



# DISTRICT PROFILE 2019-2020



*Fostering an environment of equity and opportunity.*



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# SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS



## JEFF CRAIG, Ed. D.

"I am proud to lead one of the most diverse school districts in the state of Illinois, where we believe that every student should have access to a rigorous, comprehensive education as well as opportunities to develop their talents and passions. We are proud of our rich history and "tradition of excellence," that continues to be defined by the good works of our students, faculty, and alumni."

## DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

- BRENT RABY, Ed. D. Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning
- ANGELA SMITH Assistant Superintendent of Operations
- MICHAEL P. SMITH, Ed. D. Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources
- RYAN ABRAHAMSON Director of Finance
- ANNA GONZALES Director of Community Affairs
- LYNN HEAD Director of Transportation
- JENNIFER HERMAN Director of Special Education
- MARIA LOZANO Director of English Learners
- JAMIE MAX, Ed. D. Director of Secondary Teaching & Learning
- MARTI NEHRING Director of Student Services
- DON RINGELESTEIN Director of Technology
- JEFF SCHILLER Director of Operations
- SARAH WADDELL, Ed. D. Director of Elementary Teaching & Learning
- ELIZABETH WENDEL Director of Assessment

## WHO WE ARE

West Aurora School District 129 is a unit school district located in southeastern Kane County, Illinois. District 129 is proud of its rich tradition of excellence, which dates back to 1868 when "West Side High School" first met on the third floor of Old Stone School. In 1870, the first graduating class was comprised of five members. Today, the West Aurora School District includes eighteen school buildings, serving over 12,000 students and employing 1,800 individuals, making the district the second largest employer in the city of Aurora. The high school campus now occupies an area of nearly a square half-mile and encompasses an athletic stadium, extensive playing fields, and courts. It also includes an arboretum-like collection of more than 200 trees. The academic offerings range from college prep to career education. Award-winning extracurricular activities include the arts, twenty-three sports, technology, and cultures. One of the greatest strengths of the district is the success with which it has embraced the diversity of the student body, thereby enriching the surrounding communities.

## FAST FACTS

73% Teachers with Master's Degree or Higher

55 National Board Certified Teachers

12,316 Total Student Enrollment

94% Student Attendance

20:1 Student/Teacher Ratio

## ACADEMICS CORE CONTENT AREAS

- Art
- English
- Health
- Mathematics
- Music
- Science
- Social Studies
- Physical Education
- World Languages

## OUR SCHOOLS

- 1 EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY
- 10 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
- 4 MIDDLE SCHOOLS
- 1 HIGH SCHOOL
- 1 SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOL
- 1 ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION ACADEMY
- 1 CENTER FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

## RECOGNITIONS

### Ranks #8

Among the Most Diverse School Districts in Illinois by Niche

### Ranks #149

Among the Most Diverse School Districts in America by Niche

### Ranks #53

Among the Best School Districts for Athletes in Illinois by Niche

### A1 Bond Rating from Standard & Poor's

## INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

- Advanced Placement Course Offerings
- Air Force Junior ROTC
- Connections Academy
- Dual Credit Course Offerings
- Early Learning Academy
- Elementary STEM
- Health Occupation Science Academy
- Parents as Teachers
- Pathways to Prosperity
- Project Lead the Way
- Spanish for Heritage Speakers
- SUCCESS Academy
- Transition Program

# STAFF & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



West Aurora School District 129 views professional development as a platform to provide staff with meaningful learning opportunities that will have a positive impact on the lives of its students and community.



*"Life is hectic and expensive! As a high school English teacher, trying to improve my teaching craft and grade countless essays, I jumped with both feet into the professional development opportunity offered by my district: West Aurora University. I have almost completed four micro-credentials: Instructional Purpose, Instructional Practice, Grading, and Assessment.*

*These free graduate-level courses, based on current, research-in education, have helped me to motivate and engage my students, share improved pedagogy with my colleagues, interact and learn from administrators, and move up the pay scale without breaking my emotional or financial bank.*

*This professional development opportunity has also strengthened my voice in the school climate committee and as one of the leaders of a teacher-initiated standards-based grading movement. My loyalty to my district and school and students blossoms as I continue to learn and help others."*

**-Terri Shepard**  
West Aurora High School English Teacher

## TOP 10 REASONS

Why Professional Development in School District 129 is **EXCEPTIONAL!**

- 10** Free professional development through in-house **West Aurora University**
- 9** Potential for salary advancement through the unique **Micro-Credential Program**
- 8** Robust **Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program**
- 7** Support from content-expert **Curriculum Coordinators**
- 6** On-site **National Board** cohort opportunities
- 5** **English as a Second Language (ESL)** endorsement opportunities in partnership with the University of St. Francis
- 4** Partnership with Aurora University, the first and only institution in the state to offer a **Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction**, in conjunction with an **English as a Second Language (ESL)** endorsement and a **Learning Behavior Specialist I (LBS I)** endorsement
- 3** Partial **tuition-reimbursement** for external professional learning
- 2** **Stipends** for the successful completion of **online competency badges** (Google, Schoology, Apple Teacher, and Data Protection)
- 1** One of the most **collaborative learning environments** in the state of Illinois!

