

By SUSAN M. DYCKMAN
Specially Written for *This Is Westfield*

While test scores speak well of Westfield students' academic achievement, they do not say enough about the collaborative effort behind the public schools' commitment to academic excellence.

The district's biggest work in progress, the Strategic Plan, calls upon this powerful alliance of administrators, faculty, parents, community and students to "Share the Pride, Shape the Future" of Westfield schools going into the next millennium.

More than 200 community members volunteered to serve on seven action committees which are charged with devising plans to achieve the goals and implement the plan drafted by the 36-member Strategic Planning Council last December.

Action committees are charged with: integrating technology into the curricula; developing high expectations for all levels of ability; promoting a climate of respect through the curricula; developing a counseling program for Kindergarten through grade 12; developing an active program of community service for all students; developing effective family, community, business and school partnerships, and insuring safe and effective instructional facilities. Superintendent of Schools Dr. William J. Foley commented on the partnerships that contribute to students' success during their Westfield school career, primarily the one between schools and parents.

"We don't receive children as blank slates," said Dr. Foley. "They come to us well-prepared so we can accomplish a great deal more with them."

"The strength of the partnership between parents, family and school is the key to our success here," he added. "Because parents are attentive, kids are motivated, goal-oriented, and that's what makes us different."

A second partnership which the superin-

tendent would like to enhance is the one between the schools and the members of the community "who hold substantial positions" at companies like Lucent, Merck, AT&T and Schering Plough.

Dr. Foley said he would like to draw upon those corporate resources to open up opportunities for students to pursue internships or independent study programs at these high-profile corporations.

During an interview for *This Is Westfield*, the superintendent spoke of the strategic plan's pursuit of "a climate of respect" across the curricula.

"We have the ability to create good students," explained Dr. Foley, "but we have the responsibility to create good citizens."

He wants to see Westfield's children prepared to work with, accept and respect the multi-cultural, multi-lingual diversity of the world around them.

Asked to comment on the best programs offered in the Westfield schools, Dr. Foley listed Special Education, Project '79 at Westfield High School, the elementary-level Advanced Learning Program, Intermediate Math Program and Fine Arts Program.

Special education programs are directed by the Office of Student Personnel Services, headed by Dr. Theodore Kozlik. Services include child study teams, resource rooms, in-district and out-of-district classes for the handicapped, and a pre-Kindergarten program for children ages 3 to 5.

For the 1997-1998 school year, there are presently 77 students placed out-of-district for special education.

Project '79 offers an alternative to the

traditional high school program. It was created for high school students who do not function well in a large group setting, and can benefit from increased adult attention.

Dr. Foley called it "an example of an alternative regular education program which allows children to be successful who might not be so otherwise." Project '79 has lowered the district's high school dropout rate.

The Advanced Learning Program (ALP) in grades 3 to 5 is Westfield's version of a talented and gifted program. Participating students, who must test into the program, spend one day a week outside their elementary school at Edison Intermediate School. There, ALP teachers expand upon and enhance what the children are learning about in their regular class work.

For example, a fifth-grade study of the planets was amplified to include a project where students prepared to "go into space" by visiting a space center in Paramus.

The Math Program at Edison and Roosevelt Intermediate Schools is "truly on the cutting edge of what a great math program should be at this level," said Dr. Foley.

The program will be further strengthened during the coming year with additional computer work stations in the mathematics classrooms as outlined in the Board of Education's proposed budget for 1998-1999.

The superintendent also recognized the strength of the district's Fine Arts Program which, he said, "does a terrific job, without a lot of money, and not a lot of resources."

Thanks to an "enormously talented staff...talented Westfield students have an opportunity to shine," said Dr. Foley.

In addition to music class at the elementary level, the schools offer instrumental music lessons to grades 4 and 5, plus a band and string ensemble for grades 4 and 5, and chorus for grade 5.

At the high school level, 15 students were recently selected to be members of the 1998 New Jersey Region II Orchestra and Region II Choir. Region II encompasses schools from greater central New Jersey.

Despite the fact that standardized testing such as the Grade 4 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, Eighth Grade Early Warning Test and High School Proficiency Test reflect impressive and improving scores for Westfield students, the superintendent sees room for improvement.

"We need to try to target kids who are not achieving as well as the mainstream," said Dr. Foley.

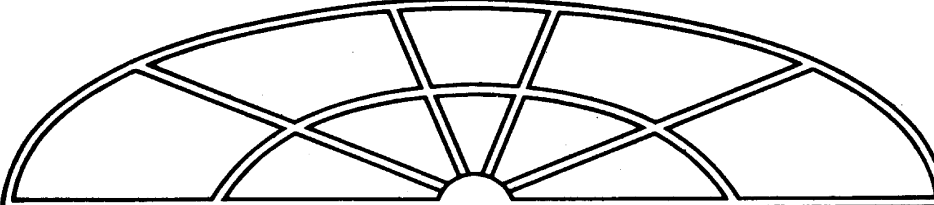
"We need better accommodations for different learning styles and different paces of learning," he said. "We want to address how to accommodate kids in the middle, and the special needs they have that don't always get recognized."

He wants to expand teachers' skills in dealing with the diversified learning styles of their individual students.

The district wants to develop clearer expectations for all students, putting more effort, for example, behind reading and mathematics programs.


For example, he said, "I hear people say that kids don't know how to multiply. I think they don't always know when to multiply."

"We need to help students' performance in other kinds of assessments," he added.



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of District Now; Schools Look With Community, Businesses

"We want to test their abilities to do multiple tasks, to think at a higher level."

Residents will be asked to vote on the budget that would allow the district to implement new initiatives and maintain the level of existing programs on Tuesday, April 21.

