



Dear Mrs. Sadowiski

At times I got annoyed at all the love work you threw at me. But it was all part of the plan. You helped me share my ideas, and share what I know. You helped me spell so people can understand what I can do with words. You praised me and made school fun. You helped me dig deep and connect with my parents. You helped me read. And now I can't get my nose out of a book. You pushed me farther than I wanted. You pushed me far enough to see how smart I am.

You made learning fun. So I wanted to say,

Thank you

Sincerely Rylee

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Stories of Our School Community



Wissahickon School District
Annual Report to the Community
2017-2018 School Year





This is 3rd grader Joseph Casalinuovo and Mimma Pascucci, his teacher at Shady Grove Elementary. They have built a great bond rooted in genuine caring and clear expectations. Mimma also established meaningful relationships with Joseph's parents! She admits building a strong relationship requires an ongoing effort. Maybe that's why it's so special? She credits trust and consistency as keys to her relationship with Joseph.

In Mimma's words, "I think the key to building a real relationship with a student is to cultivate trust. Trust is not granted easily - it is earned with time and consistency. I believe I have earned Joseph's trust - he knows I will cheer him on at his best moments and pick him up during his lowest moments."

We Take the Time to Talk & Learn About Each Other's Interests

Do you remember a teacher, counselor or other school staff member who made you feel special, supported you, made learning fun and motivated you to work harder? At Wissahickon, our staff and students have formed strong personal connections through classroom activities and informal interactions throughout the school day that facilitate trust, respect and open communication. Here's a few highlights of specific activities:

TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES: To start the school year off on the right foot, teachers organize ice-breakers, artistic projects that are "all about me", classmate interviews and goal-setting activities that provide great insight into student interests and aspirations.

MORNING MEETINGS: In elementary schools, these meetings give students and teachers the opportunity to share something important or interesting going on in their lives – a great way to reinforce listening and learning about each other.

CASUAL CONVERSATION: Classroom Assistants, Counselors and Administrators are present during recess at the elementary schools and at lunch in all schools to have informal conversations, eat lunch or play games at recess with the students.

TROJAN DAYS at the Middle School are no ordinary advisory classes. Students choose from a list of teacher-generated topics (e.g. origami, Fantasy Football) and, based on their interests, are grouped and assigned to a class. These activities give students and teachers the chance to work with others who share a common interest or participate in a new activity of interest.

2017-18 Student Enrollment



Districtwide
4,572



Blue Bell
Elementary School - 414



Lower Gwynedd
Elementary School - 584



Shady Grove
Elementary School - 604



Stony Creek
Elementary School -521



Wissahickon
Middle School - 1083



Wissahickon
High School - 1310



We Mentor and Learn from Each Other

Mentoring is a proven approach to drive rich learning and development for both mentees and mentors. In every school, there are mentorship opportunities that foster meaningful relationships between students and staff.

WMS Classroom Assistant Amy Welsh and student Arianna DeFrancesca were matched together during the 2016-2017 school year as part of the Wissahickon Middle School Mentoring Program. Mrs. Welsh and Arianna, a new student to WMS, met weekly to work on homework, share lunch and talk. The pair had a great connection from the beginning and decided to perform together in the Lip Sync Contest during the WMS Mini-thon. This past year, with Arianna moving on to 8th grade, Mrs. Welsh gained permission from Arianna's parents to continue meeting with her after school at the YMCA.

We Celebrate Accomplishments

Each year, every single student at Blue Bell Elementary is celebrated for an accomplishment whether it be academic or being a good friend or classroom helper. Every student's picture is added to the **Thinking Wall of Fame** display and, at an all-school assembly, Principal Concetta Lupo awards certificates/trophies as the whole school cheers for each student. *"It's impossible to leave the assembly without a smile on your face! It shines a light on every child in our school and helps us all get to know each other a little better,"* Dr. Lupo said.



Nathan Walker is a lucky student. He is among the Shady Grove students who help Building Supervisor Vic Lelii with custodial responsibilities around the school as a reward for good behavior or to take a break from classroom activities when needed. It doesn't matter what the chore is - setting up for events, cleaning up in the cafeteria, delivering paper, picking up trash on the playground - the students say it's fun to work with Mr. Vic and they like to help around the school.

The feeling is mutual. Mr. Vic said having the students help him and getting to know them is the best part of his job. *"I really enjoy working with the kids. We're part of a team - Shady Grove all together. Every staff member believes in building good relationships with all our students."*

We Prioritize Teaching as a People Business

WSD intentionally recruits staff members who have a passion for teaching, forming strong relationships with our students and families, and embracing the best instructional practices and high standards that Wissahickon expects.

