Process to Begin in 2006

A new Strategic Planning process will begin in September of 2006. We will be involving community members in this important initiative at the start of the new school year. As always, we look forward to the talents and expertise that are shared by parents and community members and the partnerships within our community that will support and enhance our school system as we plan together for the future of our school district.

Current Initiatives for 2006

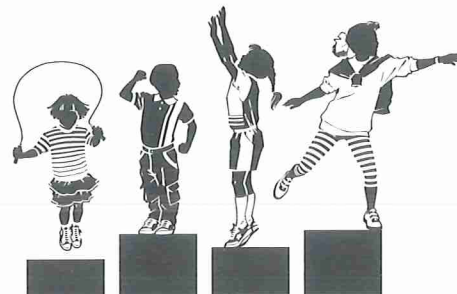
Initiatives now underway in our district include the following:

- Teachers are engaged in monitoring progress of students through local assessments, new online programs, and the PSSA to inform our process of curriculum development and instructional design.
- Teachers are engaged through department teams and grade levels in

refining the alignment of all courses from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

- Supervision opportunities are designed to provide options for teachers at differing stages of professional development.
- An advocacy program for district-wide summer reading is underway.
- Student support systems are under review for the purpose of ensuring that all students make Adequate Yearly Progress.
- Health, Safety, and Welfare Planning including 911 preparedness, CPR, and AED training continue as major initiatives.
- New procedures for providing differentiated instruction (in the form of support for students in attaining proficiency and extended opportunities) for students in need of learning enrichment are continually under review.
- Legalities of the IEP, inclusive practice, and No Child Left Behind Requirements are topics for new training initiatives.
- Coordinated Health Planning (covered in detail below).

Coordinated Health Planning



When we talk about the purpose of schooling, we talk about high quality educational experiences delivered within a safe, nurturing environment. When children are healthy and safe, they can learn. When they are not, learning is severely impeded. It is the obligation of schools to provide a safe, nurturing environment. Comprehensive health planning will ensure that we can provide the environment in which high quality education will thrive. The law, Section 204 of Public Law 108-265--June 30, 2004, requires each district to enact a wellness policy by the first day of the

2006-2007 school year. (This is the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004.) During the 2005-2006 school year, districts must focus on the development of wellness policies through district-level committees or School Health Councils that will develop the policy. Parents, students, teachers, school food service staff, the school board, school administrators, and the public must be involved in the planning.

After establishing our local advisory councils for the local wellness plan, district representatives attended several orientation sessions for the development of a local assessment. Our district's council is composed of representatives of the community and school board, students, parents, teachers, educational specialists, school nurses, food service personnel and administrators. Dr. Matthew Masiello, Mrs. Diana Schroeder, and Mrs. Donna Wehner are serving as regional coordinators of comprehensive

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Westmont Hilltop Students Exceed No Child Left Behind Requirements

Westmont Hilltop's Grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 students once again exceeded the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements on the PSSA during the Spring 2005 testing. District students scored above the state average in both reading and mathematics at all four grade levels.

Pennsylvania established Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Goals prior to the Spring 2002 PSSA assessments. The Spring 2005 AYP Reading target goal was raised to 54% - up from 45% in 2003 and 2004, and the Mathematics target goal was increased to 45% - up from 35% in 2003 and 2004. 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 2005, districts were meeting AYP Goals if 54% of students at each grade level tested scored at the proficient or advanced levels on the Reading Assessment and 45% 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 four grade levels that were tested.

Two other important No Child Left Behind targets are PSSA participation rates and student daily attendance. 98% of Westmont Hilltop students took the PSSA in 2005. The state set 95% as the minimum acceptable standard for the PSSA participation rate. Our graduation rate of 99% exceeds the state minimum target of 80%.

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 for students in the following categories: 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.

