



West Allegheny Area Schools

The West Allegheny School District (WASD) serves approximately 3,300 students in Imperial, Pennsylvania, right outside of Pittsburgh. This Lighthouse System consists of one high school, one middle school, and three elementary schools. While this district technically provides K-12 education, its vision is to encompass a model that serves learners from grades K14/16. This vision emphasizes the need to make certain every student is college and career ready with all students having a viable post-secondary plan upon graduation. To support students' success in their selected post-secondary endeavors, the district strives to ensure that no student graduates with a need for remediation. It uses a robust portfolio system involving college and career programming aligned with its Early College in High School Academy (ECIHS), helping to actualize this vision and transforming education across the system in the process.

To lay the groundwork for this ambitious commitment to the post-secondary success of all its learners, WASD is committed to an education that addresses the Whole Learner. No student is marginalized in this future-driven organization. The initial process of transforming the district to achieve these ambitious goals included implementation of the following: (1) full-day kindergarten to ensure equitable access to early learning for all; (2) new standards for mathematics and literacy, including a sustained commitment to alignment; (3) revision of middle school offerings to eliminate tracking and enhance rigor for all learners; (4) a partnership and grant opportunity with the National Math and Science Initiative to expand Advanced Placement coursework for underserved students (including 23 course offerings); (5) a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to provide early and effective interventions; (6) a transition plan to wrap academic and social-emotional supports around students as they transition across grade levels; (7) a K-12 vertically aligned plan to address Career, Education, and Work Standards (using a panel representing counselors, teachers, principals, parents, and community stakeholders); and (8) student-parent advisory groups to enhance shared decision-making and avenues to elicit stakeholder feedback.

A key component of the system's commitment to students' post-secondary educational success involves its Early College in High School Academy Program. Established in 2018, ECIHS involves partnerships with regional institutions of higher education committed to removing barriers for students. The program provides unparalleled opportunities for learners to gain an early start on their post-secondary plans and position them for persistence to degree completion. Offering 23 programs and 171 college-level courses to students while in high school, the program offers options for students to earn certificates, associate degrees, and credits toward Bachelor's Degrees by the time they graduate from WASD. Partners include the Community College of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh Technical College, Robert Morris University, and the Community College of Beaver County.

In addition to the rich range of options available to students, support services and programs are also extensive in WASD. These include: a Study Skills course to provide individualized support to students during the school day; ECIHS courses differentiated to provide pacing that meets the educational

needs of students with learning disabilities; student access to tutoring sessions at the higher education institutions via Zoom; an additional high school counselor to ensure smaller caseloads and reinforce connections to a career pathway and the college application process; a partnership with Family Links to provide therapists at the high school; professional development and mentoring partnerships for WASD faculty to support their professional growth and capacity to differentiate learning to serve all students at a high level for individual success; and a robust freshman transition plan to support incoming students in adjusting to the pace, expectations, and demands encountered in a rigorous high school setting.

WASD district leaders state: “West Allegheny School District believes that a K-14/16 model provides students with the skills to persist beyond high school as they enter the workforce, postsecondary training, or college without the need for remediation. The journey the district has taken to redefine college and career readiness and to build a seamless academic program that is vertically aligned and connects every student with a viable career and/or college pathway has been both challenging and rewarding.”