It starts with recruiting the best staff. As part of a dynamic interview process, we spend time sharing the culture and expectations of Wissahickon School District to help ensure the position is the **RIGHT FIT** for the candidate as well as for our district. In addition to the traditional interview of prospective faculty members, we also evaluate candidates working with students through a demonstration lesson.

Strong relationships between teachers and administrators are critical. All new teachers are paired with either a formal or informal mentor to support them in their transition to our learning community. At the elementary level, mentors are often grade-level partners or content-specific. At the secondary level, mentors are either team-based or department-based mentors.

Ongoing professional development throughout the year emphasizes KNOWING our students. Teachers are expected to learn **AT LEAST ONE** unique or important thing about **EACH AND EVERY** student in their classes.

Our Staff by the Numbers

377

Teachers

234

Support Staff

36

Administrators

11

Teachers with Doctorates

319

Teachers with Masters Degree

13

Average Years of Teaching



Janice Belcher, Maryland Haig and Tori Grosch are the core teachers of the 6th grade Mustangs team at Wissahickon Middle School. Working as a collaborative team for the past five years, the teachers enjoy planning, differentiating lessons, communicating with other teachers and parents and discussing their students. *“The kids can see that we are a team and how much we genuinely like each other and have fun, which rubs off on them,” Mrs. Haig said.*



“Our rapport is contagious and it helps to build a successful and engaging classroom experience.”

Steve Mogg
WHS Teacher

Steve Mogg and Katie Tzorfas co-teach 11th grade Language Arts and are another Wissahickon dream team. *“Through developing a positive professional relationship and friendship, we have created a welcoming learning environment for our students,” Ms. Tzorfas said.*

We Encourage Participation in Extracurricular Activities

When asked about a school relationship that changed their life, many students will mention their friends who played sports or were in a club with them or a coach/club advisor who taught them new skills, teamwork, perseverance and hard work. At WSD, we actively encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities that expand and enhance their relationships with staff and other students. In 2017-18, we implemented the following:

- New Activities Fair for 9th graders, new students and non-engaged students
- Requirement for 9th graders to set an extracurricular goal
- Extracurricular visits to 8th grade lunches
- WHS Pep Rally to highlight different clubs/activities
- Reduced cost for sports physicals and elimination of the \$50 Activity Fee
- Extracurricular awards at 9th Grade Academy Awards celebration
- New after-school clubs at the elementary schools

75% of students participate in a extracurricular activity at WHS and 60% at WMS



Eighth grader Payton Breinich and Sue Brown, WMS Music Teacher/Drama Club Advisor, both enjoyed working together in class and on the *Mary Poppins Jr.* production.

“Payton worked hard and helped other students,” Mrs. Brown said, while Payton noted that she helped him become the best performer he could be. “Mrs. Brown really helps kids find their strengths in theater and works with you in areas where you may need improvement to get the best experience. She showed me that theater can be more than a hobby. I found what I really wanted to do here.”

This year, **27 girls in grades 3, 4 and 5** participated in the **Girls on the Run** program at Lower Gwynedd Elementary working with three teacher coaches: Jessica Murphy, Taylor Beck and Emily Morin and six parent volunteers. During practice, the coaches/volunteers creatively integrate running while helping the girls build strong relationships, confidence, and personal goals to improve their character and problem solving skills. Ms. Morin noted: *“It truly provides the framework for goal setting and building positive, healthy relationships.”*

We Support Student Programs that Build Relationships

Wissahickon offers a variety of school programs and after-school activities where students are given the opportunity to socialize, share common interests, participate in fun activities and help each other with school work. As a result, students form relationships with people they might not otherwise meet and create friendships that help them socially and academically.

CHARACTER BUILDING PROGRAMS: Students involved in programs like **No Place for Hate** and **Rachel's Challenge** help plan activities that nurture a school environment based on mutual respect and kindness.

PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN GRADE LEVELS: In elementary schools, every 5th grader is paired with a Kindergarten Buddy. High school students may also serve as a mentor to middle school students.

PEER TUTORING PROGRAMS: Students volunteer to tutor other students at the middle school, high school and after-school Homework Club.

SPIRIT ACTIVITIES: Various clubs like Student Council organize activities that impact **EVERYONE**, such as Valentine's Day where every student at WHS received a rose and kind note from another student.



Shaylyn Jackson and Maddy Hippensteal met through **Wiss Pals** - an after-school club where regular education students and autistic support and life skills students participate in activities together. As you can tell from their smiles, the girls have become good friends!