The district is working toward continual improvement for each of our subgroups and for all students in order to maximize individual potential. 📖

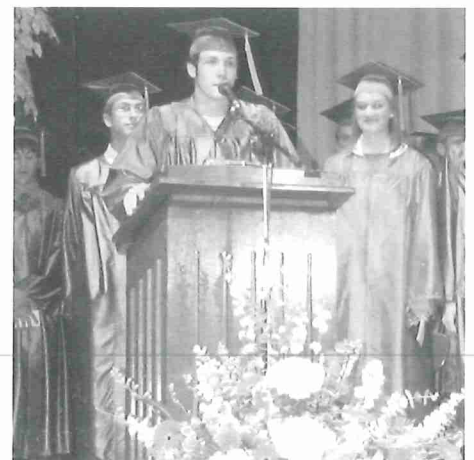
2003-2014 PSSA Target Goals - Percentage of Students Proficient and Advanced

Targets for Spring of:	Percent of Proficient Reading Performances	WHSD READING				Percent of Proficient Math Performances	WHSD MATH			
		3	5	8	11		3	5	8	11
2003	45%	N/A	64.4%	79.5%	69.0%	35%	N/A	67.3%	72.1%	62.9%
2004	45%	64%	72%	81%	74%	35%	67%	70%	75%	62%
2005	54%	77%	71.7%	82.6%	79.8%	45%	90%	78.4%	79.8%	75%
2006	54%					45%				
2007	54%					45%				
2008	63%					56%				
2009	63%					56%				
2010	63%					56%				
2011	72%					67%				
2012	81%					78%				
2013	91%					89%				
2014	100%					100%				

The Class of 2005 and the SAT I

It is noteworthy that 84% of the Class of 2005 took at least one SAT examination. This is a higher percentage than most districts experience—evidence of the high value students and parents in our district place on their post-high school aspirations. 📖

	District	PA	National Average
SAT I Verbal	514	501	508
SAT I Math	510	503	520



Westmont Hilltop School District Endowment Fund

An important 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 Fund, donating a gift that will extend the resources of the Westmont Hilltop School District for the benefit of future classes. Class reunions have highlighted the Endowment, in order to bring awareness to our alumni.

This year, the district hosted the First Annual Gala to benefit the Endowment on Friday, October 14, 2005 at the Sunnehanna Country Club. The event of 2005 included excellent musical entertainment, dinner, and a silent auction. As a result of the event, the existing funds were nearly doubled in one evening! We hope to expand the event in future years and to explore a variety of formats, but the district will host an event to focus on the Endowment on an annual basis.

Members of our faculty and community have established several memorial options. In addition to the opportunity to contribute to the Endowment to support your school district in perpetuity, you might consider contributing to a scholarship fund that was established to benefit students who intend to follow in the footsteps of the Hilltoppers for whom the fund was established. Currently, the following options are available within the fund:

Robert Feath Memorial Scholarship Fund

The Robert Feath Memorial Fund was established by Mrs. Marian Feath and family in honor of Mr. Robert Feath, middle and high school industrial arts teacher, in memorial to his years of dedicated service to the education profession and admirable contributions in his field. The fund will provide

opportunities for industrial arts students who intend to further their studies after high school.

Michael Rudnac Memorial Scholarship Fund

The Michael Rudnac Memorial Scholarship Fund was established by Mrs. Cindy Rudnac, in honor of the late high school teacher and passionate educational leader Mr. Michael Rudnac. The fund will benefit students who intend to further their education while becoming involved in educational or community leadership and will simultaneously serve to commemorate Mr. Rudnac's contributions as an educator and effectiveness as a leader.

John Stewart Memorial Hockey Fund

The John Stewart Memorial Hockey Fund was established by the Stewart family in honor of John's ardent support of the Westmont Hilltop hockey program. His tireless efforts in fundraising extended beyond his own son's involvement in the program, and this fund is established to encourage others to do the same. The fund will benefit our hockey program in perpetuity and in memorial to John Stewart.

Through the funding options above, and many more that we hope will follow, the Endowment Fund will benefit both academic and athletic programs within our district.

Gifts may be designated to a specific cause or donated without restriction, whereby they will be available to serve the changing needs of our district in ways that we may as yet be unable to predict.

The Westmont Hilltop School District Endowment 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.

