# Westport Community Schools


# Educational Plan

July 2016

*"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."*

— Benjamin Franklin

Ann Marie Dargon, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools
17 Main Road
Westport, MA 02790
508.636.1140
adargon@westportschools.org

Westport Middle School
Module 3: Preliminary Design Program
1.2 Educational Program

Outline for Educational Program

A. Introduction
    - Community Profile
    - Westport Community Schools Vision and Mission
    - Educational Vision
B. Grade and School Configuration
C. Class Size Policies
D. School Scheduling Method
E. Current Spatial and Facility Deficiencies which impact Program
F. Teaching Methodology and Structure
G. Teacher Planning, Collaboration, Student Report, and Room Assignments
H. Lunch Program and Student Dining
I. Technology and Security
J. Music
K. Art
L. Physical Education and Health
M. Special Education
N. Media, Vocations and Technology
O. Transportation Policies
P. Functional and Spatial Relationships and Key Adjacencies

Community Profile

The Town of Westport, in Bristol County, is bordered on the north and west by Fall River, on the east by Dartmouth, on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the west by Tiverton and Little Compton, Rhode Island and Fall River, MA. It is about 8 miles from downtown Fall River, 7.5 miles from New Bedford, 54 miles from Boston, and 26 miles from Providence, Rhode Island.

Westport's location has affected its growth in several ways. First, its relatively short distance to the Boston, Providence, Fall River and New Bedford job markets made it attractive for families. Second, the town's exceptional location along the coasts (moderate climate and good soils) and its history of agriculture have resulted in the survival of its rural character. Third, the town's geology has resulted in exceptional surface water resources which include two branches of the Westport River, the coastline, several ponds, many wetlands and a tidal shoreline of 47.4 miles. Finally, the town's socio-economic character is very mixed. There are many old families in Westport and many newcomers. The town has traditionally provided a range of home types for the people of the region seeking a rural setting.

Westport has its own school system. There are three schools: Alice A. Macomber School, which provides pre-school (pre-kindergarten), kindergarten, first grade, and second grade; Westport Elementary School, near the Head of Westport, which serves grades 3-6; and Westport High School, which serves grades 7-12. In September 2015, the Westport Middle School was closed due to PCB contamination. The grade 7-8 students from the Westport Middle School were relocated to the High School and the 6th grade students to the Westport Elementary School.

## Vision:

Westport Community Schools is an exemplary 21st Century learning community whose graduates are empowered through an engaging, inspiring and personalized curriculum to meet the challenges of a global, complex, and changing world.

## Mission:

Westport Community Schools' mission is to ensure that our children achieve academic and personal excellence, become lifelong learners and responsible, productive and engaged citizens of the world.

## Theory of Action

If we provide a safe learning environment, develop, coordinate and implement a rigorous curriculum through quality instruction, and create an environment where educational innovation and best practices are valued, practiced and evaluated, then our students will be prepared for college and career readiness.

**Organizational Values** ~ The Westport Community Schools lives by the following values:

**Pride** – We will be passionate champions for the Westport Community Schools

**Integrity** – We will be sincere in our adherence to ethical principles and do what is in the best interest of all we serve.

**Respect** – We will demonstrate an appreciation for the value of all. We will foster an environment that is safe and nurturing for students and staff.

**Responsibility** – We will take ownership for following through with our mission. We will expect staff, parents, students and community members to be accountable for their contribution to the educational process.

**Achievement** – We will continually improve.

**Communication** – We will seek the input of all our stakeholders; sharing information openly and honestly and expect the same of all stakeholders.

## Educational Vision

Our goal in modernizing and reorganizing our middle/high school is to provide our students with better preparation for their pursuits after high school graduation including college, other forms of continuing education, and career. With this background, it is expected that every student will have the ability to lead a meaningful and productive life, which includes earning a wage sufficient to maintain the life s/he chooses and having the potential for career advancement and the ability to be an active and informed citizen.

## Grade and School Configuration

Westport Community Schools provides educational programs for students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12. As of October 2015, there were 1527 students enrolled in the district. The enrollment was as follows:

Macomber School
PreK - 64
Kindergarten - 111
Grade One - 120
Grade Two – 111

There are three full-time preschool teachers and five teachers in grades, K-2.
Westport Elementary School
Grade Three - 124
Grade Four - 147
Grade Five - 115

Grade Six – 127

There are six teachers at each grade level at the Westport Elementary School.

Junior/Senior High School
Grade Seven - 134
Grade Eight -128
Grade Nine - 108
Grade Ten - 70
Grade Eleven -91
Grade Twelve -77

The MSBA has authorized the Town of Westport to complete a feasibility study for the renovation/expansion or new construction of a Westport Middle School that would accommodate a population of 505 students for grades 5-8. An enrollment of grades 5 -12 would accommodate 860 students.

