WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

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WPS Professional Development Plan

2026-2027

Westwood Public Schools provides extensive professional learning opportunities to ensure that district educators and staff are highly effective in their roles, and well-prepared to implement district curriculum and instructional goals. It is our steadfast belief that if we, as educators and leaders, actively engage in professional learning and growth, demonstrating what it means to be a lifelong, continuous learner, our schools, systems, and ultimately our students will benefit from that learning and we will see improved outcomes for all.

The district professional development programming includes multiple components, and offers a mix of voluntary and required training and growth opportunities for all staff. The development of this plan is done in collaboration with Central Office leadership, principals and instructional leaders, the Professional Development Council, and with feedback from staff around the prior year's offerings and requests for future professional learning opportunities.

Early Release Professional Development Afternoons

2026-2027 PD Calendar

Approximately twice a month, Westwood schools dismiss students early, and the teacher day is slightly extended, to allow time for professional development, collaborative work, or other priorities for schools and the district. The WTA contract outlines the use of several of these early release times (about 8-10 early release dates, depending on the grade span) to ensure adequate time for report card writing, conducting conferences, and collaborating with colleagues. The remaining early release afternoons are used for professional development for staff.

- Some afternoons are designated as **Building-Based days**, where principals and teams at each school determine the agenda and facilitate professional development for the staff at the school. These afternoons advance the school's progress on their School Improvement Plan goals and towards district goals.
- Some afternoons are **Department Days**, where educators gather by department rather than by school (eg, K-12 Performing Arts Department, 6-8 Science Department, 9-12 Math Department, etc.). Elementary classroom teachers are usually pulled together by grades across the district, to focus on a content area (eg, Grade 4 teachers districtwide meet for PD in Social Studies, Grades 1-2 teachers meet for PD in Math, etc.).

Departments may be looking at student work, collaborating on planning and assessments, implementing new curriculum programs, and more.

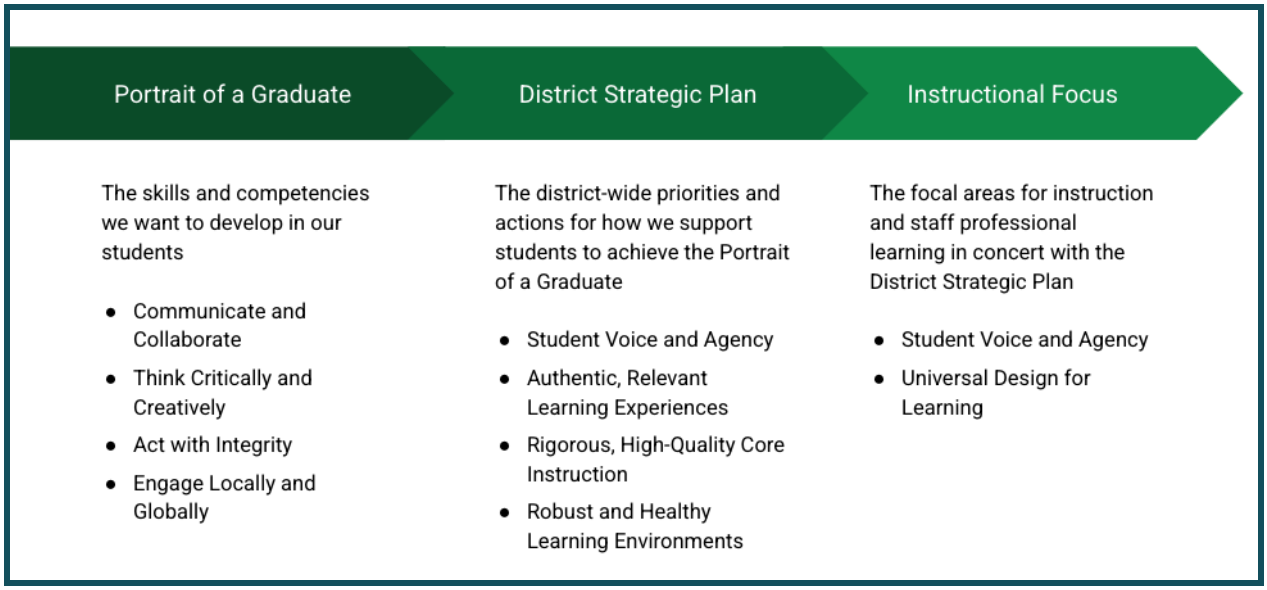
- For 2026-2027, one early release day, and the full-day professional development, are designated as **District Days**, with the focus and agenda determined by the district. This year's plans are described below.

