



“THE QUOTE”

westirondequoit.org

March 2024

Defining the Portrait of an Irondequoit High School Graduate

The New York State Department of Education (NYSED) released a 48-page report, “Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures,” last November. It outlines recommendations for graduates, as well as the curriculum and opportunities school districts should consider to support students gearing up for post-secondary education. NYSED calls it “a roadmap for learning-centered education that best meets the needs of every student.” We wanted to share more with you about our work to achieve this in West Irondequoit.

The report outlines four “Priority Areas:”

#1 Consideration of Multiple Pathways Leading to One Diploma: This focuses on creating equitable ways all students can earn one high school diploma. The Commission wants future graduation requirements to be clear and simple while providing rigorous, equitable pathways.

#2 Review of Assessment Flexibility: The Commission prioritized assessment flexibility, which would include reconsidering the number of Regents exams required to earn a diploma and consider other alternative assessment options.

#3 Understanding of Meaningful Life-Ready Credentials: This targets ensuring graduates obtain life-ready skills. There was a high value placed on considering graduation credentials that elevate soft skills such as problem-solving, empathy, time management, etc., as well as career and literacy skills (such as financial, digital and media literacy).



Graphic: NYS Education Department

#4 Culturally Responsive Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment: This priority aims to put the focus on Culturally Responsive Education. The Commission wants more opportunities for students to showcase their knowledge through assessments in this area.

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A Message from the Superintendent



Dear West Irondequoit families/residents:

As we march into spring, I want to express my pride and appreciation for the tremendous progress we are making districtwide, thanks to the tireless efforts of our faculty, administration, and you. This month’s “The Quote” is dedicated to our curriculum and instructional program, highlighting the gains we have made thanks to our collective efforts.

We are currently in year three of five of our comprehensive Strategic Plan, and it’s exciting to see this work coming alive in our classrooms.

One significant advancement has been the alignment districtwide. With 10 schools, it is essential to have a common understanding of what high-quality instruction includes. Based on research and extensive input, our instructional model gives us a common foundation for planning

and discussions about teaching and learning. The model prioritizes student engagement and fosters independence in all students.

Another highlight of our progress has been our systems of support and interventions. We have a strong base of Response to Intervention and continue to grow. Thankfully, it has come at the right time. Emerging from the pandemic, huddling up to understand the unique needs of every child has been paramount. We have aligned our Instructional Support and Problem-Solving Teams in all schools to dive deep into individual student needs. It is not easy work, but thanks to a shared commitment and family engagement, we have improved our ability to intervene in social-emotional, behavioral and academic needs.

The final highlight I must share is about our youngest learners. When the governor announced that the Science of Reading would be our state’s new educational priority, I could not help but smile. Our teachers

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New district personnel

West Irondequoit has added two new Assistant Principals, seen an Assistant Principal become a Principal at a new school and welcomes back its former Transportation Director.



Nicholas DiMartino – Principal, Rogers Middle School

After three years serving our district as an Assistant Principal at Dake Junior High School, Mr. DiMartino became the new Principal at Rogers Middle School on Jan. 2, 2024. A Webster Schroeder and St. John Fisher University graduate, he also earned a Master's degree from Fisher. DiMartino taught previously in Honeoye Falls-Lima and Fairport.



Sonja Griffin – Assistant Principal, Irondequoit HS

A Rochester native and IHS graduate, Ms. Griffin started in her new role in late January. She has worked in the Rochester City School District for 17 years, serving as a Lead Teacher since 2018 and providing intensive instructional support for educators. Prior to that, she was a Special Education teacher in the RCSD for 12 years. She replaced Mrs. Barbara Battin, who retired.



Alexa Hogestyn – Assistant Principal, Dake Junior HS

A native of Long Island, Dr. Hogestyn joined Dake in late February. Most recently, she was a Literacy Specialist (grades 6-9) for East Lower School in the Rochester CSD for eight years. She also has worked as a Long-Term Substitute in the Greece and Spencerport school districts. She also was an administrative intern for three months last summer in the RCSD. She replaced Mr. Nicholas DiMartino, who is now Principal at Rogers Middle School.



Mary Jo Nugent – Director of Transportation

Ms. Nugent returns to West Irondequoit in the same leadership role she occupied for three years (2019-2022). She replaces Ms. Kathy Blair, who is retiring. Ms. Nugent started in late February. She left her position as a Routing & Logistics Specialist in Pinellas County, Florida to return to the WICSD. Ms. Nugent has served in school transportation for nearly a decade, working in the Gates Chili and Webster districts before taking over in the WICSD in December of 2018. [W](#)

Quote Notes

R.I.S.E. CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATE

As of publication time, the R.I.S.E. Capital project is currently under review by the NYS Education Department, which has experienced a backlog of submitted capital projects. The delay in the review will likely cause us to change when we bid the project and when the work will actually start. We originally planned for work to commence in the late spring 2024 but the NYSED delay may result in the work beginning late summer instead. Once we have approval of the submitted plans, more information regarding the timeline of bidding, construction, etc. will be determined.