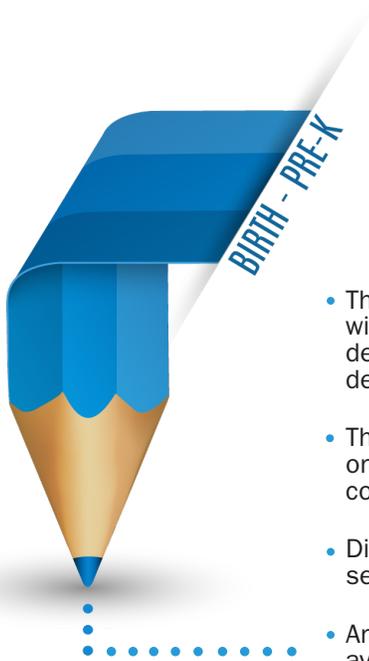
## SUMMER 2019 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NUMBERS:

- 406** staff members in attendance
- 95** different professional development classes offered
- 45** staff members earned Micro-Credential Badges
- 72** staff members completed Apple Teacher Certification
- 55** staff members completed Google Level 1 Certification
- 29** staff members completed Google Level 2 Certification
- 132** staff members completed Schoology Level 1 Certification
- 62** staff members completed Staff and Student Data Protection Certification

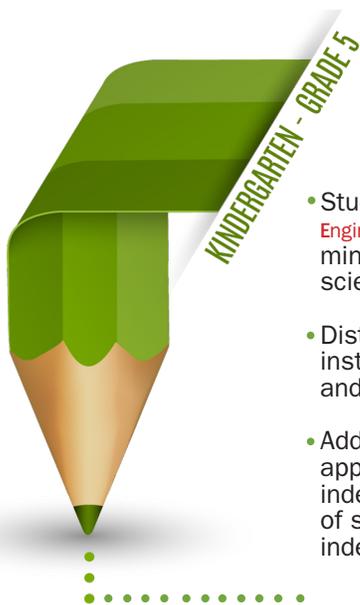
# ACADEMICS

## WEST AURORA SCHOOL DISTRICT 129:

Is a **one-to-one learning environment**, meaning that each student is issued a device to be used as an engaging learning tool.



- The parent education and support program **Parents as Teachers** serves families with children from birth to three years old as well as expectant parents and is designed to guide parents in supporting their children so they learn, grow, and develop to realize their full potential.
- The **Early Learning Academy** hosts over 400 students. This academy is located on the second floor of the newly-renovated West Aurora Learning Center and is composed of 12 classrooms, a multi-purpose room, and office space.
- District 129 **Preschool Expansion Program** is located in 7 elementary buildings, serves 200 students, and is a full-day program.
- Annual **developmental screenings** for students between the ages of 3 to 5 averages 600 students a year.



- Students in grades 1-5 engage in weekly **STEM instruction** (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), focusing on activities that provide hands-on and minds-on lessons. STEM education creates critical thinkers, increases science literacy, and enables the next generation of innovators.
- District 129 has adopted **Balanced Numeracy**, a philosophy for mathematics instruction that provides opportunities for students to uncover, construct, and apply mathematical understandings.
- Additionally, elementary students are instructed using the **Balanced Literacy** approach, which focuses on balancing explicit language instruction with independent learning and language exploration. The framework consists of six components including read alouds, guided reading, shared reading, independent reading with conferencing, writing, and word study.



Has **fully inclusive schools**, which means that “general education” and “special education” programs are not separated; instead, the schools are structured so that all students learn together.

Has a strong **English Learner’s Program**, comprised of students who speak over **57 different languages!**



- In an effort to ensure academic preparedness for career and college-level work, middle school students receive a **double-block of mathematics and English language arts** instruction daily.
- District 129 offers a **Self-Contained Exceptionally Talented Program** that aims to provide an educational experience for students who have demonstrated aptitude on standardized assessments. This extraordinary program seeks to maximize student development during the middle school years by creating a small-group schooling experience in tandem with rigorous learning opportunities that extend beyond the typical curriculum.
- Each middle school student participates in an **elective sequence** that includes a quarter each of art, music, textiles, and the engineering design process!