We thank our community, faculty members, and administrators who have contributed through payroll deductions and gifts. We extend, once again, a heartfelt thanks to all who supported the First Annual Endowment Gala. 🍷

Coordinated Health Planning

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health planning through the Office of Community Health. They are also members of our local Westmont Hilltop School District Health Council. Members of the council also include Dr. Susan Anderson, Mrs. Peggy Antolik, Mrs. Cyndi Atterbury, Mr. Mitchell Azar, Mr. David Benford, Mr. Sonny Burns, Mrs. Jackie Carpenter, Mrs. Debbie Chuba, Dr. Anu Dharbhamulla, Rev. Ron Carnevali, Mrs. Marian Feath, Mr. Timothy Harrigan, Mrs. Meg Horn, Mr. Toby Horner, Mrs. Carole Kakabar, Mr. Paul Knupp, Mrs. Nicole Kuzmiak, Mr. William Marshall, Mrs. Peggy McDonald, Mr. Steve McGee, Mrs. Cindy McCombie, Mr. Thomas Mitchell, Ms. Tina Morrow, Mrs. Anne Paratore, Mrs. Joan Ponzurick, Mr. Daniel Ream, Mr. Gregory Sanford, Miss Jillian Schroeder, Mrs. Beth Stem, Mrs. Heather Thomas, and Mr. Matthew Thomas.

The members of this council are engaged in a process designed to significantly advance the mission of the district by focusing on the health and safety of our educational community through each of the following avenues: 1) health education, 2) the physical education curriculum, 3) health services, 4) nutrition services, 5) family and community involvement, 6) promotion of a healthy school environment, 7) health promotion for staff, and 8) counseling, psychological, and social services. We believe that a healthy school environment is an essential prerequisite to the provision of high quality educational experiences for our students.

Pre-assessment of strengths and needs has taken place and will now be followed by goal setting and action planning. Our completed plan will be submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education in September of 2006. 🍷

Westy Winners for Hurricane Relief Efforts

The Westmont Hilltop School District students and faculty have been extremely successful in their efforts to raise money for victims of Hurricanes

Katrina and Rita. All three buildings had fundraising activities running through September and October. A list of these activities to date follows, by building.

Elementary:

"Kids for Katrina" Fund
Autumn Wreath Raffle
Family Bingo Night
School Carnival—(a portion of proceeds)
"Laps for Little Lives"
Lemonade Stand (operated by 2 students) during the October 17 In-service Day

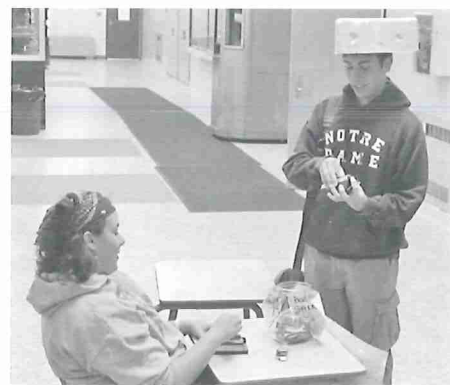
Middle School:

"Hat" Days
Faculty Dress Down Days
Spirit Beads Sale
Louisiana Clams Sale



High School:

Art Club Candy Bar Sale
"Hat" Days
Football and Lunch Collections
Health Aids and School Supplies Collection
NHS Initiatives
Key Club Sponsorships



Leah Bambino receives a hurricane relief contribution from Jason Catanese.

To date, our district has raised close to \$4000.00 in relief for the hurricane victims.

Thank you, Hilltoppers!

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Sources of Funding

During the 2005-2006 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	2005-2006
Title I, Part A	\$92,449	\$85,891	\$84,460
Title II, Part A, Class Size Reduction	\$44,534	\$43,272	\$42,948
Title II, Part D, Technology	\$2,175	\$2,028	\$1,407
Title V, Part A, Innovative Programs	\$6,755	\$4,822	\$3,226
Safe and Drug-Free Schools Grant	\$5,126	\$5,518	\$5,576

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, especially in the efforts to reduce bullying and harassment situations and compensation for tutoring services for students who may be academically at risk.

We will receive funding through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in the amount of \$193,418 that has allowed us to retain a new special education teacher and aides for a second year.

Post Act 72 Decision Update

The implications and complications of Act 72 were thoroughly studied during the spring of 2005 as they applied specifically to our district. This information was reviewed at a public meeting and published on the district website to invite public input and comment. Finally, a decision against opting into the provisions of Act 72 was made in the best interests of the district.

Due to the current funding formula, which determines the amount of state and federal aid that a school district receives, our district receives less than 30% of its total funding from the state and less than 1% from federal sources. The county average is 62% for state funding and 4.3% from federal sources. Our district receives less than any other school district in the county.

