

Meeting Your Needs

February 2025



A Message from Mark - February 2024

We sure pack a lot into February: Groundhog Day. Black History Month. The Super Bowl. Valentine's Day. The Governor's Budget. The next West40 Newsletter!

Thank you for joining us as we focus on the third line of our mission statement: We Will Walk Further With You. Please know that we are very deliberate in how we describe it. We don't push you from behind. We walk with you. To us that means being supportive in collaboration, coming alongside in your journey.



Currently, the notion of walking further with you is manifest in a wide variety of ways at West40. Whether it's supporting students through our ALOP programs, finding additional sources of funding to pay for educator training, or promoting school safety across the country, West40 strives to meet the vast array of needs in our partner districts and communities.

Please enjoy the action-packed month of February and know that your family, friends and colleagues at West0 are walking alongside you to keep you safe, support your needs and wrap you up to be ready for success!

Dr. Mark A. Klaisner

Three Ways West40 is Meeting Your Needs

Expanding Student Advocacy Across Illinois

West40 provides "wrap-around" services and supports to students who are struggling to meet their potential. We embed these supports within the home school where students are poised for success. To do a better job of walking further with our districts, we have expanded the number of districts in which we partner and expanded the breadth of grade levels in which we work.



In the past few months, West40 has provided direct assistance to over a dozen Regional Offices of Education looking to launch or expand their ALOP programs, ensuring at-risk students receive the support they need.

"As programs grow across the state, we are hopeful that the foundation West40 has established will continue to flourish with support from other offices, strengthening our impact and increasing opportunities for every student to thrive," said Senior Director of Student Programs Renee Makris.

Additionally, the West40 leadership team has worked with state agencies and regional offices to advocate for policies that strengthen alternative learning options statewide.

Finding Grant Money To Support Educators and Administrators

We realized in West40 that to do the work we need and want to do, we must be creative in finding funding sources. Under the leadership of our Director of Grants, Cara Wiley, we have built a full time team of 10 people scouring the grants world for available funding sources and mechanisms for us to use in fostering our mission.



Funding from grants has allowed us to service more than 180 schools statewide with professional development and trainings on Tier 1 and 2 mental health intervention strategies and approaches, expand school safety professional development to 22 districts under the TVTP (Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention) grant, provide technical assistance to 20 districts write for and manage their own Stronger Connections grant to provide students with safe and supportive learning opportunities and environments, and provide more than 3000 students and their families with academic and enrichment opportunities through the After School Programs Grant.

The West40 Grants team is dedicated to securing the seeds of opportunity—nurturing investments that transform classrooms, empower educators, support families, and unlock the potential of every student by meeting them where they are and providing exactly what they need.

Making Schools Safer

We must acknowledge that children cannot learn unless they feel safe first. At West40, we like to say that we focus on "Heartening and Hardening" our schools. By this we mean making the physical structures as safe as we can make them and focusing on the social and emotional needs of the people (big and little) who are in the building every day.



Comprehensive Educational Services team members continue to support districts by conducting Health Life Safety and Compliance visits, issuing Building and Occupancy Permits to districts as they build and upgrade their facilities, and supporting building and grounds personnel by organizing and off-setting the cost of trainings, such as Electrical Training in the Workplace.

Additionally, our STAT team engages in partnerships with a variety of organizations conducting security assessments, emergency operations plans, and facilitating safety trainings specific to the district. These partnerships extend to organizations outside the West40 area and as far away as Wyoming, Michigan, and Georgia.

The CES Department supports West40 districts with residency concerns, McKinney-Vento families, verifying eLearning plans, approving Waivers, and approving HLS grant opportunities.

"The CES team always approaches their partnership with districts as supporting their individual needs, never a 'gotcha'," said Chief Comprehensive Educational Services Officer Steve Bogren.

After all, we all want what is what's best for kids.