Here's what Maddy shared about their relationship: *"It is great to be friends with Shay. She's the sweetest, cutest and most enthusiastic person I know. Her kind heart makes me happy and I look forward to being able to interact with her each and every day."*

Brooke Shapiro is among the upperclassmen who volunteer to tutor other students through the **STARS (Students Together Achieve Real Success)** program. *"It's nice to apply what I already know to help someone else and see how they can improve their grades and do better in a class. It just keeps giving back."*

Donovan Leary, who is receiving help from Brooke with Spanish and Language Arts, said being tutored by someone with a different perspective than the teacher has really helped him understand the content better.

We Value Parent & Community Volunteers



The successful operation of a school is not possible without the support of parents/guardians and community members who volunteer their time and talent to help our students, staff and families. Many school events, like Career Day and Family Fun Day; classroom presentations and celebrations; and extra academic resources are provided by our caring and dedicated volunteers.

Pedro, a Shady Grove second grader, and Mrs. Margie Hoffman, hit it off at the WAC Cares Homework Club, which assists over **40 elementary students** from Shady Grove and Lower Gwynedd. Held three days each week after school, the club provides elementary students the opportunity to work with "homework helpers" – **35 middle and high school students, staff and community members** who volunteer their time to help the students with reading, doing homework and more.

"Homework club helped me become so good at reading, I was chosen to read to kindergarten students. I made new friends too," said Pedro.

400+

Volunteers in WSD Schools!

Blue Bell Elementary parents Abbey Alpert and Nina Seidel are among the dedicated parents who work with their **Home and School Association (HSA)** to provide fun and educational opportunities for students and families.

Mrs. Alpert, who has twins in kindergarten, joined the HSA this year and organized its' Science Night. *"What I like about the HSA is the events aren't just about academics. They are about having fun. If we get our kids excited about being at school for things like Science Night, it fosters the idea that 'school is a place where I want to be'. This is my community now and it's nice for my kids to see me take pride in their school and take it seriously."*





We Partner with our Business Community

The relationships with area businesses expand learning outside the classroom and provide our students with real-life learning opportunities.

Wissahickon High School's Social Lab internship program allows 12th graders to earn academic credit for their work in a career setting with an area business. Students who participate in this year-long program have classes half of their day and intern in a local business for the other half. For the last five years, **Chickie's Daughter** in Ambler, has provided internships for Wissahickon students such as Celina Foulcher who said working at Chickie's Daughter validated her decision to study Fashion Design. Store Owner Amy Kabinoff said, "students learn every part of running a business – buying, selling, merchandising and customer service."

36
Seniors in
an internship

50
Businesses that offer
internships



Johnson and Johnson and Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) provide students with a unique learning opportunity in the pharmaceutical industry. Through the **Bridges to Employment** program, students follow the development of a product from the research and development phase through getting the product into the hands of the consumer. Mentors from Johnson and Johnson and MCCC work with small teams of students, share their career path stories and give practical advice to the students. "This is one of the most exciting programs that I have seen connecting the classroom to the real world. The mentors are very generous with their time and skills. They demonstrate that students will continue to find caring adults who support young people as they journey into the work force," said WHS Associate Principal Tom Andrzejewski.

36
Students in program

12
Workplace Coaches
and Mentors



Over the last three years, **Ambler Savings Bank** has donated **\$35,000** through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC) to help enhance Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programming in our schools. This year's contribution supported the WMS Boys/Girls Who Code Club, an after-school activity for boys/girls in grades 6-8 that teaches them how to write computer code, create apps, games and websites. "Our students really enjoyed the experience and the challenge. It was amazing to watch the girls come together as a team to plan, problem-solve and create code to solve real-world problems," said Joann Groark, Girls Who Code Advisor.