As a result, the local tax effort continues to be a challenge for our community. Despite this, a study of fiscal

management conducted by a private consultant reveals that our district has averaged far less in tax increases than the Act 72 index would have allowed during the course of the past five years.

The state recently certified the allowable index for Act 72 purposes. The base increase allowed for 2006-2007 is 3.9%. Under Act 72, our district would be allowed to increase real estate taxes by 4.6% or 3.1 mills (the equivalent of 6.2 mills under the previous 50% assessment ratio).

Fortunately, we will not be constrained by the negative aspects of Act 72, and we will continue to make every effort to manage our budgets well under the allowable index. Meanwhile, our district continues to advocate for meaningful tax reform that is fair and equitable for our district as well as for all school districts throughout the Commonwealth.

Hurricane Relief Efforts

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National Honor Society

The National Honor Society hosted a spaghetti dinner as a fundraiser for Hurricane Katrina Relief, contributing \$1,000 to the effort. Under the direction of Mrs. Karen McNair, everyone did more than they were asked to do and, in the process, learned about community service, goal-directed action, organizational details, and the power of collaborative initiative.



Captain Heinzman of the Salvation Army accepts hurricane relief funds.

Salvation Army Check Presentation

On November 9 students from Westmont Hilltop Middle School and High School presented \$3200.00 to the Salvation Army in support of the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The students from each building had various fundraising events in September and October to pool together the grand total, including at the High School: an Art Club candy bar sale, "hat" days, collections taken up at football games and during student lunches, and money containers in homerooms. At the Middle School, the service group Westy's Angels spearheaded the efforts including: "hat" days, faculty dress down days, a Louisiana Clams Sale, and a Spirit Beads Sale.

Salvation Army Wish List Service

The Middle School's Westy's Angels helped make Christmas a little brighter for over 1,200 children as well as senior citizens through their efforts during the annual Salvation Army Wish List for Christmas Program.

Kids for Katrina

The website of Bayou Woods Elementary School in Louisiana displayed this banner headline in December:

"Santa Claus came early at Bayou Woods Elementary. The students and faculty of Westmont Hilltop Elementary School, Johnstown, PA, adopted Bayou Woods Elementary and their families. An eighteen wheeler filled with boxes of gifts for Christmas was delivered to families who suffered losses due to Katrina."

The eighteen wheeler was packed with gifts for the community of Bayou Woods Elementary from the Westmont Hilltop community. The initiative was spearheaded by elementary school teachers Mrs. Joselle Skelley and Mrs. Heather Thomas with the support of Principal Peggy McDonald. The three visited Bayou Woods to help with the distribution of the gifts as they arrived and were hosted by the administration of Bayou Woods who provided an historical perspective and tours of the area that had been ravaged by the storm. Our educators believe that as a result of the experience, they brought back far more than they gave, and they shared the following reflections upon their return:

"A few things have made an everlasting impression. The first is how truly generous and caring people can be. No matter where we went or who we approached about making a donation to help the hurricane victims, the response was overwhelming. Our Westmont Hilltop families, William Polacek and Johnstown Welding and Fabrication employees, and the community at large, opened their hearts to provide clothing, bedding, toys, etc. to these families. And once people contributed, amazingly, they continued to ask, 'What else can I do?'"

Another thing that touched my heart was how many parents thanked US for the opportunity to help their children understand what it means to give to others. They kept saying that this was a wonderful experience for their children. I think it helped us all to realize that even on our worst days, we are all very blessed.

The last, and most memorable experience, was the thankfulness and spirit of the families we helped. We all, and I mean everyone who contributed to this effort, received many, many heartfelt thanks and blessings from the families."

Mrs. Joselle Skelley

"I will forever recall what a teacher at Bayou Woods said to me when I shared that feeling with her. She said, 'You roll with the punches. Blessings will continue for us in life; we may just have to look harder for them.'"

Mrs. Heather Thomas

"Our efforts were a mere ripple in the pond of need. We cannot forget our new friends. They will need our support into the distant future. Each person's response to our boxes was so personal and sincere... personally witnessing the reception of their gifts from us brought the reality of their desperation to a deeper level. When people are so overcome... with our efforts to bring a glimmer of hope into their lives that they cannot find words to express appreciation, then we know that we've accomplished some good."