FOOD SERVICE – BE PROACTIVE

The district announced in November great news about free meals for all students for the rest of the 2023-24 school year. Our district achieved this by applying to be part of an expanded U.S. Department of Agriculture program. We still advise all parents/guardians to fill out a free and reduced meal application. If approved, the benefit will carry over for the first month and a half of 2024-2025. Applications can be found at westirondequoit.org under “Food Services” (also in the main office of all schools and at District Office).

TRANSPORTATION FORMS UPDATE

April 1 is the deadline for all Private, Parochial & Charter School families for the 2024-25 school year. Even if you don't plan to use our transportation, you must fill out the form. A digital version is available on our website, westirondequoit.org; click “Departments” and “Transportation.” We emailed our families about this in February. You can submit ALL transportation forms online, including opting out of taking the bus at any time.

‘INTO THE WOODS’ AT IHS MARCH 21-24

This year's Irondequoit High School spring musical is “Into The Woods,” the beloved musical from legendary composer Stephen Sondheim. It weaves together the stories of classic fairytale characters as their separate missions bring them together in the woods where they discover that granted wishes don't always end with a “happily ever after.” IHS students are excited to share their performance with the community. Hope to see you all at the IHS Auditorium March 21-24. Show times are below. Buy tickets in advance at ShowTix4U.com!

- Thursday, March 21-23 at 7 p.m.
- Sunday, March 24, 2 p.m.

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Students are eligible for our full-day kindergarten program in September 2024 if they will be 5 years of age on or before Dec. 1, 2024. **The deadline to register a child for the 2024-25 school year is April 1st.** Letters with information were mailed home and emailed to families with eligible children in February. Our parent/guardian orientations happened in late February and early March. Registration information can be found on our website at westirondequoit.org. Click on “Parents” and then “Registration.” Children attending private, parochial, charter schools or homeschool still must be registered. Questions? Call the Registrar's Office at 336-6743.

Portrait of a graduate *Continued from cover*

To read the entire report, go to nysed.gov; click “Education Areas” and “Graduation Measures.” At this point, the report only offers recommendations. NYSED has not instituted any regulations or policies. But the recommendations are an excellent guidepost as we plan how to best support West Irondequoit for post-secondary opportunities. The timing also aligns with our five-year Strategic Plan, “Choosing to Rise.” This, our third year, focuses on exploring how to best build curriculum, instruction and experiences that prepare students for any career or post-secondary education they may pursue. While this exploration obviously has an impact on high school, we are analyzing how we can support students from Pre-K through 12th grade.

College and Career Exploration: What it looks like — One example of building college and career expectations was the work by the Dake Junior HS and IHS staff, leadership and parents/guardians to create a “West Irondequoit Portrait of a Graduate.” Last November, those groups and school-based planning teams reviewed a multitude of resources to better understand how to cultivate authentic educational experiences. The teams looked at post-secondary student data, state-wide research related to topics such as artificial intelligence, NYS labor statistics and the Blue Ribbon report. We created our own “Portrait of an Irondequoit High School Graduate.” The teams developed more specific definitions and expectations to guide us moving forward. Highlights include a focus on Career and Technical Education (CTE), financial literacy, being a global citizen and creating critical thinkers and innovative problem-solvers. Our hope: This work provides research-based guidance to create a learning environment for students to cultivate essential world and future-ready skills.

At the elementary level, this may look and feel different. The intent, though, of mastering essential skills to develop productive community citizens is still at the heart of the work. This January, Gov. Hochul introduced a “Back to Basics” proposal to improve student reading proficiency. It relies heavily on building teacher capacity and under-

standing of the Science of Reading. SOR is a concept derived from cognitive psychology, education, implementation science and neuroscience research. In West Irondequoit, we have been shifting instructional practices for the past seven years to align with SOR. We have engaged nearly all K-4 general education teachers, ENL teachers, some special education teachers and leadership teams in some version of LETRS training (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling). We have crafted in-district professional learning to build teacher capacity in using SOR approaches, such as sound walls and heart words. With support from community members and the West Irondequoit Foundation, as well as district funds, we’ve boosted and created libraries of decodable books. Lastly, we have started implementing a K-4 curriculum resource, CKLA, which was built in alignment to the Science of Reading. At the elementary level, we have made major shifts in our curriculum and resources to help build the proper foundations for future-ready students (see the back page of this edition for more).