The tentative school budget for 1998-1999 is \$52,016,848, a 2.33 percent increase over 1997-1998.

The instructional portion of the budget, which includes teacher salaries, athletics, supplies and summer school, constitutes the largest expenditure for the district, and represents 52.7 percent of the total.

A series of facilities improvements are included in the tentative budget, including completion of re-roofing work at the high school and Edison Intermediate; \$71,500 to install new fire alarms in Tamaques Elementary, and \$209,000 to modernize stage lighting equipment and install a new sound system in the Roosevelt Intermediate School auditorium.

The Board of Education has made a "strong effort," according to officials, in the amount of \$546,137 under the 1998-1999 tentative budget to provide for technology initiatives. These will include additional hardware and large-screen monitors for the fifth grades, continued wiring of the schools and further implementation of the district's technology plan.

Growing enrollment at the elementary level was addressed recently by the construction of 12 new classrooms and redistricting of students.

The new classrooms, six each, at Wilson and Jefferson Schools, increased elementary capacity by 300 students. These were com-

pleted for the start of school in September.

In 1997-1998 the district has 4,878 students and 617 staff members - 461 professional and 156 support staff. The cost per pupil is \$10,181. The beginning teacher salary is \$38,279

Elementary Schools

As of the current school year there were 2,558 students in Kindergarten to grade 5 and a pre-Kindergarten Handicapped Program.

Classes, which have an average class size of 20.3 students, are instructed by 183 professional staff members. The entrance cut-off date for students entering the school is October 1. Age limits are age 5 for Kindergarten and 6 for first grade.

The district offers half-day morning and afternoon Kindergarten programs.

Kindergarten to grade 5 students are bussed if they live more than two miles from school.

Programs

Elementary schools include classes and resource rooms for students with special needs; an Advanced Learning Program for academically gifted students in grades 3 to 5, and an Enrichment Program for all second grade students; ACHIEVE, a Basic Skills Improvement Program; ACT (Artistically Creative and Talented Program for grade 5); Computer Education and fully-automated Library/Media Centers.

Other features include English-as-a-Second Language, Instrumental Music Lessons and a Band and String Ensemble for grades 4 and 5, and fifth grade chorus and STS (Sharing Talents and Skills) Community Volunteer Program.

Students' curriculum includes English, mathematics, reading, spelling, science, social studies, art, health and music (recorder, grade 3), handwriting, physical education and safety, and library/information skills. Computer applications are included within the curriculum.

Secondary Schools

Enrollment includes 2,320 students in grades 6 through 12. Services include Student Assistance, Counselors Peer Counseling, Child Study Teams and Guidance Services.

Students in grades 6 to 8 are bussed if they live two miles or further from school. Students in grades 9 through 12 are bussed if they reside more than 2.5 miles from school.

Programs include Academic Summer School for grades 8 to 12 and STS (Sharing Talents and Skills) Community Volunteer Program.

Intermediate Schools

Enrollment in Edison and Roosevelt Intermediate Schools includes 1,058 students in grades 6 through 8. There are 105 professional staff members, including four guidance counselors.

Team Teachers are available for grades 6 and 7 in language arts, mathematics, science and world geography.

Curriculum includes language arts revised, technology-infused mathematics, science and geography curricula. French, Latin and Spanish begins in grade 7. Students also receive training in physical education and safety, health, instrumental and vocal music, general music, humanities and related arts, visual arts, practical arts, computer

education, drama, journalism, ACHIEVE and basic skills, along with Special Education programs.

Programs offered include extensive club and activity programs, four interscholastic athletic teams and a Student Assistance Counselor.

High School

Westfield High School has 1,262 students in grades 9 through 12, and 113 professional staff members, including six guidance counselors.

Students receive a curriculum which includes 165-plus courses offered in college prep, business, fine arts, music and industrial arts programs. Forty-seven percent of students are enrolled in one or more of 14 honors/advanced placement (AP) courses which offered in English, the sciences, mathematics, foreign languages and social studies.

Of last year's graduates, 93 percent continued their education. Eighty-four percent enrolled in four-year colleges and universities, with nine percent going to two-year colleges, vocational, business or other post-high school institutions.

The Class of 1998 features five semi-finalists and 14 who have received letters of commendation in the National Merit Scholarship Program, and 22 Edward J. Bloustein Distinguished Scholars under the Garden State Scholarship Program. These students averaged a combined total of 1411 on their Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores.

High school programs include Project '79, an alternative high school program; Special Education Resources Centers; foreign languages - French, Latin, Spanish, German and Italian; English-as-a-Second Language, drama and speech.

Over 60 extra-curricular activities are offered including 27 varsity athletics teams, musical groups and an award-winning, student-run newspaper, *Hi's Eye*.

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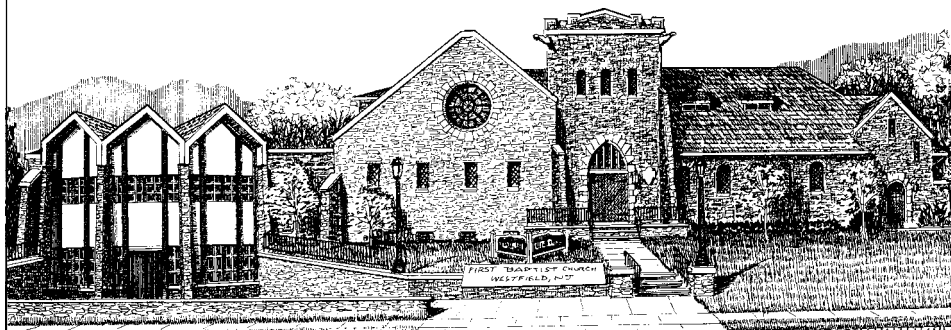
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