15
Participants in WMS Girls Who Code Club

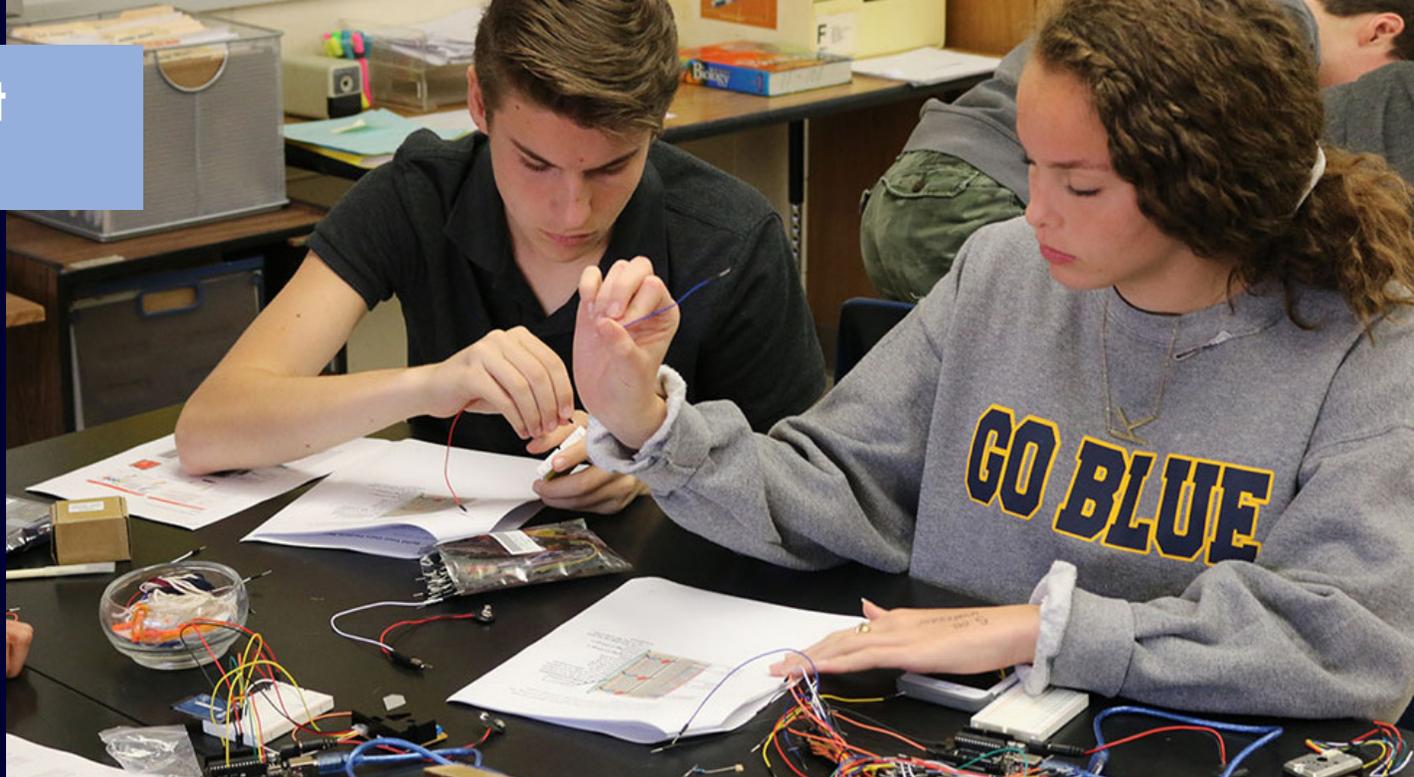
30
Participants in WMS Boys Who Code Club

We Team Up with Great Community Partners

For 26 years, the relationship between the **Wissahickon Educational Opportunities Foundation (WEOF)** and the school district has expanded learning opportunities for students in all six schools. A non-profit organization, WEOF raises money to fund grants for projects and programs ranging from technology to the arts.

This year, a grant to Terry Jarvis, WHS Biology Teacher, supported a STEM project where students built air sensors that were used to learn how air quality is measured, assess the air quality in the Wissahickon School District and the surrounding areas, and present their findings to their classmates.

For more information about WEOF visit weof.org.



\$750,000

Amount of WEOF Learning Grants to Expand WSD Programs Since 1992



The district's relationship with the **Wissahickon Valley Boys and Girls Club** in Ambler is really special. Shady Grove Elementary students receive after-school support there. Alumna Robyn Betterly, Class of 1981, who has volunteered for seven years is on a mission to teach students about good nutrition. Her weekly cooking class includes 10 students who love learning different recipes and trying their hand at cooking delicious meals with healthy ingredients. Every Friday, Ms. Betterly also provides a pre-packaged bag of fruit and vegetables with a recipe the students can make at home.

70

Shady Grove Students in the Boys and Girls Club

"The best compliment I received was from a 6th grader, Kayla, who said 'I told my family to try new foods because you never know what will be your new favorite. I learned that from you, Miss Robin!'"

Robyn Betterly, Volunteer and WSD Alumna

We Work Hand in Hand with Emergency Personnel



Lower Gwynedd Police Officer Beth Sanborn is a familiar face to Luke Pai and other students in our schools where she serves as a full-time School Resource Officer. *“One of my goals is to show students that police officers are human beings, no different than they are, and remind them that we are helpers and someone you can turn to when in need.”*

Sanborn and other emergency personnel from the local police and fire departments regularly meet with staff, students and families to provide educational presentations, resources and support. They also work closely with our administration and staff on school safety initiatives.