District Professional Development Days

In accordance with the WTA contract, Westwood educators have a full day for professional learning during the school year, which is often done on the Monday after the Thanksgiving break, or on election day in presidential election years. For 2026-2027, this full day on November 30th, along with an early release afternoon on October 14th, are opportunities for the entire district to focus on moving forward our Strategic Plan goals.

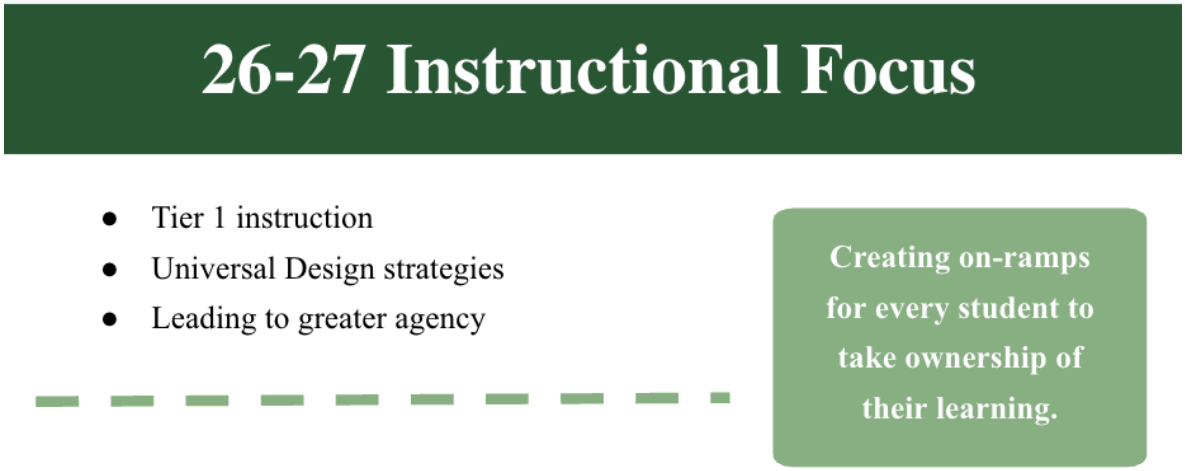
During the 25-26 school year, our instructional focus was on Student Voice and Agency, alongside Universal Design for Learning. These focus areas came out of our work with the Portrait of a Graduate, and then the Strategic Planning process, which highlighted for us achievement gaps we see in our student outcomes, as well as our students' desire for, and capacity to, take on more ownership in classrooms and in their learning journeys. The district professional development during that year was designed to ensure all staff understood the "why" behind the focus on student voice, agency, and UDL, as well as the "what" - the foundational best practices for UDL.

2025-2026 Instructional Focus



What we learned last year was that different teachers and different schools were in very different places in regards to being able to effectively implement UDL, and strategies to increase student voice. We worked to differentiate PD offerings to meet the needs of our diverse (adult) learners, and will continue to do that. As we enter our second year focusing on these topics, though, we plan to be more specific and directive in the expected learning outcomes for all staff, and also more explicit about the ways in which UDL strategies lead to increased student voice, agency, and executive function skills that our students need:

2026-2027 Instructional Focus



While the exact agendas for these PD times are still in development, we are excited to share the general overview:

October 14, 2026

- All staff will work at the building level to raise up common understandings and consistent language around Universal Design for Learning, to prepare for the November full-day professional development that will extend and deepen the learning.

November 30, 2026

- This day will begin with a keynote address by Kristen Jacobsen, invoking our district instructional focus and providing educators with a common framework for understanding Executive Functioning skills and strategies
- Then, three concurrent breakout sessions will group educators by role to extend the keynote into applicable strategies
- Educators will select from a menu of workshops facilitated by WPS educators, sharing strategies, tools, and best practices for amplifying student voice and implementing UDL in our myriad educational spaces and roles
- Finally, educators will gather by school to reflect, debrief, and connect the day's learning to their school context

Elementary Literacy

At the Elementary level, a significant amount of professional development time will be devoted to supporting the pilot of a high-quality literacy program. At the leadership level, principals will meet regularly with both district leadership and K-5 curriculum leaders to learn about the shifts in literacy instruction, evaluate the progress of the pilot, and determine supports for teachers. Pilot teachers will receive regular support and professional development from the literacy specialists, with up-front training from the pilot program vendors. Finally, once a program is chosen in winter 2027, all elementary teachers will be trained in the program starting on the winter-spring early release Wednesday afternoons.