**Class Size Policies**

In seeking a quality education for all students, the Westport School Committee and the Westport Federation of Teachers recognize that class size is an important factor. Whenever possible, the School Committee and Federation will develop strategies to align student-teacher ratios with best practice, research, and knowledge. We continuously monitor class size at all levels. Starting at the middle level through high school, student/parent choice or course selection due to the availability of varied studies dictates oftentimes class size. Varied studies would include accelerated pathways, music, world languages and elective studies beginning in the middle school but more substantial at the high school level. There is no School Committee Class Size Policy.

**School Scheduling Method**

The Westport Middle School operates on a five day rotating schedule of six 52 minute classes. Students are required to take four core courses in English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies along with two exploratory classes per day in Physical Education, Art, Band, Chorus, Spanish 1, General Music, Boat Building, Film-making, Master Writing class and Health. Each course has one day per week when it is offered as a double period. Therefore, students take 312 minutes of each course per week for 180 days of school. Class sizes average 24-26, never going over 30 students per section.

Westport High School utilizes a four by four semester block schedule. Students enroll in four classes each term for a total of forty credits over the course of one year. Westport High School follows the Mass Core Program of Studies. (See School Profile in Appendix)

**Current Spatial and Facility Deficiencies which impact Program**

The existing 1954 high school building has served the Town for almost 62 years. Over time, the Custodial and Maintenance staff has been very attentive to the building's operational needs. It is highly commendable that the maintenance of this building has allowed for it to serve the District well beyond its designed life expectancy; the building's poor physical condition, undersized program areas, lack of specialized program space, and outdated organization and layout prohibits the delivery of a 21st Century educational program. The academic classrooms, academic programs, and academic support spaces are not arranged to facilitate efficient functionality of the school. Most piping and plumbing fixtures are at least 50-years-old, with some components dating back to original construction. The original boiler is operational, but in poor overall condition. The electrical service is undersized and original with minimal upgrades and repairs over the lifespan of the school. Classroom lighting was updated, but is outdated and inefficient by today's standards. Despite its three-story height, one floor is below grade. Significant amounts of asbestos remain inherent in the building construction, although appropriate steps have been taken to contain any potential exposure. Many non-traditional spaces such as storage spaces and basement areas are utilized for maintenance staff and instructional spaces. Adequate meeting space for faculty, staff, and parents is non-existent. All existing classrooms are significantly undersized. The cafeteria and kitchen are undersized. The available physical education space is well below MSBA recommendations and guidelines. The boys' and girls' restrooms and locker rooms are antiquated with exposed piping, deteriorated plaster ceilings and walls, exposed water valve controls, and inadequate temperature mixing controls. Lavatory and sink counters do not meet the needs for the student population in the boys' and girls' locker rooms. Perhaps most importantly, the compromised functionality mentioned above does not support a modern 21st Century educational program. Undersized classrooms are stacked along corridors without the necessary small and large group instructional spaces to support hands-on project based learning. The cafeteria is undersized and isolated from integration with other key academic areas. Critical spaces for teacher planning, collaboration, and work are non-existent. There are no technology application labs (maker/builder space), with only one grossly undersized classroom having been converted to a "Computer" lab. Although grade levels strive to operate as teams, the building's physical organization does not allow classrooms to be clustered in an organized fashion and does not provide the necessary support spaces. Special Education program space is not appropriately integrated with the remaining educational space, and appropriately sized and located resource and inclusion rooms are non-existent. Adequate meeting space for faculty, parents, and staff is virtually non-existent, as the staff struggles to integrate parents into this school without any meeting space for conferences, collaboration, or discussions. There are limited spaces for art and music instruction, with only one small classroom having been converted to serve as a makeshift art room.

The goal will be to plan a newly reorganized and educationally appropriate school which fosters connections in academics and the arts for students, parents, and Westport community members. As students journey through their secondary school years, they are experiencing significant physical, social, and emotional growth. In order to maximize their education and care, the facilities need to be appropriately reflective of our commitment to them.

**Teaching Methodology and Structure**

Instruction in the Westport Community Schools is based on the practices of backwards design as advocated by Wiggins and McTighe in their Understanding by Design research and teaching/learning paradigm. Units of instruction based on the Massachusetts State Frameworks in all disciplines are mapped PreK-12 and a variety of learning experiences and assessments (DDM's: formative and summative) are based on what students should know, understand, be able to do, and transfer as indicated in the maps. Various student-centered instructional strategies are used to meet the needs of all learners, most notably flexible grouping and problem-based learning. We have deliberately infused the principles of engineering design and inquiry-based learning into many of our learning activities to ensure engagement and relevance for 21st century learners as evidenced by STEM classes at the elementary level, our Boat Building course at the middle school and our Senior projects at the high school. Included in learning activities are opportunities for our students to learn and apply the habits of mind and skills needed for working in teams, persisting, and becoming self-reflective life-long learners.

