

Spotlight on Success

Westport Public Schools



Westport Public Schools (WPS) is located in the Town of Westport, Connecticut. WPS has eight school buildings and more than 5,600 students. A total of 83.5% of students are white, and the largest minority groups are Asian (6.3%) and Hispanic/Latino (4.6%). Less than four percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.¹

In 2016, WPS adopted use of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model, which was developed jointly by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and ASCD. WPS implements the WSCC model under the leadership of the district-level Health, Wellness and Positive Youth Development (PYD) Advisory Committee. This committee, which meets quarterly, is a partnership between WPS, Westport Parent-Teacher Association

(PTA), and the Westport Department of Human Services (DHS). It has diverse stakeholders with representation from school administrators and staff, parents, DHS, and students. Committee members collaborate with other groups, such as the Westport/Weston Health Department and the Westport Prevention Council, which focuses on substance use. PTA leaders and two parents from each of the eight schools serve as committee members, and these parents, together with other actively engaged parents/guardians in the district, strengthen WSCC implementation across the WPS school environment.

Through the Health, Wellness and PYD Advisory Committee, WPS has taken numerous actions to build and sustain a WSCC approach including:

- The committee provides training to its members, school staff, and parents to increase awareness of the WSCC model and advance implementation.
- The WSCC model logo and title appear at the top of committee meeting agendas and communications to reinforce the importance of the model and to help align discussion and priorities with WSCC.
- During the 2016-17 academic year, the committee developed an action plan for WSCC implementation using results from a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of the 10 components of the WSCC model. The committee is developing a new wellness plan that will complement this work in response to the WPS Strategic Goals Framework, finalized by Westport Board of Education in December 2017. The framework has

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a "Healthy Learning Environments" area of focus that includes a charge to complete CDC's *School Health Index (SHI): Self-Assessment and Planning Guide* in establishing a plan of wellness for both students and staff members.² The committee completed the SHI assessment, and a wellness plan is under development for use beginning fall 2018.

- The district addresses all 10 WSCC components, while also being responsive to areas identified for improvement within each and every component. For example, WPS has an emphasis on enhancing the counseling, psychological, and social services component since WPS students report high rates of stress, anxiety, and depression. The district leverages its strengths in the family engagement component, as well as highly trained staff and effective social and emotional learning programs, to meet student needs. Current priorities include 1) making mindfulness and emotional regulation programs more consistently available for students, 2) providing education to help reduce stigma related to mental health, and 3) coordinating care to improve early identification of at-risk students and any needed referrals to supportive community services.

In addition, WPS is revising the district's wellness policy to make it stronger and more comprehensive. To guide this process, the Health, Wellness and PYD Advisory Committee conducted a policy review using WellSAT 2.0, the Wellness School Assessment Tool developed by Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity.³ WPS anticipates that the revised policy will incorporate the WSCC model, including all 10 components. The policy will continue to focus on two components: 1) nutrition environment and services and 2) physical education and physical activity. It also will support recent environmental changes in effect after WPS began implementing the WSCC model, such as increased fruit and vegetable offerings. Integrating the WSCC model into WPS's wellness policy will contribute to improved coordination of policies, processes, and practices and WSCC sustainability.

As implementation of the WSCC model continues, WPS plans to explore further opportunities to weave this approach into the fabric of the school community. WPS views parents as instrumental to student success and hopes to expand partnerships within the Town of Westport to improve learning and health.

For more information on the WSCC model:
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wsc/index.htm>

FOOTNOTES

¹ District Profile and Performance Report for School Year 2016-17: Westport School District. Available at:
http://edsight.ct.gov/Output/District/HighSchool/1580011_201617.pdf

² School Health Index (SHI): Self-Assessment & Planning Guide 2017. Available at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/shi/index.htm>

³ WellSAT 2.0. Available at:
<http://www.wellsat.org>

Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model A Collaborative Approach to Learning and Health