We All Make a Difference in our Children’s Lives!

There are many ways community members can get involved with our schools and support our students:

- 🍏 Volunteer in our Schools or with our Community Partners (WAC Homework Club, WEOF)
- 🍏 Be a Career Day Speaker or Class Presenter
- 🍏 Provide a Business Internship
- 🍏 Join our Alumni Network
- 🍏 Sponsor our Programs, Teams & Clubs
- 🍏 Attend School & Athletic Events (**FREE** for residents 62 and over with a WSD Gold Card)

Additional stories about special relationships in our school community will be highlighted throughout the 2018-2019 school year on our website - wsdweb.org - and social media.



We Connect with Our Veterans

Veterans have so much to teach our students! Every year, our schools invite veterans to speak to our students about U.S. wars/conflicts, their experience in the military and the importance of service to our country. As a school community, we also recognize and honor their sacrifices to protect our country through various events and activities. This year, we launched a fundraising initiative to install a Veterans Memorial at Wissahickon High School where students, staff and community can pay our respects to those who serve. Students, families and staff are actively supporting this noble cause. Community members interested in supporting the memorial can find more information at gofundme.com/wsd-veteran-memorial.

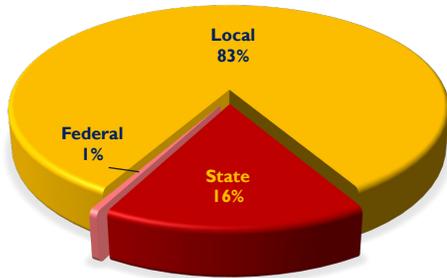


2018-2019 Budget Highlights

Wissahickon School District
601 Knight Road
Ambler, PA 19002

Nonprofit Organization
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 444
LANSDALE, PA

Revenue Sources

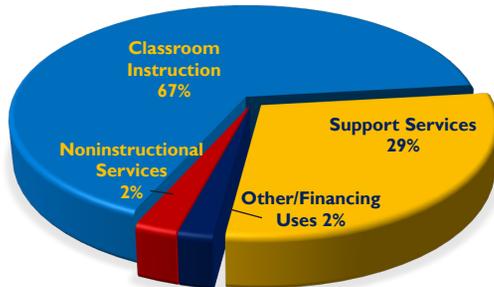


\$102 Million
Total Budget

20.02
Millage Rate

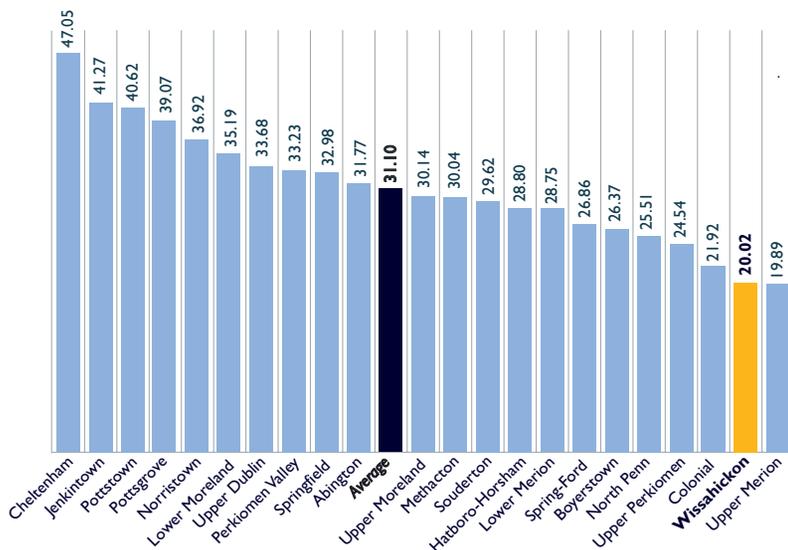
2.98%
Property Tax Increase

Expenses



\$121
Property tax increase for a household with a median assessed value of \$207,000

Montgomery County School District Millage Rates 2018-2019



Property taxes in Wissahickon are well below the average and second lowest among the 21 districts in Montgomery County.

(To calculate your property tax, multiply the assessment of your property by the mill rate and divide by 1,000)



Strong Student Outcomes and District Accolades

353

Class of 2018 Graduates

99.9%

Graduation rate

94%

Percentage of graduates attending four-year or two-year college/trade/technical school

100.7

2017-2018 School Performance Profile for Wissahickon High School: Second highest in the state

22nd

Wissahickon High School ranking of Best High Schools in Pennsylvania (out of 1,501 high schools) U.S. News & World Report

More Student Outcomes Information is available in our WHS School Profile on our website