Core instruction is provided through teams of four teachers, each responsible for one subject. Teaching teams meet weekly to discuss student achievement. Westport Middle School has five departments in English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies and exploratory. These teaching departments also meet once per week to develop curriculum mapping and plan instruction.

To successfully be promoted to the next grade level students must achieve a passing grade (above 65) in a minimum of three out of four core subjects. Students who do not pass two or more courses in 6$^{th}$ and 7$^{th}$ grade are provided with the opportunity to attend summer school to pass and be promoted to the next grade level. Students in grade 8 who are not successful in passing three out of the four courses can attend a program at Bristol Community College in conjunction with the Westport High School. Upon successful completion they are allowed to progress to 9$^{th}$ grade.

To ensure the opportunity for success with students at Westport Middle School, intervention programs are available in reading, writing and math. These intervention groups are done with no more than 5 students, two to three times per week for 52 minutes. For the achievement of students with more severe learning disabilities we provide a resource room for smaller, more intense instruction in all core subjects as well as a substantially separate room. Language based classes are also offered at each grade level with a maximum of 18 students. Student Success

Plans are developed for any student that demonstrates insufficient progress on the MCAS testing. This is also how placement into small grouping intervention is done.

Westport Middle School provides enhancement programs for students who excel in Mathematics. An accelerated math program for grade 7 is offered and Algebra 1 is offered to grade 8 students with high achievement on testing.

Several community collaborations are set up for the Middle School Students. Successful partnerships are in place with the Westport police and fire departments, Council on Aging, Westport Watershed Alliance, Westport Conservation Society, the local Veteran's Association, the Westport Education Foundation, and the local supermarket.

Westport Middle School is also a member of the National Junior Honor Society. Student members volunteer for service hours at local soup kitchens, organize several fund raisers for donations, and assist at an organization called Gifts to Give to help provide resources to children in need.

*Reading*: The reading curriculum is based on the standards outlined in the MA Curriculum Frameworks for ELA and Literacy. Both system-wide and site-based professional development focuses on the skills and concepts for reading fluency, comprehension, and the analysis of complex text. Westport Middle School teachers utilize novels, trade books, anthologies, periodicals, and eBooks for instructional purposes. Text selections range from a common novel to teacher selected articles, author studies, and independent reading. Teachers assess comprehension and fluency through tests and quizzes, book reports, and sample MCAS open response questions. English Language Arts: Literacy standards for writing, grammar, and vocabulary are also directly aligned to the MA Curriculum Frameworks for ELA and Literacy. Language Arts and Reading teachers plan instruction around common themes, providing students with a strong connection between what they are reading and writing about in class. Every middle school language arts teacher uses a common resource aligned to the new state standards to develop lessons and assessments that support the theme or unit. The writing and language standards from the Common Core drive the planning of instruction, assignments and assessments.

*Mathematics*: The middle school math curriculum is aligned to the 2011 MA Curriculum Framework. Teachers follow a common pacing and alignment guide to plan their trimester and year-long learning goals for students. Each classroom is equipped with materials and resources from a common math program: GoMath or Big Ideas in Mathematics. Teachers and students have access to textbooks, as well as online digital resources and assessments. Every math classroom is equipped with a computer, projector, and interactive whiteboard for interactive whole class lessons.

*Science:* Westport's science teachers develop and implement units, projects, and assessments based on the current science, technology, and engineering state standards. While each grade level has a textbook aligned to specific topics at each grade level, much of the science curriculum is developed from best practices highlighted in the National Science Teachers Association professional resource online library and the Next Generation Science Standards. Hands-on

activities, small group collaborative projects, and lab experiments drive the daily curriculum. The use of video clips, online demonstrations, and media-rich presentations are growing in popularity in middle school classrooms.

*Social Studies*: The curriculum is based on the current History and Social Science standards outlined in the MA Curriculum Frameworks. Geography, ancient civilizations, and the American Revolution are major themes highlighted throughout middle school. Primary sources, periodicals, virtual tours, field trips, web-based research, and teacher-created lessons all contribute to the design and implementation of the social studies curriculum. In both system and site-based professional development, teachers share best practice and supplemental resources. The social studies teacher is often asked to participate in the design of interdisciplinary units that connect history to current events, and provide students the opportunity to write persuasive essays or support a social commentary on community, state, or global issues.

