



2025-2026 Phase One: Executive Summary for Schools_09302025_10:22

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West Hardin Middle School
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Description of the School

Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?

West Hardin Middle School is located in Stephensburg, KY, approximately 11 miles southwest of Elizabethtown. Our school population, approximately 520 students, draws from the largest geographic region in the district and includes both rural farming communities and portions of the Elizabethtown city limits. Our community consists of our school, an elementary school, a drive-in diner and a volunteer fire department. There are several small churches in the community as well. However, our school district encompasses several other communities including White Mills, Big Clifty, Eastview, as well as parts of Cecilia, Glendale, and Elizabethtown. Dating back to the 1950s, our building has served the district as Stephensburg Elementary and West Hardin High School. We now serve grades 6-8 with 38 certified staff members and 20 classified staff members. Our school population has fluctuated over the past few years, going from 560's to almost 620 in 2019 and now 520 in 2025. We anticipate an increase in enrollment as Ford has finalized plans to build a battery plant nearby and as we move into our new building in about 2 years.

School Stakeholders

Identify and describe the school's stakeholder groups. How does the school ensure stakeholder involvement and engagement in the improvement planning process?

Parents and guardians are essential stakeholders who have a vested interest in their children's education and well-being. Our Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSA's) or parent councils will provide input and engage in school decisions. Surveys and feedback forms to gather parent/guardian opinions on school improvements will also be utilized, as well as workshops and informational sessions to ensure all stakeholders are informed about school initiatives.

Students are key stakeholders as they are directly affected by the quality of education and school environment. Their perspective will be heard through student council and Laker Connect groups. Data from student surveys which gather feedback on various aspects of school life are also utilized in the improvement planning process.

This year, we also sought out feedback from the Kentucky Center for Safe Schools, which conducted interviews with a diverse group of over 100 students, parents, teachers, bus drivers, and district personnel. Their input focused on school safety and climate, providing valuable insights that will inform our ongoing improvement efforts.

Teachers and staff members are integral to the daily operations and educational outcomes of the school. Their involvement in the improvement planning process will take place through faculty meetings, committees, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and professional development.

Finally, community members and organizations often have a vested interest in the success of the school and its students. Through partnerships with local businesses and organizations for resources and support, we will ensure their input in our improvement planning process.

School's Purpose

Provide the school's purpose statement and supplementary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs, including the year in which they were last reviewed or revised. Describe how the school embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students and how stakeholders are involved in its development.

West Hardin Middle School will empower and inspire all students to apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to be problem solvers, achieve personal success, and contribute responsibly to their communities. We believe all students have the ability, right, and responsibility to learn and achieve their own individual successes. We believe in recognizing and accepting the differences and challenges in each student's abilities, background, and family structure. We believe in partnerships among students, families, the community, and our staff to promote student skills and work ethic necessary to be productive members of society.

In alignment with these beliefs, we have finalized our Portrait of a Learner competencies that all students in Hardin County Schools and at West Hardin should demonstrate. These competencies—Engaged Learner, Active Collaborator, Effective Communicator, Personal Champion, and Responsible Citizen—were developed collaboratively with input from all stakeholders and are tailored to each educational level: elementary, middle, and high school. To showcase their growth and mastery, students will present defenses this year, demonstrating how they embody these competencies in both academic and personal contexts.

Notable Achievements

Describe the school's notable achievements in the last three years.

The 2024–2025 school year was a success, and we plan to build upon that momentum in the year ahead.

West Hardin has placed a strong emphasis on i-Ready growth and achievement, especially in light of recent changes to the state assessment system. The i-Ready diagnostic is administered three times a year, and our students consistently performed above state averages in both math and reading for the percentage testing on or above grade level. From fall to spring, our i-Ready data reflected high performance and high growth in both subjects, with reading showing exceptional

progress—West Hardin achieved the highest growth of any Hardin County Schools campus, posting an impressive 206% increase.

In addition to strong assessment outcomes, we expanded advanced academic opportunities. Sixty-three students participated in and successfully completed advanced math courses, marking a steady increase from the previous year. Recognizing the need for enrichment in English Language Arts as well, we launched advanced ELA classes based on i-Ready scores, enrolling 60 students to ensure those with high literacy potential are equally challenged and supported.

Our students also earned individual academic accolades, including winners of the Kentucky Ag and Environment in the Classroom essay contest and recipients of the Preparing for Success scholarship. Our staff was recognized as well, with several teachers awarded the Nolin RECC Lighthouse Grant to enhance classroom instruction and student engagement.

Beyond academics, our extracurricular programs continue to thrive. For the past two years, our band has consistently earned distinguished ratings. Three students earned spots in the prestigious All-State Band, while another three advanced to the National Beta Convention after winning at the state level. Our VEX robotics team continued its impressive streak, winning the state championship for the third consecutive year and qualifying for—and attending—the World Championship last year.

We were also honored to receive the Purple Star Award, recognizing our school's commitment to supporting military families and students.

We continue to make meaningful gains in student attendance, particularly among those identified as chronically absent. Of the students who received targeted support, 32% successfully met the attendance goals we set. Overall, 64% of these students showed improvement, with 56% increasing their attendance by 5% or more and 28% achieving an increase of 10% or more—clear indicators that our interventions are making a positive impact.

Our PBIS program remains a cornerstone of student engagement. Throughout the year, we teach Laker Expectations and reward students with Laker Loot for various accomplishments. Students can use their Laker Loot at our monthly PBIS store or at a larger auction held twice a year. As part of this initiative, the Laker Pride Party is also held each trimester to celebrate student success, and this year, over 70% of students in each grade earned the opportunity to participate by meeting expectations in attendance, behavior, and academic performance.

Areas of Improvement

Describe areas for improvement that the school is striving to achieve in the next three years.

Looking ahead, one area of growth is increasing parental involvement. West Hardin aims to host more events that encourage family participation and strengthen the home-school connection. Additionally, we plan to deepen our community engagement by building authentic partnerships with local businesses, helping

expose students to real-world opportunities and resources available within our community.

We also recognize the importance of continuing to strengthen our support systems for student mental health and well-being. Expanding access to counseling services, implementing proactive wellness initiatives, and providing professional development for staff on trauma-informed practices are key priorities.

Another area of focus is enhancing student voice and leadership. While we've made strides through student councils and Laker Connect groups, we aim to provide more structured opportunities for students to lead initiatives, and showcase their growth through platforms like Portrait of a Learner defenses.

Additional Information

Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

West Hardin's school story can be found on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We utilize social media to share our school's successes and to constantly communicate with our stakeholders about our school vision of Sailing to Success.

Attachment Summary

Attachment Name	Description	Associated Item(s)
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