



# PLC AT WORK<sup>®</sup>

Success Story

## Westmont H.S. District 201

**WESTMONT, ILLINOIS**

Westmont H.S. District 201, a Model PLC and winner of the 2020 DuFour Award, increased its graduation rate to nearly 100 percent and saw tenfold growth in successful AP exams after forming its professional learning community.



Solution Tree

# Westmont H.S. District 201

## WESTMONT, ILLINOIS

### DEMOGRAPHICS

- › **365** students
- › **14%** Students with an Individualized Education Program
- › **4%** English language learners
- › **20%** Hispanic
- › **7.7%** African American
- › **64.7%** Caucasian
- › **3.6%** Multiracial
- › **4.1%** Asian
- › **0%** Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- › **0%** Native American

*Westmont H.S. District 201 is located in Westmont, Illinois, a community of approximately 24,650 residents.*

### ► CHALLENGE

For some schools, “Whatever It Takes” is a mantra. For Westmont High School District 201, it’s a way of life.

Westmont, now with more than 15 years of experience as a professional learning community, entrusted the PLC at Work® process to help its staff do whatever it took to ensure high levels of learning for every student.

“I think it was a good place, and it was certainly a place that cared about kids, but we didn’t have the system to bring about maximum effective collaboration,” Westmont High School Principal Jack Baldermann said.

### ► IMPLEMENTATION

Though small in size with just 36 teachers, Westmont’s professional learning community collaborated to create action plans and form SMART goals to plan meaningful interventions for students. More importantly, though, the staff engaged in deep discussion to collectively decide on the specific learning goals, meeting norms, and data benchmarks that would guide their critical work of their PLC.

“We spent months of careful and open discussion to ensure all voices were respected, and in the end, gained near unanimous approval through an anonymous vote of our entire staff,” Baldermann said.

An early warning system (EWS) was established to track failing grades, absences, credits earned, and referrals from the prior school year, to determine which students needed the most support. The EWS is recalculated every quarter to measure progress and growth.

“We know that a meeting without data is just conjecture, and that data must be broken down student by student and skill by skill,” Baldermann said. “Our primary goal is to use the specific student performance information to focus the work done during interventions.”

Westmont also provided its students with additional time and support for learning, such as a literacy workshop tailored to students’ specific needs, and college readiness programs for learners who want explicit training for the ACT or SAT tests.

“If students are not learning, then we come together and provide whatever students need to help them achieve,” Baldermann said. “Our mission is not to teach students, but to ensure all students learn.”

“The passionate care and professional commitment of our entire staff, rooted in PLC values and concepts, has led to an incredible culture and environment for all our students. We are clear that our main focus and purpose is to work with our students so that they grow as compassionate leaders who give service back to their community.”

—Westmont High School Principal Jack Baldermann

## ► RESULTS

Westmont’s accomplishments as a PLC have led to incredible success for students across the board, including its recognition as the most improved high school in Illinois, and one of the most improved and top-performing high schools in the nation.

Before forming its professional learning community, Westmont’s graduation rate stood around 88 percent. In each of the seven years since implementation, that rate has been a shining 99 percent, with all of its students graduating on time in the 2017–2018 school year. One hundred percent of African American and Latino students have graduated for each of the past five years.

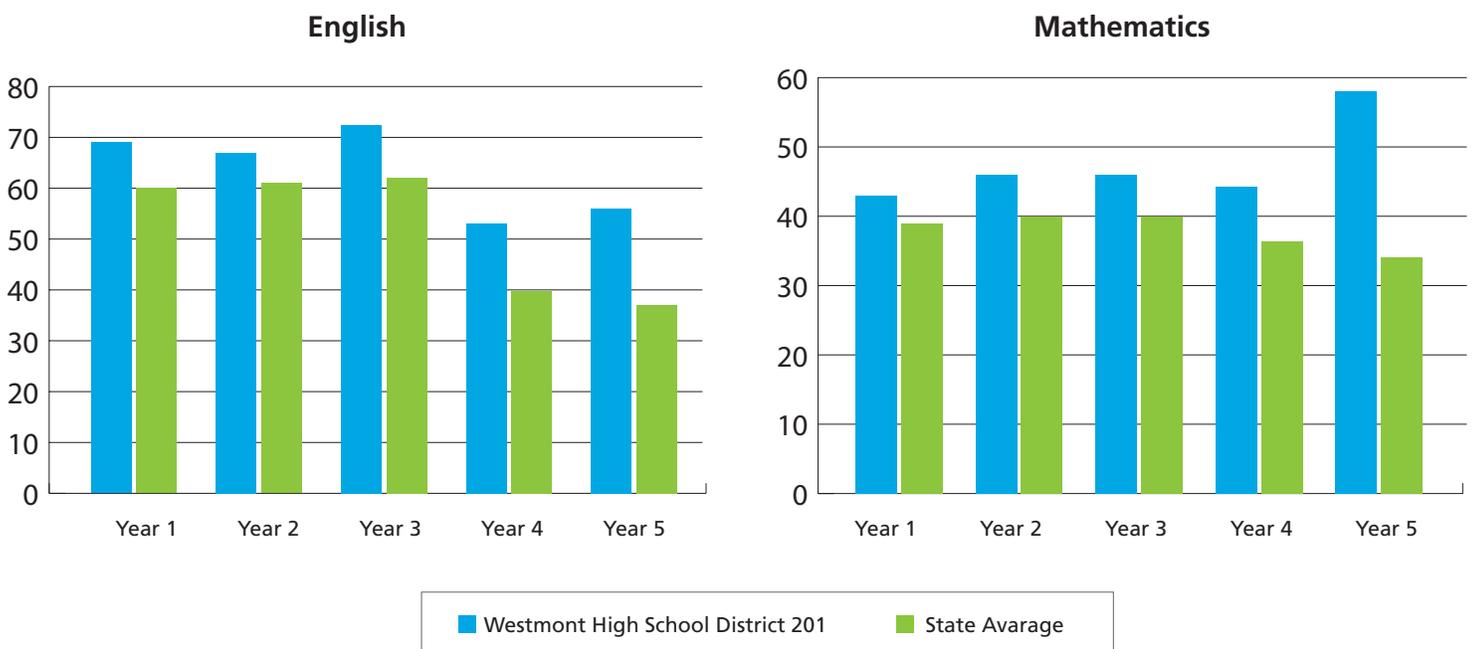
The number of students passing Advanced Placement exams has also increased in that time, growing more than

tenfold from 29 students to 303. Westmont ranks in the top 1 percent of high schools in the country for including students in the rigorous AP course of studies.

For these outstanding successes as a PLC and more, Westmont High School was named the recipient of the prestigious 2020 DuFour Award, which annually honors one outstanding Model PLC that demonstrates exceptional levels of student achievement.

“We built our PLC together, with all members of our school community, on the foundation that compassion and service to others are essential,” Baldermann said. “We continue to work extremely hard and are always looking to improve our skills.”

**Westmont High School District 201  
School Student Achievement Data**  
School Accountability (ACT for 2013–2016, SAT for 2017 and 2018)  
% of students meeting or exceeding proficiency





# Start Your Success Story

**You have a vision for change and improvement in your school or district.** You want to see results in the classroom for the lifelong betterment of your students. Like many educators, you may be doing more with less, and you are always looking for ways to improve.

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**OUR PROMISE:** No other professional learning company provides our unique blend of research-based, results-driven services that improve learning outcomes for students.

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