Planning and Collaboration Grades 6-8: The school utilizes a cluster system with approximately 100 students in each of the grades. Grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 are taught by a team of subject area teachers, one each from Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and English Language Arts. Middle school teachers use weekly common prep periods to plan interdisciplinary units, grade-level projects, and community service events. Both vertically and as grade-level teams, teachers meet to analyze assessment data, examine student work, and review assessment results. Vertical meetings typically take place on early release days in the library media center, while grade-level teams meet during common prep time. These meetings are held in whatever space they can find at the time.

In order to earn a WHS diploma, students must successfully complete 150 credits. Students in grades 9 and 10 may select courses from two levels: college preparatory or honors. Students in grades 11 and 12 may select course from three levels: college preparatory, honors, and Advanced Placement (when offered). All students are required to take four years of English (20 credits) mathematics (20 credits), and physical education (10 credits), three years of science (15 credits) and social studies (15 credits), one year of world language (5 credits), one computer class (2.5 credits), one government class (2.5 credits) , and one personal finance class (2.5 credits). Students select the remainder of their program from a variety of elective courses. The completion of a Senior Project is a graduation requirement for all students and is part of the English 12 curriculum.

Westport High School has established effective partnerships with two local colleges whereby juniors and seniors may enroll in one college course each semester at no cost to the student. For the past two summers, there has also been a partnership with one of the colleges which has provided career exploration and MCAS preparation for students identified as at-risk of failing the MCAS tests. Other partners include the Westport Watershed Alliance, the Westport Police Department, the Westport Education Foundation, South Coast Surgical Center, and Lees Market.

The commitment to support the success of all students is exemplified by the implementation of programs and resources including Integrated Math I and II, Finite Math, Introduction to Algebra, AP Calculus, Modern American Studies, Introduction to Science, History of Rock and Roll,

Digital Music Creation, and Reading Workshop. Programs have also been added to aid struggling students. These include Freshman Composition, Credit Recovery, Focus Classroom, Language-based Learning classes, and an Educational Proficiency Plan that is developed for students identified by their MCAS performance as needs improvement.

The ideal school design will separate students by grade level/department, allowing for controlled transitions; but will also make certain that some level of connectivity and collaboration across grade levels continues to exist, as discussed in the educational visioning sessions. Students will need to travel to a centralized location within the building for some non-core classes (physical education, specialized art or music, media production and distribution, health, technology education, child development, Stem, etc.). Space will be necessary for administrative offices and guidance as well as collaborative meeting space. Tiered support is an important focus in our schools; space will be necessary to continue Tiered 2 and 3 support.

In order to prepare students for successful adulthood in the 21st Century, we must work to engage all learning types in a blended learning environment where students have opportunities to learn in multiple styles but also are guided by teachers in completing self-directed inquiry and investigation through research and hands-on activities. Teachers are being asked to expand their roles beyond a "sage on the stage", and also become a "guide on the side", strategizing to encourage students to be self-motivated investigators who can problem-solve in the 21st Century in jobs that likely have not yet even been created. This expanded responsibility of educators to both deliver instructional content and also guide the student learner as an investigator is key to creating successful life-long learners and professionals. It is an approach which requires an energized and collaborative staff that understands the evolving social and educational demands of the 21st Century. The Westport Middle School already includes such a staff, and this group has been actively involved in identifying the strengths of the current middle school educational delivery and how these strengths can be reinforced through the creation of a well-organized educational environment with appropriate space for a variety of learning styles and activities. They have also identified the opportunities and goals which can provide a roadmap for how a new 21st Century middle school can help facilitate the necessary teaching, learning, research, and investigation. During the educational visioning sessions, the educators reviewed the physical (spatial) challenges of delivering a project-based or hands-on curriculum that supports self-directed investigation. These challenges include the limitations typically associated with a "Traditional classroom;" a space which was conceived during the industrial revolution and assumes that its primary function is to physically accommodate the appropriate number of student desks and provide a "Delivery area" for content and instruction from the teacher. This particular notion of a classroom fails to recognize the spatial requirements of hands-on student inquiry, investigation, and application. As a group of students begin to collaborate to design a building, build a boat, or a new computer application, the spatial limitations of the traditional classroom immediately impose restrictions on their ability to design, fabricate, create, explore, and document their ideas. Each team requires a spatial extension of the classroom that provides the spatial and functional amenities necessary to develop and present projects. This includes sufficient space to maintain "Works-in-progress" where student projects can evolve in phases over an extended period of time without the limitations associated with having to break down and store projects on a daily basis. Projects should be able to remain on display in a sort of "working classroom" which always exists in a works-in-progress mode. This allows student

