

The History of Joliet West High School

Year Opened	Fall 1964	
JT West Principals	Richard E. Terry	1964-66
	Clarence Stallman	1966-68
	Dr. John Vanko	1969-71
	Leroy Leslie	1972-73
	Dr. John Vanko	1973-76
	Leroy Leslie	1977-83
	Arlene Urquhart	1984-87
	Ronald O'Brien	1988-93
	Dr. Richard Samlin	1994-97
	Dean Schultz	1998-99
	Shirley Lang	2000-02
	Cheryl McCarthy	2003-09

JT West Name Tigers 1964-93 / Steelmen 1994-2010 / Tigers 2011 – present

NOTE: When the high school first opened, the students were known as Westmen.
However, within a month the students voted to become Tigers.

JT West School Colors	Black, Gold and White
JT West Mascot	Tiger 1964-93 / Steelman 1994-2010
JT West Name/Mascot	Tigers - All teams beginning with 2011
JT West Newspaper	Tiger Tales
JT West Yearbook	Alpha Omega

JT WEST LOYALTY

Fight...Fight...
Fight! Fight! Fight!
Go! West High
Go! Tigers!
Fight! Show the foe your might
Victory and glory bring
Every loyal son will sing!
Rah, Rah, Rah!
Black, gold and white
West is best, and that's our battle cry
Loyalty and honor to the men of Joliet West High
T-T-T-I-G
E-E-E-R-S
T-I-G
E-R-S
TIGERS!

The Joliet West fight/loyalty song was composed by and lyrics written by Choir Director, Roy Johnson.

In September of 1964, Joliet Township High School opened its West campus doors to students for the first time. The original construction of the building has now seen four additions. In 2003, the new cafeteria was added along with a new commons area, thirty-eight classrooms, an expanded library, modified office space, and remodeled science laboratories. The most exciting addition is the state-of-the-art West field house dedicated in opening ceremonies on October 28, 2008 enabling the district to facilitate the restoration of a separate sports program. The field house has the capability for a variety of sports activities. There are three basketball courts, three volleyball courts, and three tennis courts as well as room for track and field, hurdles, pole vaulting, long jump, and cages for batting practice.

Since the fall of 1993, the campuses of JT West and JT Central have shared a sports program as Steelmen when the teams were combined due to district budget constraints. However, during the 2008-2009 school year, the district began to divide the schools athletic programs starting with the freshmen teams. By the school year of 2010-2011, all JT West teams will once again be known as the Tigers.

JT West offers a wide variety of sports for its students. Among the girls' sports are cross country, golf, track and field, basketball, volleyball, softball, tennis, badminton, swimming, bowling, and gymnastics. Boy's sports include baseball, basketball, football, tennis, volleyball, golf, track and field, cross country, swimming, hockey and wrestling.

There are many significant achievements in West campus sports history. The West "men of the mat" qualified a number of times for state finals and brought home several state wrestling championships. The Boys' golf teams have been district champs and sectional champs. In boys' tennis, the teams have taken district titles and have been awarded regional plaques.

When the IHSA offered a state championship in girls' basketball, the West team was one of the first teams to win a first place trophy. The girls' basketball teams have been regional champs, sectional champs and state champions. The track relay team has been a state champion. The girls' cross country teams have been regional champs. The softball teams have been successful as regional champs, sectional champs and state champions. The girls' tennis teams have claimed district championships. Volleyball teams have won as district champs and regional champs.

Over the years, the baseball teams have been successful as regional champs and have qualified for the state finals several times. The boys' basketball team has won regional and sectional tournaments. On the gridiron in the late 60s, West's football team won the Illini-8 conference titles twice. In subsequent years, teams have placed in both the Illini 8 Conference and the SICA West Conference.

Special Mention:

Ray Klootwyk arrived in Joliet in 1959 and he had a great three-year run with the Steelmen teams winning 25 straight games without a defeat, including 21 games in a row. In 1964, he moved to West to assume coaching duties and his winning ways followed. Coach Ray Klootwyk led the Tigers football team in the late '60s. The teams won back-to-back Illini-8 conference titles in '68 and '69. Coach Klootwyk also known as "Tiger Ray" passed away at the early age of 50 after a battle with leukemia. As a tribute to the coach, the JT West stadium was named the Klootwyk Field. He was inducted into the Joliet Area Sports Hall of Fame in 2004.

With the coaching of Dale O'Connell, the girls' softball team enjoyed an extraordinary season in 2000. They were victorious all the way to state and brought the state championship trophy home to West.

The Cheerleaders and the Poms have always brought high recognition to the West campus for their exceptional routines. The Tiger Paws have won several world pom pon championships as well as taking home state championship titles numerous times. The dedicated sponsor for many years was Nicki Alander.

Academically, teams and individual students at West have been sectional and state champions in several specialty events including Drama, Speech, English, Math and Debate competition.

Looking through the collection of 44 West yearbooks, one will find references to the many clubs on the campus, i.e., Biology Club, History Club, Key Club, Math Club, Spanish Club, Latin Club, French Club, German Club, Lettermen's Club, Physics Club, Earth Science Club, Speech Activities Club, Amateur Radio Club, Ballet Club, Art Club, Chess Club, Boosters Club, N.C.O.'s Club, Drama Club, and Modern Dance Club.