- West Aurora High School offers a **complete and rigorous course of study for all students**, including Advanced Placement, Honors, and Dual Credit courses. The curriculum is also rich in opportunities for exploring pathways in the Fine Arts, Career and Technical Education, and Air Force Junior ROTC. West Aurora High School has been recognized as an AP Honors School by the College Board.
- The newly constructed, 18,000 square-foot **Weisner Family Center for Career Development** opened in the fall of 2019. It is designed to provide advanced educational and work-based learning and training, and is currently home to welding and precision machining programs.
- Educational services for the learning disabled, behaviorally disordered, and autistic students are extended to the age of 22 through the Blackhawk Academy’s **Transition Program**.
- The Blackhawk Academy’s **Connections Program** is dedicated to providing high school students with a quality educational program that focuses on supporting academic and social-emotional growth. This special education program is held in the newly-renovated West Aurora Learning Center, is highly structured, provides social work support, and is designed for small group instruction that aligns with the district curriculum.

# STUDENT LIFE

**Did you know** that one hundred choir students represented West Aurora High School on a good-will performance tour to Toronto and Ontario, Canada in March of 2019?

In 2019, **three West Aurora High School students** were invited to present their scientific research at the elite International Student Science Fair held in Singapore. In 2020, the group is traveling to the next science fair held in Thailand!



West Aurora High School is unique in the number of students who have received a **Seal of Biliteracy and Commendation toward Biliteracy!**

*\*The Seal of Biliteracy and the Commendation toward Biliteracy are awarded to those students who demonstrate proficiency in English and a second language.*

AWARDS

121

IN 2019

113

IN 2017

112

IN 2018

77

IN 2016



**73%** of West Aurora High School students are involved!

*\*Involvement is defined as a student who participated in a sport, club, or organization.*

# STUDENT LIFE

## West Aurora has 8 Gold Quality Programs!

*\*The Gold Circle of Quality recognizes early childhood programs that have met the highest quality standards in three areas: learning environment and teaching quality; administrative standards; and training & education. Our sites include:*

*Early Learning Academy, Freeman Elementary School, Goodwin Elementary School, Greenman Elementary School, Hall Elementary School, Hill Elementary School, McCleery Elementary School, and Smith Elementary School*

## In 2018/2019, West Aurora High School students ranked among the best!

- Ranking fourth overall at the Air Force Junior ROTC Nationals!
- Qualifying one student for the HOSA National Leadership Conference!
- Finishing with eight state finalists at the DECA State Competition!
- Qualifying three students for BPA Nationals!
- Qualifying five students for National FCCLA Competition!
- Placing third overall at the Bass Fishing IHSA State Competition!
- Qualifying two students for Speech Sectionals!
- Placing third in the state at Tech Olympics!
- Qualifying one student for All-State Orchestra, one for the All-State Honors Orchestra, and one for All-State Honors Band!
- Earning national recognition at the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards!

## West Aurora School District students are community-minded!

*\*Over the past school year alone, tens of thousands of dollars have been raised by students and donated to:*

- Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital
- Feed My Starving Children
- Henry Pratt First Responders
- Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
- Local Animal Shelters
- Pennies for Patients
- St. Baldrick's Foundation



**At every level, there are opportunities for students to develop their talents and passions. Some of the clubs and activities at the elementary level include:**

- Art Club
- Basketball
- Book Beasts
- Chess Club
- Comic Book Club
- Crazy 8's
- Drama Club
- Drum Club
- Environmental Club
- Fit to be Tied
- Girls Club
- Girls on the Run
- Healthy Living
- HEART Club
- IMSA Fusion
- Literacy Through the Arts
- Makers Club
- Math Club
- My Time
- Readers Theater
- Robotics
- Running Club
- Speech/Debate Club
- Stand for the Silent
- Student Council
- Technology Club
- Volleyball
- WE Club
- Writer's Forum

## WEST AURORA HIGH SCHOOL HAS ACADEMICALLY STRONG STUDENTS WHO ARE HONORED FOR THEIR HARD WORK!

**66** students in the Spanish Honor Society

**35** students in the Kitty Hawk Honor Society

**259** students in the National Honor Society

**36** students in the French Honor Society

**19** students in the National Art Honor Society

**55** students in the National Technical Honor Society



**ONE DISTRICT • ONE GOAL • STUDENTS FIRST**

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