work product to remain on exhibit for observation, study, and discussion; and promotes a collaborative environment where students and staff can be energized by their peer group. Each team neighborhood should include classrooms that wrap around a central "Hands-On Project Space" that serves multiple purposes. This Project Space shall be a clearly defined neighborhood space that is directly integrated into the classrooms and support areas. It cannot be an isolated space which is remote from the classrooms. It will be a Maker/Builder space that will serve as an application lab for each neighborhood, and will also help to support and promote social interaction, academic investigation, and student exhibit and presentation. It will meet the needs of extending the classroom environment as described above. The goal is to develop students who are self-motivated learner/explorers and therefore, such space should include provisions for project-based student inquiry including building, multi-media, research, presentation, and arts integration. It will allow learners the ability to develop large physical projects in an environment where it is critical to have appropriate space to spread out without the need to break down and store projects each period. It will allow small groups to create multimedia projects that are part of the academic instruction being developed in the classrooms, with a group of students capturing and preparing a video component of their project while their peers work in the classroom or small resource rooms on other aspects of the same project. It should allow individual students and groups of students to both present and exhibit their work. This Maker/Builder space should also include all necessary amenities to support STEAM delivery, as it allows students within the neighborhood to work actively on projects that include an integrated art/media/visualization component without the restriction of having to leave their team in order to gain access to the necessary tools and amenities. For purposes of the proposed space summary, the Hands-On Project Space (Maker/Builder space) will be created through the combination of separate program areas combined into a single contiguous area. These areas include the STEM Applications Lab Support identified within Core Academic, the Project Based Applications Lab identified in Vocations and Technology, and the SPED Project Applications Area identified within the Special Education portion of the Space Summary.

This approach was utilized because the space does exist to support each of these areas in the following way:

STEM - As previously identified herein, a traditional classroom does not provide sufficient space for the development of projects which integrate science, technology, engineering, math, art, and the humanities. For this reason, a small academic spatial allotment dedicated to the extension of each of the surrounding classroom areas seems appropriate for providing the necessary space.

Vocations and Technology – many of the projects that will be developed within the Maker/Builder space will include the application of hands-on tasks in what could be described as a 21st Century vocations and technology program. Students are no longer being taught how to build bird houses, but instead are utilizing graphic media, video production, and computer applications to enhance their academic STEM projects. This is the "Vocations and Technology" of the 21st Century. In some instances, staff that would traditionally be teaching in the vocations and technology program will be co-teaching within the academic neighborhoods to assists general classroom teachers in overseeing student projects.

SPED Project Applications – one of the goals of integrating the special education classrooms into the academic teams is to also give these students opportunities for hands-on project instruction at a pace which is appropriate to their developmental needs and skill set. By allotting a small amount of space to the special education program the goal would be to insure that there is sufficient area within the Maker/Builder space to allow these students to work either independently or as part of the general education group; with sufficient space to accommodate their specialized needs. The Maker/Builder space will be a scheduled space, but will not result in one of the other general classrooms being vacated during its use. It is an extension of the classroom space, and will be utilized simultaneously with one or more classrooms. This is the reason it must be located in direct proximity to the classrooms and must include transparency and visual connection to all classrooms. Currently proposed schedules and projects suggest that it will have a utilization rate equal to that of any of the general classrooms, as it acts to support one or more disciplines throughout each period of the day. The proposed building project would continue the current educational organization of combining grades 5 through 8 in a single middle school facility, as this has been a successful model for the Westport Middle School community and allows the staff and administration to continue advancing this success. Integrating special education services into the neighborhoods when practical will allow the Special Education teachers to become part of a co-teaching solution and to work collaboratively with the other teachers and teams in the neighborhood. Additionally, strategies which afford the opportunity to integrate these spaces with the classrooms of the team neighborhoods (like transparency and adjacency) should be explored as part of the building design solution. The desired approach to educational delivery includes a strategic composition of varying instructional practices in all classrooms that are research-based, collaborative, and evidence-based. Instruction must respond to varying student needs and learning styles. It should provide additional and unique support to students by collaboratively diagnosing any underlying issues, and by prescribing and implementing appropriate intervention strategies as a key component of the regular education program. Finally, 21st Century Skills and STEAM Instruction will be embedded into the curriculum and will include such skills as: self-directed inquiry; creative thinking and problem-solving; integrity, honesty, and respect; ethical decision-making; effective multi-modal communication; collaboration, leadership, teamwork, and innovation; and willingness to take risks as a path for learning and discovery.

It is expected that the current teaching methodology and structure continue in the future.

**Teacher Planning, Collaboration, Student Report, and Room Assignments**

Currently, our teachers do not have ample space for teacher planning and collaboration. Often they can be found sharing space in the Media Center while the students are also utilizing the space. It is our hope that all departments will have a collaborative staff room augmented with meeting space and teachers assigned a work space and desk. Classrooms and other instructional spaces will be assigned using scheduling software. The goal is to maximize the number of teachers who teach in the same room consistently; however, any given room may be used by another teacher during a prep or supervisory period. We expect to foster a collaborative culture

where teachers do not “own” their classroom, but for convenience, instruct in the same room each day.