Mrs. Peggy McDonald

Walking Club

During the 2004-2005 school year, elementary school students participated in the Feelin' Good Mileage Club. Each week, the children walked at least one quarter mile, and school wide results were posted on a large map of the United States. During warm weather, the students walked outside and during the winter months they walked indoors. For every five miles posted, the students received a small token in the shape of a foot. These were collected and added to a bracelet, which was worn with great pride! Certificates of achievement were also distributed at the end of the school year. By June, over 10,000 miles had been logged!

The Feelin' Good Mileage Club is up and running (no pun intended!) again this year. Incentives continue to be offered for every five miles posted. The intent of the club is to foster a healthy lifestyle in our students and staff.

Making High School Count

On Wednesday, September 21, 2005, Westmont Hilltop High School hosted the nationally acclaimed "Making High School Count" assembly for grade nine students. As ninth grade students begin their journey through four years of high school, this assembly is designed to provide skills and information in order to plan effectively, establish academic goals, and strive toward a future lined with success.



Students at "Making High School Count"

Westmont Hilltop is proud to host this dynamic presentation. The "Making High School Count" program has received praise from educators across the nation. Parents have found it to be helpful in assisting students to recognize their individual potential for success. "Making High School Count" offers advice on topics that are integral to optimizing the high school experience such as:

- The importance of grades and ways to improve them
- What colleges, the military or employers look for
- How to identify the many available options for the future
- Common freshmen mistakes and how to prevent them
- Ways to create a personal plan for success
- The importance of extracurricular activities and employment

The "Making High School Count" program is offered to schools at no cost thanks to the program's corporate partners such as FastWeb, PricewaterhouseCoopers and NRCCUA.

If you would like to learn more about this program, you may also visit the Making It Count Web site at www.makingitcount.com.

Jeopardy Celebrity



Debbie Chuba

Guidance counselors keep us out of *Jeopardy*... although, on rare occasions, one could take us into *Jeopardy*! Our very own Debbie Chuba is a case in point.

On December 20 of this school year, Debbie Chuba appeared on *Jeopardy* for an impressive performance that made us all proud. The magnitude of this accomplishment is obvious when we realize that in order to enter the selection process for *Jeopardy*, contestants must first pass a test. The test is a 50-question written test projected on a screen. Potential contestants have 8 seconds to answer each question on this extremely challenging test. After that, all contestants who did not pass the test are dismissed from the room, and those who pass play a mock round of *Jeopardy* as an additional screening procedure.

Of the 24,000 people tested each year only 400 are selected for the show. Of 67

people who took the test in Pittsburgh last October, only four people passed (three others and Miss Chuba). Even when a potential candidate passes the test, there is no guarantee that he or she will be on the show. For example, of the four who were referenced above, only 2 have been on the show!

Debbie amassed over 17,000 points in the televised show, finishing second. She didn't miss a single question – even in *Final Jeopardy*! She made all of us in the Westmont Hilltop community proud. As one former student wrote:

Dear Miss Chuba,

I was channel surfing last night and couldn't believe my eyes or ears! I was a student of yours in 1976/1977. You looked fantastic and made me proud to be a Hilltopper!! I am quite certain the entire district and community is also quite proud of you and your performance. I don't get back to Johnstown/Westmont as often as I would like (my parents still reside in Westmont) - so seeing you brought back some nice memories.

Mark Kuperstock

Senior Citizen Appreciation Luncheon

The annual Senior Citizen Appreciation Luncheon was held on November 18th, 2005 at the Westmont Hilltop High School cafeteria. Approximately 300 senior citizens enjoyed a delicious turkey dinner provided by Metz and Associates, the district's food service provider. Entertainment for the event was provided by a wide range of Westmont Hilltop students.

Guests were welcomed in the WHHS auditorium by Dr. Susan Anderson, District Superintendent; Mitch Azar, School Board President; and Jeff Howanek, Key Club President. Grade 4 students from Westmont Hilltop Elementary School and Grade 8 students from the Westmont Hilltop Middle

School sang several musical selections. Grade 4 teachers collaborated with music teacher Mr. Shawn Miller in preparation for this performance.