Speaker Urges Administrators to be Future-Focused at Leadership Summit



West40's first annual Leadership Summit brought together school leaders from across the region for an inspiring conversation about the future of education in a world of Artificial Intelligence.

Keynote speaker Dr. Bill Daggett emphasized why AI matters and how it can support, not replace, great teaching. Yet he challenged attendees to think beyond the present so students can be prepared for their future, not our past.

"We need to prepare our kids to have skills, knowledge, and attributes that AI doesn't have," said Dr. Daggett.

Riverside School District 96 superintendent Dr. Martha Ryan-Toye said her team enjoyed the opportunity to hear Dr. Daggett speak about the future of education and the impact of AI.

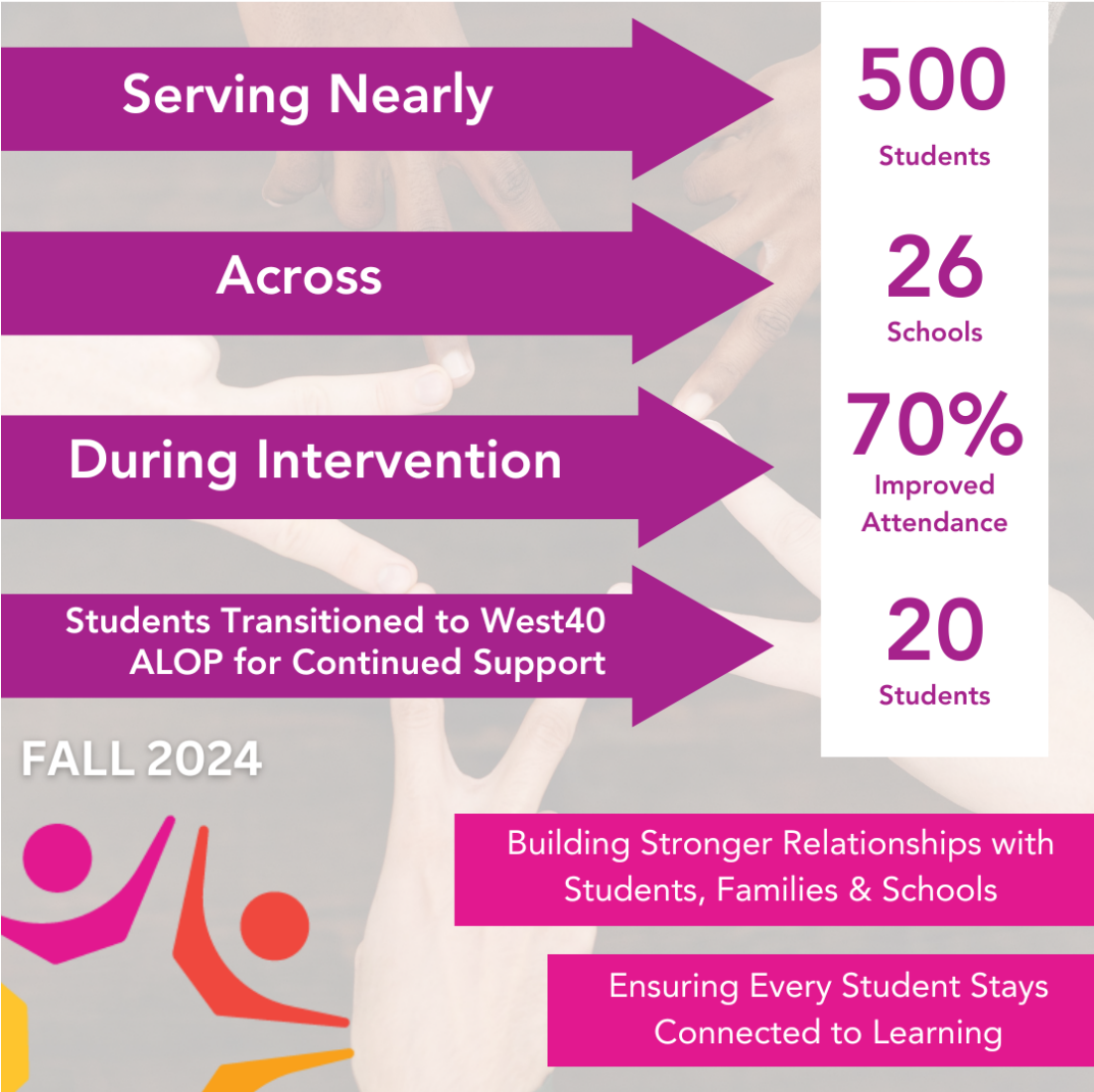
"Dr. Daggett's workshop provided us with increased awareness and important time for each team to reflect on what this means for students and staff," said Dr. Ryan-Toye. "While some components of AI feel daunting to educators, Dr. Daggett created a thoughtful and optimistic outlook for educators and students."