**Lunch Program and Student Dining**

All Westport Community Schools are part of the National School Lunch Program. The current cafeteria holds approximately 260 students and accommodates the entire student body in a three 30-minute lunch period schedule that runs from 10:39 a.m.- 12:39 p.m. Approximately 39% of the students receive a free or reduced lunch. Our kitchen expects to offer a full range of healthy food choices prepared on site each day. There is no expectation to operate a district-wide central kitchen and only provide warming capabilities on site.

**Technology and Security**

As with all Westport Community Schools, safety and security is of the utmost importance. Students who feel safe and secure in their environment will be better prepared to take advantage of the educational opportunities presented by the school’s staff. At this time, Westport is not fully secure by current standards. The current intercom system is deteriorating and needs replacement, both in terms of wiring and the speakers. Hallways do not have working intercoms at this time. There is no school-wide access control system to initiate a lockdown of exterior doors or to initiate an audio lockdown message or automatically notify a monitoring system. There are no panic buttons directly linking to the Westport Police Department. There are no cameras internally or on the exterior of the school.

**Music**

The Westport Community Schools offers a comprehensive music program Kindergarten through their high school experience. As students’ progress through the middle years, more options for specific music interest is available to students including the ability to select a musical instrument or participate in a choral program. All middle school students are required to take Music, and then it is an elective starting in 9th grade. As student enter the high school more varied music opportunities spider out from initial opportunities at the middle school. The school has a music/performing arts program, with some of it taking place after school hours due to space limitations. Programs include: Orchestra, Chorus, Concert and Jazz Band. Instrumental lessons are also offered. There are no instrumental practice spaces.

Westport Community Schools provides an incredible opportunity for our students of all ages to participate and learn in the dramatic performing arts. Our elementary students in grades three and four are able to participate in an annual drama musical program. Well over one hundred third and fourth grade students participate in the annual event. Our middle and high school students have access to an annual drama performance as well.

## Art

The Westport Community Schools offers a comprehensive art program Kindergarten through 12th grade with instruction in all elements of art: line, shape, form and texture. The arts programs at Westport Junior/Senior High School consist of ceramics, drawing, painting, and modeling from introductory levels to Advanced Placement options. Currently there is just one Art room. Other classroom space must be utilized for classes.

## Physical Education and Health

All students have access to physical education at every level and our district has put forth a concerted effort to establish a wellness program for students elementary through high school. The Westport Community Schools School Committee acknowledges the direct correlation between health and academic success as indicated in research conducted by the Center for Disease Control. Therefore, we provide the necessary resources in nutrition, health and physical education, school based activities and food services to promote healthy lifestyles and maximize student performance. Westport offers a range physical education courses. Students participate in PE classes twice per week for all four years of their middle and high school career. Health Education is also offered. The range of course offerings requires a variety of spaces including typical classroom spaces, fitness spaces, dance/yoga spaces, weight training and at least a two-court gymnasium, locker rooms, and outdoor playfields among others. There is great community support for school sports as evidenced by the need for 800 seat bleachers in gym. The new project will also hopefully house boys' and girls' athletic programs including basketball and volleyball among others.

## Special Education

The Westport Community Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness. The Department of Student and Special Education Services facilitates full access to the general education curriculum and the school/community learning environment for every student based on student potential and identified special needs. The district's goal is to provide support services in the least restrictive environment which, for the majority of students, is the regular education classroom. Eligibility is reevaluated every three years and a review of current services is conducted annually. Teachers, special education providers, and parents/guardians/caregivers are integral members of the team process. Placement in special education is based on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) as written for each student identified as eligible within the IEP team process. The goal of the Special Education Department in Westport is that all students are educated in classrooms that meet their diverse learning needs, styles, and abilities.

Program space is severely limited in the special education programs. Many special education classrooms have been converted from other used rooms and lack appropriate equipment, space, and conditions for learning. For example, one special education space that was once a classroom, now serves as classroom, OT/PT space, life skills space, and community space.

Westport has a Substantially Separate Program for students with moderate to severe disabilities who are eligible to stay with us until they are 22 years of age. In all cases, both middle and high school strive to fully integrate special needs students into the fabric of the school culture, and it is the District's goal that any new construction reflects this expectation.

