

why **WPSD**?





WPSD understands.

WPSD *understands* that all parents want to provide the very best opportunities for their children. We *understand* that parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children face additional challenges and decisions. We *understand* that the vast, and often conflicting information on language and educational methodologies can be confusing. We *understand* that hearing loss affects the entire family.

WPSD *understands* how children with hearing loss learn and socialize. We also *understand* that delays in language development can affect learning and that every child has the right to access language and to educational achievement.

WPSD *understands* that each deaf and hard-of-hearing child is different and unique.



Parents of a child with hearing loss face a variety of complex questions and decisions.

- How do we best advocate for our children?
- Should we use sign language and/or spoken language?
- Should our child get cochlear implants?
- How do we give our children the best education possible?
- Should they go to a mainstream or specialized school?
- How do we deal with a child who is not only deaf but has other disabilities?

WPSD believes that every child has unique strengths and talents. Our teachers and professional staff recognize the particular academic needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing children. We recognize the gaps and obstacles they've encountered. That is why WPSD works with parents to develop high quality, individualized programs that support the goals of each and every family so that their child may reach his/her true potential.

“My own research and that of others has clearly demonstrated that ‘Deaf children are not hearing children who can’t hear.’ Beyond their hearing thresholds, there are differences in their early experiences, their learning styles, and (as a result) even their brains. WPSD has demonstrated that they are able to build on their students’ strengths while accommodating their needs.”

– **MARC MARSCHARCK, PH.D.**

*Director, Center for Education Research Partnerships,
Rochester Institute of Technology*



“Early language experiences create the ability to learn throughout the lifespan, regardless of the mode of communication.”

- MAYBERRY & LOCK
Brain and Language. 2003

The acquisition of language.

At WPSD, the acquisition of language is at the heart of learning. We understand that a language-rich environment, where the child has full access to adult and peer interaction, is vital to learning.

- More than 30% of our student body has cochlear implants
- 52% use hearing aids
- 18% are un-aided

Our staff is specifically trained to evaluate the child's needs and help parents understand their options and how to advocate for their child. We understand that open communication between the School and the family is necessary to create a partnership in which goals are shared and the student is the priority.

The student's communication plan is an integral part of the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and is developed with parent and teacher input. WPSD's All-Inclusive language/communication environment ensures that we meet the needs of the individual student. Instruction is offered in:

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Sign Supported English
- Spoken English

A wide range of support services is offered to all enrolled students:

- Speech therapy
- English and sign language instruction
- Audiological services
- Psychological counseling
- Physical therapy
- Visual support



WPSD is committed.

WPSD is committed to student growth and achievement. From preschool through 12th grade, our curriculum is aligned with national and state education standards, but we don't stop there. We believe in high expectations, accountability and academic excellence. We believe that students need to be challenged and to be given opportunities to stretch their imaginations and to step beyond their everyday experiences.



73% of the 2014 graduating class were enrolled in a university or other post-secondary education program.

Our experienced, certified teachers understand that children with hearing loss are primarily visual learners.

- Classrooms and educational methodology are designed to engage students and ensure productive instruction.
- Small class sizes, the latest educational technology and dynamic sound field systems support student learning.

WPSD collaborates with parents and students to design an Individualized Education Plan that matches the goals and strengths of each child. Whether the goal is to transfer to a mainstream school or graduate from WPSD, our professional education team works together with the child and the family to achieve success.

“WPSD has helped our family raise Maggie. They taught us a language to communicate with and a culture to embrace. She is in college now and the world is her oyster! Thanks in huge part, to WPSD.”

– L. DONALDSON
WPSD parent



The ability to connect.

In this ever-changing global environment, knowledge, experience and comfort with the larger world and the latest technology is extremely important. WPSD classrooms are equipped with the most current educational equipment and software. Laptops, iPads, SmartBoards and videophones are all part of the daily life at WPSD.

Our students have opportunities to participate in a variety of educational programs like:

- Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama
- Close-UP in Washington, D.C.
- TechNights @ Carnegie Mellon University (CMU)
- Bots, IQ, a regional robotic design and building competition
- Regional and national Academic Bowl competitions

WPSD provides additional experiences through class trips ranging from the Pittsburgh Zoo and Carnegie Museums to our state Capitol, Gettysburg, New York City, Washington, DC, and the junior class trip to London, UK.

