

Westfield High School

Westfield Washington Schools, Westfield, Indiana

Location type: Large suburb

District enrollment: 6,759 students

School enrollment: 1,824 students

Percentage of students at school eligible for free and reduced price meals: 17

Key Takeaways

Westfield High School's 2014 OECD Test for Schools results indicated a need for more rigorous instruction in reading, math and science. Although about a third of students performed at Level 4 in reading, math and science, school leaders have committed to increasing the percentage of students reaching Levels 5 and 6 on future OECD Test for Schools administrations. To accomplish this, Westfield has chosen to focus on improving students' critical thinking skills.

Actions Taken

In response to their analysis of the test results, school leaders have taken several actions:

-  School leaders have reviewed curriculum across all three content areas to identify ways to increase rigor. Significantly, this effort has reached back to include the high school's middle and elementary school feeders so that the district establishes a rigorous K-12 continuum that will maximize students' global competitiveness in high school.
 - To achieve this, the district has scheduled more meetings where staff from the elementary, middle, and high school levels meet to ensure alignment throughout the pipeline, and there has been professional development focused on 5th through 8th grade math, science and social studies to support effective instruction and appropriate rigor throughout the middle grades.
-  Additionally, building-wide initiatives such as a PEEL process for writing a constructed response are now used and expected in all content areas.
-  School leaders have compared the school's OECD Test for Schools results with other college readiness data, including the College Board's assessments, which has helped school leaders to identify priority areas of improvement.
-  Teachers at Westfield have begun revising locally developed assessments to include more questions that place greater cognitive demands on students. Assessments now include more document-based questions to assess students' analytical and critical thinking skills.
-  School administrators have identified professional development as a key lever for change. Teachers are focusing on examining how to support problem solving and critical thinking in daily instruction and integrating lessons learned from the OECD Test for Schools with other professional development opportunities, such as Advanced Placement trainings.
-  To support critical thinking and problem solving in daily instruction, the following actions have been taken:
 - Science and social studies teachers have begun using interactive content notebooks rather than lectures with worksheets or outlines to better engage students.
 - Language arts teachers use College Board's SpringBoard materials and work more towards a gradual release of responsibility model. Before teachers taught whole group lectures and whole class novels, and now they use Socratic Seminar, small group lessons and book clubs to better support student acquisition of deeper learning skills.
 - Math instruction is now more focused on concepts and the understanding of math processes rather than memorization and the repeating of information.
-  Westfield High School has participated in a number of Global Learning Network virtual convenings, including a webinar on communicating results to stakeholders. Representatives from Westfield High School also attended the Convening of World-Leading Schools in 2014.

Westfield High School's efforts have paid off, with the percentage of students performing at the highest levels increasing in all three subjects between 2012 and 2015. Performance in math has shown the most growth, with the proportion of students performing at Levels 5 and 6 increasing by 15 percent, while the rate of students performing at the lowest levels fell by 12 percent. In reading and math, the proportion of students performing below Level 2 decreased 12 percent, while the percentage of students identified as deep and wide readers grew slightly.

Those wishing to learn more about the practices at Westfield High School may visit the school's website [here](#).