English Language Learners

The goal of our English Language Education Program is to provide students with instruction that is inclusive and honors the various language and cultures found within our student population. The Westport Community Schools has followed all federal and state laws and guidelines in developing the program, and continues to adhere to federal and state laws and guidelines in implementing the program. We offer Sheltered English Immersion, an inclusionary instructional program in which English Language Learners are placed in classes with native English speakers. Classroom teachers are trained to implement a variety of effective strategies to meet the unique needs of our English Language Learners. ELL students also benefit from direct instruction provided by a certified ESL teacher that is scheduled according to need and to ensure no instructional time in the SEI classroom is missed.

**Media, Vocations and Technology**

The Westport Junior/Senior High School building offers a myriad of technology challenges. Although the school community has worked hard to integrate new technologies within the classrooms, technology integration is severely limited due to the building's age. The most pressing challenges impeding progress in technology integration are:

• Westport has wall-mounted projectors and whiteboards, but these are dated and many are not interactive.

• Wiring for internet connectivity needs to be replaced with higher bandwidth capabilities and more wireless access points.

• Building design and construction materials are not conducive to adaptation or upgrades to facilitate technology use.

• Technology hardware is outdated and often not capable of wireless integration, even if the building infrastructure could support it.

•There is no possibility of one-to-one technology integration in the current environment.

The technology infrastructure is antiquated and does not meet the system-wide vision.

Proposed Technology: As computer technology was initially introduced into the educational environment, it was primarily viewed as a tool, a device of sorts, much like a calculator, pencil, or chalkboard. Teachers and students began utilizing the tool to assist in learning and instruction. So-called "technology rich" classrooms had lots of tools at their disposal…and if a district had lots of computers available, they were generally referred to as having "lots of technology." Classroom instruction did evolve somewhat as a result of these tools but there was no fundamental change in the overall approach to classroom instruction, as the teacher remained the focal point of the classroom, but now had to create time-consuming interactive and multimedia activities and presentations to justify the existence of the new tools, adding support to his or her lessons. The goal was to capture the attention of the student by utilizing the new technology tools, but there was little change in the overall strategy of instruction. After several decades of technology evolution, we now understand that it is not teaching with technology that affords the greatest advantage, but teaching through technology that truly defines the future. In this evolving approach, the teacher not only delivers content, but also acts as a learning catalyst, orchestrating and facilitating activities that spark defining moments for students, facilitating discovery and creation. The students must become learning investigators, acting as explorers (e.g., engineers, scientists, sociologists) and designers (e.g., architects, authors, artists, builders, composers). This shift can allow teachers to spend less time creating presentations and more time orchestrating powerful learning activities. Students and teachers can cover material with more depth and retention, and empowering these students as self-motivated investigators will give them more confidence, engagement, and an ability to validate each student's contribution to the class. As part of the visioning sessions, the staff, administrators, and consultants reviewed the expansion of the traditional three R's to include the equally critical four C's: critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Students of the 21st Century must continue to absorb a solid core curriculum, but their advanced success in secondary and postsecondary institutions, as well as in the workplace, will be highly contingent on their ability to master the four C's. Moreover, the evidence suggests that the effective application of these vital skills in a technology-infused life and workplace requires acquiring them in a technology-infused learning environment. This technology-infused environment is not about the device, but how it is utilized, calling for the placement of technology into the hands of students, and trusting them with broader and more progressive applications of such technology. The teacher cannot be the only holder of technology, as students must possess more access to technology than the teacher, and must be provided the freedom for thoughtful investigation and creation. They cannot be limited to a specific program, solution, or software application, but must be provided with as many resources as possible in order to achieve technology mastery. Instead of beginning a lesson by listening to a teacher describe or present samples or examples at the front of the classroom, the students can be allowed to utilize the available technology resources for inquiry. Technology-infused discovery activities, Internet research, virtual manipulatives, and multimedia resources can allow students to explore unanswered questions. They can be challenged to utilize the resources in