Across K-8, we have shifted our instructional practices to cluster content into Humanities and STEAM curriculum. This has been a purposeful shift with the goal of creating curricular and instructional opportunities that better prepare our students. Between foundations built at elementary, and a focus now on future-ready skills at secondary, West Irondequoit is poised to help all students become productive, creative and caring citizens of our local community and beyond. 📖

IHS College & Career Center

The College and Career Center provides opportunities for students to figure out what’s the best fit for their future – be it college, the workforce or the military. “We try to provide authentic, real-world experiences, whether it’s work-study jobs, internships, shadowing or field trips,” says the Center Coordinator, Mrs. LaVon Bucciarelli. She also invites local businesses each week for “Future Fridays,” so students can learn more about different careers. More than 75 take part in work-study programs with nearly 60 community employers.

Superintendent Message *Continued from cover*

are significantly ahead of the curve thanks to tremendous forethought by our faculty and leaders. Well before my arrival in West Irondequoit, we dove deep into the practices that now provide foundational reading and writing instruction beginning in kindergarten. Developing that strong base is essential because young minds are the most pliable. Moreover, we are prepared to offer our third year of district-supported Pre-Kindergarten next school year. Thanks to some critical community partners, the program has matured and we expect to provide three classrooms again next year, two at a community partner and one in an elementary school. More information is available on our new website at westirondequoit.org.

February was Black History Month, vital to districtwide learning and celebration. Students have experienced this in many ways, including in

and outside the classroom. These experiences unite us as a community and help us understand the blessings of our differences and recognize the significant contributions of Black historical figures, both well-known and not. Thank you to our staff and students for organizing these events and making heritage and identity a cornerstone of our instructional program throughout the year. And, as always, thank you for partnering with us as we all strive for “Peak Performance.”

In partnership,



Aaron R. Johnson, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools



Superintendent
Dr. Aaron Johnson

Board of Education
Mr. Matthew Metras, President
Mr. Matthew Sullivan, Vice President
Mrs. Melissa Bohrer
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Mrs. Jenna Lustig, District Clerk

Aliyah Bozkurt, Student Representative
Chloe Curran, Student Representative
Andrew Sullivan, Student Representative

Newsletter Editor
Mr. Jeff DiVeronica

Annual District Vote & Election

Tuesday, May 21, 2024
6 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Vote location:
St. Paul Blvd. Fire Dept.
433 Cooper Rd.

PTSA Candidates' Night:
Monday, May 13

Check the district website for details on the location. There are three Board of Education positions up for election this year. Candidates' nominating petitions are due to the district clerk by April 22.

Budget Hearing:
Thursday, May 9, 7 p.m.

The Board of Education will hold a Budget Hearing to share details of the proposed budget. Additional presentations may be scheduled. Go to westirondequoit.org or call 585-336-3067 for updates. We expect there will be time to ask questions at the Budget Hearing.

Absentee Ballots

Absentee ballots are available for those who qualify. Contact District Clerk Jenna Lustig at 585-336-2983 or jenna_lustig@westiron.monroe.edu.

New K-6 curriculum taking off in WICSD

K-6 iREADY: Teachers have been hard at work engaging, learning and experimenting with our new math curricular resource, iReady Classroom Mathematics, with a strong focus on understanding the "Try-Discuss-Connect" routine. This routine actively engages students with math concepts by first trying problems independently. They then participate in small group discussions to share strategies, reasoning and solutions. Finally, they connect their ideas to real-world contexts, fostering a deeper understanding of math concepts and critical thinking skills. As we move to full implementation across grades K-6 in the 2024-2025 school year, we commit to supporting both you and your child throughout this transition and look forward to the positive impact iReady Classroom Mathematics will have on our students' learning journey.

STEAM: Fifth- and sixth-grade teachers have made great progress incorporating the newest component of the NYS assessment strategy for science. The NYS-required "investigations" engage students in curriculum embedded experiences meant to develop and assess a student's understanding of Science and Engineering Practices, along with concepts that cut across content. Curriculum development continues as teachers are building new units on astronomy (5th grade), development of organisms and human impact (6th grade).

CKLA and HUMANITIES: CKLA (Core Knowledge Language Arts) and Humanities curriculum at K-4 work together to support a student in developing strong foundational literacy skills, a rich understanding of vocabulary, strategies for comprehending complex texts and skills as a writer of both fiction and non-fiction. At K-2, teachers are in their second year implementing the CKLA foundational literacy curriculum and students are showing significant growth! At grades 3-4, teachers are in their first year implementing CKLA, focused on developing vocabulary, deepening students' background knowledge and strengthening their skills for comprehending sophisticated language. The Humanities curriculum complements CKLA instruction by providing authentic application opportunities for essential reading and writing skills within the context of novel studies and social studies. This curriculum ensures that students access diverse perspectives while exploring their own identity within the communities to which they belong.

Humanities builds in sophistication at grades 5-6, when students study the histories of the Eastern and Western hemispheres and advance their literary skills through book clubs and novel studies. Students strengthen their voice as writers by applying their critical thinking and language skills to various writing tasks. 🗨️