Both the High School Orchestra and High School Chamber Singers provided musical entertainment under the direction of Mrs. Denise Cunningham and Ms. Beth Good, respectively. Immediately after the program, the senior citizens were invited to the cafeteria and LGI for the luncheon. Service was provided by many WHHS student volunteers. During lunch, entertainment was provided by John Livingston and the HS Musical Theatre Performance Lab under the direction of Beth Good.

Science Visit

Students in Mr. Callihan's 5th grade science class recently studied a unit on energy and matter. They became so interested and had so many questions that a local expert was asked to help. Mrs. Terndrup, the learning enrichment teacher for fifth and sixth grade, invited Mr. Douglas Atterbury, an engineer at CTC, to visit the classroom. The students prepared their questions in advance of Mr. Atterbury's visit. These questions were on topics ranging from chemical reactions to the uses of silicon in today's products. Mr. Atterbury visited on two different days, which enabled Mr. Callihan and Mrs. Terndrup to highlight and review key points of the presentation between visits. 📎



Fifth grade science students researching energy and matter.



Band Achievements

Inadvertently omitted from the 2005 Hilltopper Highlights, were the considerable accomplishments of the Westmont Hilltop School District's Band. Therefore, we will take a moment in the winter newsletter to acknowledge some important achievements.

The following students successfully auditioned into the Cambria All County Honor Band:

Jason Dailey
T.J. Dailey
Rebecca Hirsch
Lauren Kesslak
Marty Erdley
Mike Gorzelsky
Anne Rummell
Logan Weigle
Luke Young
Michael Wozniak

Congratulations to the following students who successfully auditioned into the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association District 6 Honors Band:

Logan Weigle
Mike Wozniak
Rebecca Hirsch

Look for more information from the current school year to be included in the annual Hilltopper Highlights, the summer edition of our newsletter dedicated almost exclusively to student accomplishments. 📎

Third Grade Luau

As a culminating activity for a Language Arts unit, the entire third grade celebrated with a luau! Every third grader chose a research topic related to the Hawaiian Islands, wrote poetry about a Hawaiian topic, or participated in a reading theatre based on a different type

of literature related to the Aloha State. Each individual homeroom presented their programs to family members. The children also enjoyed some special Hawaiian traditions during a special celebration hosted by parent volunteers. 📎



Grade 3 students at the luau.

Mini-grant Recipient

Mr. Evan Cornell, Elementary and Middle School Librarian, learned recently that he has received a mini-grant from the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation. Mr. Cornell will use the money received from the grant to purchase materials to use for a fourth grade project. The fourth graders will complete research on the five largest cities in the United States and compare them with Johnstown. They will create city collages and maps highlighting different cultures in the various communities. The finished maps and collages will be displayed in the library where parents will be invited in to view them. 📎



Mr. Evan Cornell

The Stanley Cup

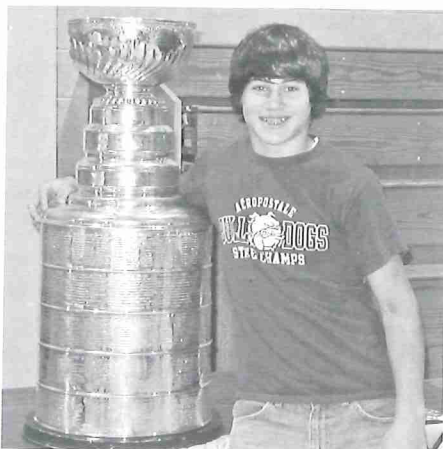
The most valued prize in hockey made an appearance in the Westmont Hilltop School District this fall. Transported in its own mobile cart, under lock and key, and surrounded by protective felt, the trophy was guarded by Mike Bolt, the personal "Cup Keeper" for this priceless artifact.

Since its donation in 1893 by Lord Stanley of Preston, then governor of Canada, the cup has symbolized hockey supremacy while gathering a series of amazing adventure stories in its travels. For example, in 1961, the cup was on display in the lobby of Chicago Stadium when a Montreal fan smashed its case and tried to abscond with it. His reason, which he revealed when his escape was foiled, was that as a native of Montreal he thought it should be returned to its rightful home, which he deemed to be Montreal!

