



West Aurora  
School  
District 129

# DISTRICT PROFILE

2021-2022



*Fostering an environment of equity and opportunity.*



Facebook:  
westaurora129

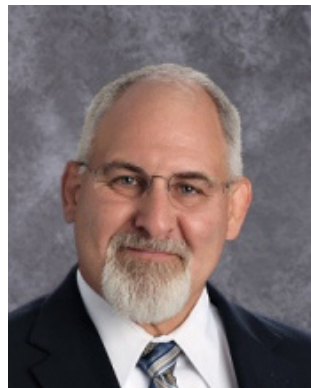


Twitter:  
@sd129



Instagram:  
west\_aurora\_129

# SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS



## JEFF CRAIG, EdD

"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."

## 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

**72%** Teachers with Master's Degree or Higher

**63** National Board Certified Teachers

**11,823** Total Student Enrollment

**96%** Student Attendance

**18:1** Student/Teacher Ratio

## ACADEMICS CORE CONTENT AREAS

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

## SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

**BRENT RABY, EdD** Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning  
**ANGELA SMITH** Assistant Superintendent of Operations  
**MICHAEL P. SMITH, EdD** Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources  
**RYAN ABRAHAMSON** Director of Finance  
**ANNA GONZALES** Director of Community Affairs  
**JAMES GOTTBURG, JR** Director of Technology Support Services  
**LYNN HEAD** Director of Transportation  
**JENNIFER HERMAN** Director of Special Education  
**MICHELLE JONES** Director of Instructional Technology  
**MARIA LOZANO** Director of English Learners  
**JAMIE MAX, EdD** Director of Secondary Teaching & Learning  
**VALERIE McCALL, EdD** Director of Educational Equity  
**MARTI NEHRING** Executive Director of Student and Family Services  
**JEFF SCHILLER** Director of Operations  
**SARAH WADDELL, EdD** Executive Director of Elementary Education  
**ELIZABETH WENDEL** Executive Director of Secondary Education

## 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 #14

Among the Most Diverse School Districts in Illinois by Niche

### Ranks #209

Among the Most Diverse School Districts in America by Niche

### Ranks #73

Among the Best School Districts for Athletes in Illinois by Niche

**Aa3 Bond Rating from Moody's Investor Service**

## INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

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

## 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 identified 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!

## 2020-2021 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NUMBERS:

- 1,125** staff members in attendance
- 127** staff members earned Micro-Credential Badges
- 40** different professional development classes offered
- 40** staff members completed Schoology Level 1 Certification
- 29** staff members completed Google Level 1 Certification
- 27** staff members completed Apple Teacher Certification
- 23** staff members completed Staff and Student Data Protection Certification
- 9** staff members completed Google Level 2 Certification

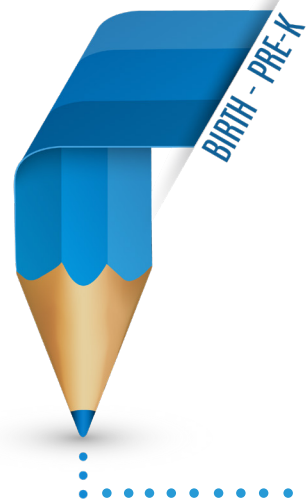
# ACADEMICS

## WEST AURORA SCHOOL DISTRICT 129:

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

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 **39 different languages!**



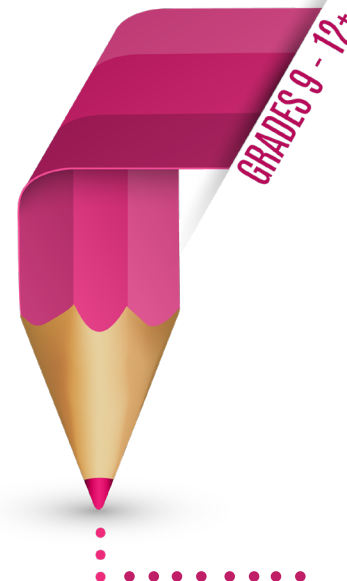
- The parent education and support program, **Parents as Teachers**, serves families with children from birth to three years old as well as expectant parents and is designed to guide parents in supporting their children so they learn, grow, and develop to realize their full potential.
- The **Early Learning 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's **Preschool Expansion Program** is located in seven elementary buildings, serves 200 students, and is a full-day program.
- Annual **developmental screenings** for students between the ages of three through five averages 600 students a year.