Thank you to all of the attendees who gathered for this day of learning and collaboration.

Let's keep leading the way!

Positive Trends in West40 Truancy Outreach

The West40 Truancy team is happy to report the positive impact of consistent, personalized support for students, as reflected in first semester data from the current school year. We have seen meaningful improvements in attendance and engagement.



Walk In Their Shoes - West40 Director of ALOP Operations

Yessenia Olivas is West40's Director of ALOP Operations. Her work often involves visits to advocates and students at schools in West40 partner districts. Go behind the scenes as Yessenia explains why it's important to build strong connections with team members so they can walk further with students.

Walk in Their Shoes - Director of ALOP Operations



West40 Advocacy Efforts in Springfield for the Spring Legislative Session

EBF Enrollment Exception for Regional Safe Schools

Because Regional Safe School Programs are mandated in School Code, they should be exempt from losing their base funding if their March 1 enrollment drops to zero as it is possible that a Safe School has no students on March 1 and multiple students on March 2 that must be served for the remainder of that school year and a year or more beyond their placement. These programs receive students from districts who are expelled or placed in lieu of expulsion. The program must exist and be waiting to meet the needs of districts and students.

Regional Safe School Grant Formula

HB1599, sponsored by Rep. Will Davis, amends the Safe Schools Law of the School Code. In provisions concerning funding, provides that in any fiscal year in which the State funding allocation is at or above \$22,730,000, each alternative school program shall receive \$100,000 for that fiscal

year (instead of receiving funding in the amount of \$30,000), plus an amount based on the ratio of an educational service region's or the Chicago public school system's average student enrollment (instead of best 3 months' average daily attendance in grades pre-kindergarten through 12) to the statewide totals of these amounts. Makes conforming changes. Effective immediately.

Upcoming Events at West40

Event Information

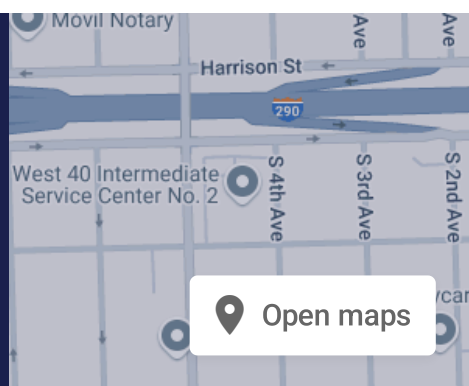
Educator Job Fair

When?

Saturday, Feb 22, 2025, 10:00 AM

Where?

415 Lexington Street, Maywood, IL, USA



Event Information

Crisis Communications Workshop

There are LIMITED seats available for a West40 workshop designed for district communications professionals and administrators. Register below.

When?

Thursday, Feb 27, 2025, 09:00 AM

Where?

415 Lexington Street, Maywood, IL, USA

Register for Crisis Communications Workshop (ONLY A FEW SEATS LEFT)



West40 Communications Department

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