Unique alliances provide our students with access to specialized learning and educational programs. The School has established educational partnerships with:

- Rochester Institute of Technology
- Carnegie Mellon University
- Community College of Allegheny County
- Forbes Road Career & Technology Center

“Without language and communication the individual is lost to the joys of human contact, the ability to connect thought and symbol, and the beauty of learning; without them a child cannot grow, become literate, or be productive members of our democracy. Deaf and hard of hearing children like all children in our nation deserve and need communication and language.

WPSD is a model for all programs interested in providing D/HH students with a language rich academic program.”

– LARRY SIEGEL
Esquire





Dual-credit Coursework.

Dual-credit coursework is available to our college-bound students, exposing them to the rigors of college academic life and earning credits that transfer to college for a head start on degree completion.

In the 2014-2015 school year, students have the opportunity to enroll in their choice of four programs:

- Raster & Vector Graphics
- Computer Applications
- Environmental Science
- Page Layout



100% of WPSD high school students enrolled in dual-credit classes achieved college credit.

Socialization and leadership.

WPSD understands that learning doesn't stop at the end of the school day. Our students develop socialization and leadership skills through after school activities ranging from chess club to service organizations to a comprehensive sports program.



We are involved.

WPSD students and our staff are strongly committed to community engagement. Students are involved with the larger community - giving our time, our talents and our resources to help each other grow and learn.

- Our Environmental Science program takes our high school students into the community to work with the Pittsburgh Park Conservancy as "Eco-Stewards of the Environment."
- Pittsburgh's renowned "Attack Theatre" joins the WPSD performing and visual arts program with a residency in creative movement and kinesthetic learning in the classroom.
- The Girls' Athletic Association supports cancer awareness and research through fundraisers and assembling and delivering "Chemo Bags" for patients undergoing treatment in local hospitals.



“WPSD prepared me for life on many different levels, but the biggest impact was by building positive self-esteem.”

- R. LAYTON
Class of 1989



“WPSD changed my grandson’s life! The experiences he received through the academic and residential program prepared him to be an independent young adult. He is now in college and studying to become an engineer. We are eternally grateful to WPSD.”

- L. YAKACKI
WPSD grandparent

Home-away-from home.

WPSD understands that school is not just a place to learn but often a second home to students. Residential life has been a proud tradition for much of the School's 145-year history. During the 180-day school year, WPSD serves as a home-away-from home for more than 40% of our student population, some of whom live as far as six hours from the main campus. Parents entrust the School with their child's well-being, academic achievement, and safety.

Our new, modern and well-equipped residence supports learning, responsibility, independence, personal development, and academic achievement for elementary, middle school, and high school children.

- Students live on campus from Sunday afternoon through Friday, returning home on weekends.
- Major emphasis is placed on providing the same kind of social, emotional and academic support that parents would provide if the child were at home.
- Our residential staff welcomes open and consistent communication with parents and families.



Providing opportunity.

Providing deaf and hard of hearing children with the opportunity for an education and a lifetime of success has been the mission of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf since 1869. Thousands of children have come through our doors and each one has been welcomed as an individual with unique needs and talents.

WPSD provides tuition-free educational and extracurricular programs in an all inclusive communication environment. With campuses in Pittsburgh and Scranton, WPSD serves over 300 deaf and hard-of-hearing children, birth through twelfth grade, from 124 school districts and 54 counties across Pennsylvania.





Why WPSD?

WPSD understands the importance and the responsibility of educating and nurturing children. It is our mission and our goal to help each child reach his/her fullest potential and to succeed in life.

Our graduates attend college, technical training or join the workforce. They have become educators, IT specialists, business owners, carpenters, mechanics and artists. They are accomplished, productive, well-rounded citizens.

Participating in the total learning environment at WPSD can change a child's life forever by opening the door to a world of possibilities.

We invite you to schedule a tour of our campus, visit our classrooms and meet our staff and our students.

Call 412.371.7000 or email swellman@wpsd.org.



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