Instructional Assistant and ABA Tutor PD

The district is making a concerted effort to strengthen our professional development plan for our Instructional Assistants and ABA Tutors, who provide critical support to students daily. A small working group, including IAs, ABA Tutors, Special Education Department Heads, and central office leaders, was convened in Spring 2026, to propose professional development topics and structures for the upcoming year. One outcome of that small group was to create and share a survey for all district IAs and ABA tutors, collecting feedback and ideas for professional learning. Between the working group conversations, and the feedback collected through the survey, a series of six professional development afternoons over the course of the school year, plus a targeted strand on our District full-day PD, are being planned to better meet the needs of our IAs and ABAs.

District Professional Learning Courses

The Westwood Professional Learning Courses are after-school and summer courses facilitated by educators, for their colleagues. Each spring, the district PD Council - a committee including educators and administrators from across the district - puts out a request for proposals for PD courses. Course proposals are vetted by the PDC, and the Committee makes recommendations to the district leadership on the slate of courses to be offered the following year. The PDC endeavors to recommend a slate of courses that are aligned with district goals and initiatives, and appeal to many stakeholder groups and interests in the district. PD Coordinator Angela Wilson manages the process of collecting course syllabi, scheduling courses, creating the course catalog and registration, and working with course facilitators and educators to ensure courses run smoothly. This year, the courses being offered to Westwood educators are:

SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Cultivating Calm: Personal Wellness is your 1st priority	Building Classroom Culture	Westwood Poetry Workshop: Poetry Across Communities	Defending Democracy: How Civic Action Has Protected American Democratic Institutions
Drawing Connections: Art Across the Curriculum	UDL in the Wild: More Than One Way to Play	Behavioral De-escalation Tools for the Classroom	
The Organized Educator's Guide to AI Productivity	10 Psychology Studies That Changed Education	Peer Coaching: Observe, Reflect, Grow Together	
	Vibe-rant Classroom Innovations		

Induction and Mentoring

Educators in their first three years in Westwood Public Schools participate in our Induction and Mentoring program. The program includes:

- A 3-day New Teacher Orientation at the start of the school year
- A trained mentor for the first three years of employment in WPS. Mentors and mentees meet regularly, and the mentor provides support for the new educator in navigating the role and responsibilities.

Professional Development Partnerships

In addition to our in-district PD offerings, Westwood partners with the following organizations to provide additional professional development options at reduced or no cost to educators. These partnerships ensure relevant PD for all job roles, access to timely PD topics that we may not yet have expertise within the district, and provide opportunities for educators to accrue Professional Development Points (PDPs) needed for DESE licensure renewal and advancement.

PD Partner	Key PD Topics/Focus
IDEAS	Culturally Proficient Practices
Primary Source	Social Studies, Citizenship, Global Awareness
Teachers as Scholars (TAS)	Humanities, Science, Math Content
The Education Cooperative (TEC)	Meeting K-12 educator licensure needs; current topics

Leader Professional Learning

This year, our school and district leaders will engage in professional learning together to help further our district goals. With our continued instructional focus on UDL and Student Voice and Agency, our work together as a leadership team will be to build our capacity to identify strong practices, facilitate school-based professional learning and coaching in these areas, and leverage our district systems and processes in ways that further support our instructional goals. We will accomplish this through the following structures:

- Joint Council “New Member” meetings to establish clarity and consistency around the implementation of the Growth and Evaluation system for continuous improvement
- An Elementary Leadership Council, a new structure to ensure regular communication and collaboration among K-5 Principals and Curriculum Coordinators. The work of the ELC this year will center literacy instruction, but will incorporate opportunities for instructional leadership around UDL within literacy and other content areas
- Admin Council bi-monthly meetings that serve as collaborative learning opportunities around the core focus of strong Tier 1 classroom instruction - what are best practices that

engage all students and lift up student voices, where are we seeing examples of this in the district, and how do we coach and lead to further the work?

- K-12 Principal Meetings as an operational anchor, ensuring clear communication around the technical work of school administration, as well as a thought partnership to plan out the Admin Council and school-based professional learning times.
- An optional, voluntary, Women in Leadership affinity group, providing a network of leadership support and learning for district administrators who identify as women