Campus organizations have included Future Teachers of America, Future Nurses of America, Future Farmers of America, TriHi Y, Future Homemakers of America, National Thespians, ROTC, National Honor Society, ETIA (Ethnic Teens in Acton), and Student Council. Many of the organizations and clubs still exist on campus today.

Outstanding music programs have been a tradition at JT West for nearly 50 years. Many graduates have continued on to very successful careers in the performing arts due to their initial participation in the West choirs and bands.

The Marching Tigers, the high school's marching band, and the musicianship of the West Jazz Band have received many top honors in state and national contests as well as at a variety of music festivals. There have been five band directors at West; Arthur D. Katterjohn, 1964-67; Dean H. Sayles, 1967-90; I.V. Foster, 1990-92, and Ted Lega, 1992-93. Kevin T. Carroll, 1993-present, continues the winning tradition of producing an outstanding West band program.

The choir music department is under the leadership of its present director, Tim DeBoer, who joined the faculty in 2003. In 2004, West began an opera scenes program, which is nearly unprecedented among high schools. Jeffrey Ray, West '87 alumnus, voice teacher, and international opera star was instrumental in guiding the program. West became the first high school to tackle light opera when the students presented "Too Many Sopranos" in 2008. The students have performed scenes from "The Magic Flute," "The Marriage of Figaro," "Carmen," "LaBoheme," "Die Fledermaus, and "Tales of Hoffman."

Over the past 44 years, the West choirs have consistently received high marks in their performances. In 2007 and 2008, the Concert Choir received high ratings in choral contests including "Best Bass Section" both years. On the roster of West's former choral directors are Sandra Thompson, Nancy Cardwell, Arlyne Nuti, and Roy Johnson.

Special Mention:

Roy Johnson came to the district in 1960 and became the West Choir Director in 1964. He was described as a composer, arranger, teacher, vocalist and an accomplished musician with a beautiful tenor voice who strengthened the traditions of quality choral music. He has several titles published in the West choral library. He was a one-of-a-kind music man and beloved by the students.

Roy conducted music, directed the choirs and staged lavish school musical productions such as "The Mikado," "West Side Story," "South Pacific," and "Lil Abner." In all, he directed 34 musicals for both JT West and Joliet Junior College. His West choirs won 22 state championships. Roy passed away in 2000 at the age of 77.

The High School Orchestra was under the leadership of Peter Labella for many years. The talented musicians were students from the three campuses of Central, East and West. Mr. Labella retired in the early 1980s. Mr. Ivy Foster directed the orchestra for a few years at West as well as Julie Ashcraft during the late 80s and early 90s. Following Ashcraft, Kevin Carroll, the present West band director, took the helm from 1995-2000. In the fall of 2000, Pamela (Burd) Breuning was hired as full time Orchestra director by the district. Breuning retired in 2007. Peter Lipari currently directs the Orchestra.

Special Mention:

Don Hopkins came to JTHS in 1962 and moved to JT West when it opened in 1964 as a Physics Teacher and Chairman of the Science Department until 1981. H then chaired the combined Math and Science Departments until 1983. His teaching load at West included Physics, Chemistry, Earth Science, and Nuclear Science. Affectionately known as "Hop," he was a true friend to countless students, a mentor to young teachers, and a cheerleader and tireless worker for all of JT West activities.

Described in a West yearbook as "Santa Claus with a crew cut," over the years he sponsored the Science Clubs, Science Fairs, Science Teams, Math Teams, and the Junior Class. "Hop" was also responsible for starting many new clubs, organizations and programs such as SADD, Student Council, Pep Club, and the Tiger Stats Team. As Student Activities Director, he announced all home football games, basketball games and track meets. In addition, he was the Prom Advisor/Sponsor, supervised afternoon co-ed volleyball, led the Tiger Follies, the All-School Talent Show, was the emcee at all-school assemblies, chaperoned all school dances, helped organize the homecoming parades and judge the floats.

"Hop" retired in 1991; however, he is still known by former colleagues, students, and administrators as the personification of school spirit!

JT West athletes included in the naming of the "100 Athletes of the Century " as part of the centennial activities celebrated by District 204 in 2001 are the following:

'98	Aaron Aguire	All-state soccer – All-Midwest
'80	Cathy Boswell	Three-time All-State Basketball '84 Olympic Gold Medallist
'89	Nikki Brandolino	State Champion Bowling
'69	Bob Burris	All-State Football
'74	John Cabrera	State Champion Wrestling
'72	Mel Carson	State Champion Wrestling
'91	Terry Collins	State Champion Hurdles Final 4 Basketball Oklahoma State University
'67	Mike Cookas	All-Conference Baseball/Football/Wrestling
'82	Chris Crowther	State Champion 200 & 400 Hurdles 4 th in State Cross Country
'80	Donna Decker	State Champion Swimming 100-yard freestyle
'78	Jeff Dillman	State Champion Wrestling Two-time National Wrestling Champion at Eastern Illinois University Gold Medallist at Pan American Games
'90	Jon Foskett	State Champion Pole Vault
'70	Jarrett Hubbard	State Champion Wrestling Two-time NCAA Wrestling Champion at University of Michigan /Four-time All American & Wolverine Athlete of the Year
'88	Steve Kelly	State Champion 100 and 400-yard Dash
'75	Cindy Kontos	Named Joliet's No. 1 Female Bowler
'72	George Kontos	Professional Bowler and American Bowling Congress World Champion
'68	Lorin Lynch	All-State Football, All-conference Baseball First player named All-State for new school Named MVP Football & Baseball Named '68 "West Athlete of the Year"/ University of Iowa Football