order to answer probing questions, learning to understand, analyze, and evaluate their research as they compile answers to the posed questions. Investigation and discovery activities will give students hands-on, real-world, problem-solving experience and ownership over their learning. It also will allow them to build on this knowledge base by bringing past investigations and observations into future lessons, debates, discussions, or other creation activities. This type of technology infusion and application will be inherent in each classroom, but it is particularly critical that the technology also flow into the associated maker/builder academic project labs; as these spaces will be highly connected to the classroom neighborhoods and will serve as an extension of the investigation which starts in the classroom. The goal is for these spaces to be highly flexible and serve many purposes. This ability for the students to move seamlessly from the classroom to the maker/builder space in developing, creating, building, exploring, presenting, collaborating, and investigating within a technology-infused environment is critical in their preparation as successful life-long learners and achievers. These maker/builder spaces are also often referred to as application labs as they will include amenities to support presentation, media and video production, robotics, interdisciplinary projects, and project-based learning. These flexible maker/builder spaces will also serve as a primary agent for incorporating art, engineering, science, math, and technology directly into the academic neighborhoods. This means that they will require all necessary functional amenities to allow such, including provisions for storage, wet areas, testing, and assembly. These creation and design activities provide students with the opportunity to develop creativity and problem-solving skills by displaying their mastery in profound, meaningful, and tangible ways. One of the most significant benefits of technology infusion in an appropriately designed maker/builder space is the ability of students to create their work and express themselves before a broader audience. Students have traditionally composed their work for an audience of one - the teacher. Utilizing technological resources to provide students with a broader peer-based audience results in students knowing that their work is worth seeing, worth reading, and worth doing for a much broader audience. This student work can come in many forms - class presentations, school news shows, school websites, film festivals, literary publications, online publishing, contests and competitions, and video/audio communication and feedback with/from other classes around the world. There will be no dedicated “Computer Lab” in the proposed new building, as the advancement in technology resources makes all technology applications available in almost any environment. Technology is available everywhere, and the concept of a dedicated lab being the only place for access is much outdated. The concept of teaching keyboarding or basic applications is also long gone as the typical student enters elementary school with a better understanding of basic applications and a more intuitive technology sense than most adults. Each classroom will be a “Technology Lab,” each maker/builder project space will be a “Technology Lab”, and almost every space in the building, including some outdoors areas, will meet this same level of technology infusion. Teacher collaboration areas will contain all of the necessary technology resources, and each staff member will have a dedicated mobile device. The entire building will obviously have wireless access, as learning spreads from each classroom, maker/builder space, resource room, inclusion room, planning room, collaboration space, and neighborhood into the media center and even the flexible socialization and dining areas. Each student will have direct access to technology on a

daily basis, with Chromebooks, handheld devices, and laptops being utilized to embrace 1:1 access for all students.

**Transportation Policies**

Westport Community Schools offers school bus transportation to all students who are residents of the school district and live more than 1.5 miles from their schools. Costs for transporting students in grades K- 6 are paid entirely by funds from the annual school budget. Students in grades 7th through 12th must purchase bus passes, which entitle them to transportation to and from school for the entire school year. The cost for students in grades 7th through 12th for a bus pass for the 2015-2016 school year was $225 per with a two-student cap per family. Westport Community Schools will only offer the FREE transportation waiver if the student(s) qualify for the free or reduced lunch program.

**Functional and Spatial Relationships and Key Adjacencies**

To sustain Westport's mission and goals, the facility should:

- support 21st century teaching and learning
- integrate technology in all areas of the building
- provide vibrant, flexible teaching and learning spaces
- facilitate student and teacher initiative and engagement
- ensure safety and security
- welcome the community and educational partners

Key to design will be flexible learning spaces for students and teachers to engage in both teacher-directed and student-directed learning.

To ensure the best learning opportunities for students, this project should include:

- Classrooms including 21st century science, technology and mathematics learning areas and labs
- Build "wing" or "pod" design allowing for close proximity of all STEM classrooms, another for the humanities, etc.
- Art and music classrooms designed for performance and collaboration; multiple display areas
- General presentation and seminar spaces
- Vocational space, such as horticulture, TV Studio, carpentry, culinary, and early childhood program facilities;
- Learning/meeting areas for alternative programming for special needs and at-risk students

- Collaborative faculty planning and working spaces
- Library/media center central to all content areas
  Library/media center supporting multi-media, flexible group space, and current research practices
- Auditorium including seating, lighting, sound, stage and storage spaces
  Our auditorium is utilized for public student performances and regular public meetings (Town Meeting, Community Forums, Graduation) - which heightens the building's Civic presence and ties school and students into larger Westport Community.
- Gymnasium including ADA compliant bleachers, alternative programming and wellness center
- The administration, including counseling staff, are easily accessible and welcoming to students and the public.

**Security and Visual Access Requirements**

The Westport Community Schools has established practices that ensure the highest level of safety and security for students and staff during the school day and for community use of our facilities after school hours. All doors are locked upon the commencement of school. Visitors must buzz at the front door of each school, buzz and visitors are monitored via closed video systems. If awareness is heightened due to a number of causes, individuals must verbally identify themselves and state their business.

In the past five years the Westport Schools have been upgraded to include electronic card access and internal camera monitoring of the front entrances to the schools. In addition, all schools in Westport have developed emergency response plans. It is hoped that the new school will have clearly-defined traffic patterns, entry/egress systems, lines of sight, cameras, and other features as recommended by both FEMA and MEMA. District personnel, architectural designers, and emergency experts will work together to ensure that all necessary safety and security features are included in the school renovation/construction.

**Appendix**

Town Report
High School Profile
Master Plan