- In an effort to ensure academic preparedness for career and college-level work, middle school students receive a **double-block of English language arts** and potentially an extended block of mathematics 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.
- Middle school students participate in an **elective sequence** that includes a quarter each of art, music, textiles, and the engineering design process!



- Students in first through fifth grade 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.
- Elementary students are instructed using a **Balanced Literacy** approach, which focuses on both word recognition and language comprehension. The framework consists of reading aloud, small group instruction, shared reading and writing, independent reading and writing, and word study.



- 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

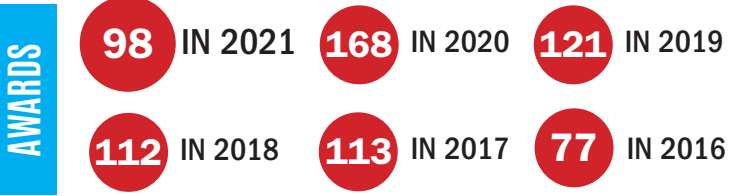
**Did you know**  
that the average grade point average of students at WAHS who are involved is a 3.15 (B)?  
*\*involvement is defined as participating in club, sport, or organization.*

In March of 2021, **three West Aurora High School students** competed in the Singapore International Science Challenge, which was held virtually. In 2022, a new team will be competing in the International Student Science Fair, which will be held in New York.



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.*



**64** The number after-school clubs at West Aurora High School

# 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 2020/2021, West Aurora High School students ranked among the best!**

- Qualifying 1 student for the BPA National Leadership Conference!
- Qualifying 1 student for the ILMEA All-State Band!
- Qualifying 2 students for the FCCLA National Leadership Conference!
- Qualifying 2 students for the HOSA National Leadership Conference!
- Qualifying 2 students for the WYSE State Competition!
- Qualifying 4 students for the ILMEA All-State/Honors Chorus!
- Qualifying 14 students for the DECA State Competition!
- Placing 6th at the Air Force Junior ROTC Nationals!
- Placing 2nd in the ILMEA All-State Composition Contest!
- Placing 1st in the 300-meter hurdles at the IHSA Class 3A Girls' Track and Field Meet!
- Placing 1st in Intro to Board at the State Drafting & Design Competition!

**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:*

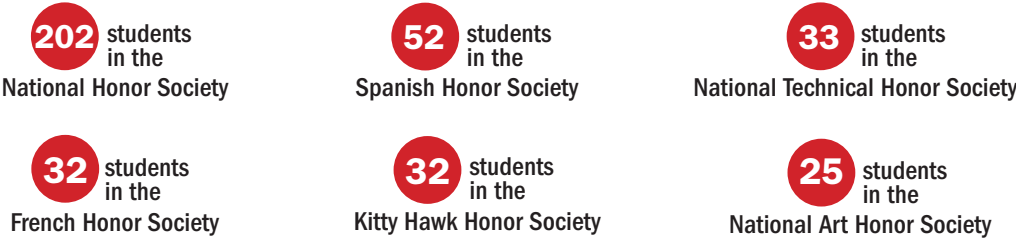
- Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital
- Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry
- Feed My Starving Children
- Maddie's Mitten March
- Marie Wilkinson Food Pantry



**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
- MyTime
- 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!**





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

1877 WEST DOWNER PLACE  
AURORA, IL 60506

630.301.5000  
[www.sd129.org](http://www.sd129.org)