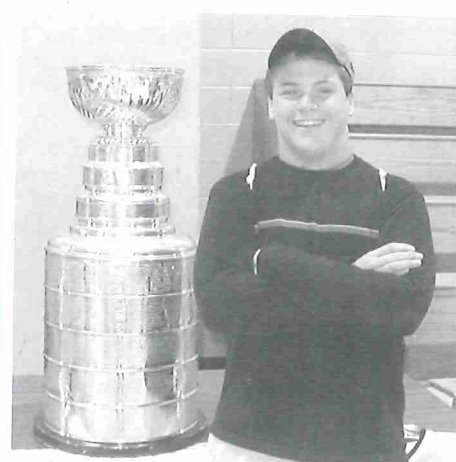
The original cup is displayed in a former bank vault in the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto, having been replaced by an exact replica in 1967 in an effort to preserve the original. The Stanley Cup championship brings with it the opportunity for all the team's players to "host" the Cup for one day. Preservation efforts have been needed because during its long history, the cup has been displayed at numerous victory parties, lost, abandoned, used to store letters and bills, and stolen from the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1970! The Johnstown Chiefs' parent club, the Tampa Bay Lightning, was the 2004 winner of the Stanley Cup. That affiliation with Tampa Bay initiated a request by the East Coast Hockey League (ECHL) for a tour of all of the league's cities, beginning in Johnstown.

Thanks to the Chiefs for their invitation to view hockey's greatest prize. The next time you watch a National Hockey League Championship that ends with the winning team skating a victory round with the Stanley Cup held high over their heads, remember that the trophy's adventures have a long history, and that history includes an historic appearance on our very own Hilltop! 🍷

Students Pose With Hockey's Greatest Prize



David McKolosky



Wesley Coolbaugh

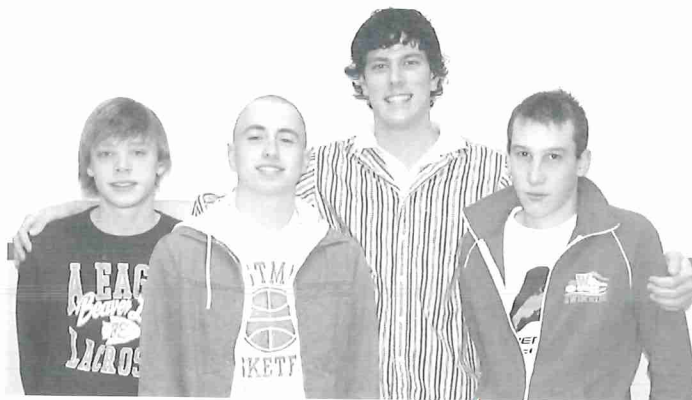
Swim Team

The high school swim team kicked off the new season with dinner at the high school cafeteria on November 13, 2005. Approximately 50 swimmers

and their parents were treated to pizza, salad, and dessert, while their coaches discussed plans for the team. Swimmers were also fitted for suits. Westmont's

first meet of the season kicked off on December 5, 2005 against Hollidaysburg at UPJ at 6:45.

The 2005 Athletic Award recipient of the Outstanding Boys' Swimmer Award was David Mancinelli, and the team pictured at left won the



Boys' Championship Swim Team of 2005 (pictured from left to right) Kelly Dorian, Lucas Staib, Kieran Layton, and David Mancinelli

District Championship in the 400 Yard Freestyle Relay. The events of the season now in progress will be reported in the Hilltopper Highlights of 2006. 🍷

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. 🍷

Westmont Hilltop School District Board Of Education

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District Administrative Staff 2005-2006

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Mr. Steven D. McGee, Director of Education & Student Support Services
Mr. Gregory T. Sanford, Business Manager

Building Administrative Staff 2005-2006

Mrs. Margaret McDonald, Elementary Principal
Mrs. Carole Kakabar, Middle School Principal
Mrs. Nicole Kuzmiak, Middle School Assistant Principal
Mr. William Marshall, High School Principal
Mr. Matthew Thomas, High School Assistant Principal

Administrative Offices

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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 American Disabilities Act of 1992.



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School Cancellations Will be Posted on the Web

Visit the main web page of the district at www.whsd.org 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 resources. Inclement weather conditions forced a cancellation of school on Friday, December 9. This day will be made up on Friday, May 26. In the event of additional school cancellations, three more snow days have been designated in advance and will be taken in this order if needed: February 20, April 13 and April 17. 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 operate on 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 Westmont Hilltop community.

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