'94	Scott Malinowski	All-State Baseball
'77	Scott Martin	All-state Basketball /University of Utah Basketball
'74	Dwayne McCallum	State Champion Wrestling
'77	Greg McCallum	State Champion Wrestling
'79	Dane Nasenbenny	State Champion Wrestling
'86	Steve Parris	Major league pitcher for eight seasons / Pittsburgh Pirates, Cincinnati Reds, Toronto Blue Jays / Tampa Bay Devil Rays
'78	Curt Phelps	State Champion Wrestling
'77	Curt Reed	All-State Baseball / Triple A Minor League with Chicago White Sox
'80	Jeff Reed	All-State Baseball / Major League Catcher with Minnesota Twins, Montreal Expos, Cincinnati Reds, San Francisco Giants, Colorado Rockies, Chicago Cubs
'84	Brent Snyder	All-state Football / All-conference Basketball Pro Football with the Chicago Bears
'99	Heather B. Suca	All-state Softball / Softball at Indiana University
'81	Todd Sterr	State Champion Wrestling
'82	Carol Wiegand	State Champion Swimming 100-yard Backstroke 100-yard Butterfly
'91	Jackie Williams	All-State Basketball
'72	Gary Woolford	Football, Wrestling / State Champion High Hurdles / NFL Football with N.Y. Giants

NOTE: In addition to the above athletes, many West athletes were also named to the roster of "Distinguished Athletes of the Century" in 2001.

JT West athletes inducted into the Joliet Area Sports Hall of Fame:

- **2003 Hall of Fame Class Cathy Boswell '80**
- **2005 Hall of Fame Class Jarrett Hubbard '70**
- **2008 Hall of Fame Class Chris Crowther '82**
- **2008 Hall of Fame Class Jeff Reed '80**

SPOTLIGHT ON WEST ALUMNI:

'65	Ford C. June III (Chet)	Attorney / President of the Board of Education District 204
'67	Skip Griparis	Jazz musician / Comedian / Actor Recording Artist / Songwriter Films / Television / Stage
'68	Mike McLaren	Trial Attorney / Actor /Film roles include <i>The Firm</i> and <i>A Time to Kill</i>
'72	Charlie Adams	Professional Musician / Drummer for Yanni / Recording Artist
'75	Jeff Krieger	Graduate of Yale School of Music /Principal cellist with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra
'75	Mark Masek	Author of "Hollywood Remains to Be Seen: A Guide to the Movie Stars' Final Homes"
'76	Thomas L. Perkins	U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Central District Illinois
'78	Paul Dillon	Professional actor / film & television producer
'78	Davenia "Deide" McFadden	Professional Actress / Films / Television
'79	Laura Soltis	Professional Actress / Vocalist / Stage & Television
'80	Sharon Graves	Professional Broadcasting Meteorologist
'81	Jimmie Chamberlin	Professional Musician / Drummer for the "Smashing Pumpkins"

'84	Judie Bell	Country singer/songwriter
'84	Andy Dick	Professional Actor / Offbeat Comedian / Television / Films
'85	John Barrowman	Professional Actor / Films / Stage & Television / Recording Artist
'87	Mark Carlson	Major League Umpire
'87	Stephanie Ferguson	Senior Engineer at Kraft Foods/Holds her own U.S. patent on a baked snack chip design process she invented
'87	Jeffrey Ray	International Opera Singer / Vocal Coach
'88	Anthony Rapp	Professional Actor / Stage / Created the role of the narrator in the Broadway musical "Rent"
'90	Amy Varsek	Dog sledding across Canada's Northwest Territories as part of Arctic Quest Mission Creator of Nintendo DS video game "Ninjatown"
'94	Shawn Smith	and of Shawnimals toy product line
'95	Sonya Gavankar	1997 Miss District of Columbia in Miss America Pageant / TV Journalist / Public Relations Executive
'95	Dayna Schoffstoll	Aerospace Engineer with NASA
'96	Jennifer Maiotti	Senior documentary producer, writer for National Geographics and Discovery Channel
'96	Nicole M. Switzer	Professional actress / National Touring Company of "25 th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee"
'98	Janina Gavankar	Professional Actress / Television / Films
'09	Emily Ziesmer	Creator of West's newest Tiger logo

ONE FINAL NOTE:

There is more than nostalgia at work here. The West students of today share more than the hallways, classrooms, lockers and lunchrooms with all the West alumni, they also share the potential for success. It is clear that JT West is no ordinary high school.