

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Providing Academic Support in Core Content Subjects

Western Hills University High School, Ohio • February 2009

Topic: Dropout Prevention

Practice: Academic Supports

### Highlights

- Teachers at Western Hills University High School provide after-school help sessions, team meetings, and tutoring services for students.
- Through the Western Hills Seminar Program, teachers across various content areas help students to analyze and synthesize reading material.
- The teachers at Western Hills utilize a computer program that deciphers each student's academic needs based on the district's learning standards.

### About the Site

Western Hills University High School  
Cincinnati, OH

### Demographics

72% Black  
22% White  
3% Other  
2% Hispanic

56% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

3% English Language Learners

25% Special Education

Western Hills University High School focuses on preparing students for graduation through a rigorous and relevant academic curriculum and through programs that help students understand and prepare for postsecondary options.

The school implements programs that:

- Offer classes and opportunities for students to develop stronger social and emotional skills
- Organize students into teams with teachers who provide extensive academic support to ensure students are adequately prepared to be successful on the Ohio Graduation Tests
- Provide students a disciplined and personalized learning environment
- Expose students to postsecondary options that include college, the workforce, and other training programs

## Full Transcript

Jolina Haines: My name is Jolina Haines. I'm a tenth grade English teacher at Western Hills University High School in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Haines to class: Once you guys are finished, then I will run the Scantron through and give you feedback as to what you guys need.

Haines: One of the ways I determine the students that need academic support is by looking at some of their test scores. We look at Dashboard, which is a district website that we can go to that breaks down the student's individual needs based on the standards and the indicators on the test, and it tells me what I need to work on with the individual students. Another way that I can figure out what a student needs is by just looking at the work that they turn in, and if they are struggling with something, then I can figure out what the student needs as a whole.

Haines to student in class: It's basically understanding what you read, so what do you think? Look at your choices and go through them, and you guys need to figure out why they're wrong or why they're right.

Haines: We provide a lot of academic support for our students. One thing that we do is after-school help sessions. After-school help sessions are held everyday after school, and students are allowed to attend to come in to check on their grade, or they can just come in to get makeup work or get that additional help that they need one-on-one that they might not be able to get in the classroom when you have 30 students in the classroom. They can come in, and they can get that, and they can expect that I am going to give my

best to them at all times.

Another academic support that we use is our team time. During team time, we call students in to say, “we’re concerned about this,” or, “we’re concerned about that.” But we also sometimes do call them in to tell them that they’re doing a good job. Not all of our students get that encouragement at home, so they need to know that they’re doing a good job and that we’re acknowledging them.

Student to Haines: I think it’s symbolizing, like, a hardship with their family, but they overcame that problem.

Haines to student: That is very insightful.

Haines: We have another program that supports the students, and what it does is it takes outside tutors and brings them into the school to help individuals with their needs. Again, they get the instruction, and they might get it a different way, which might click with the students.

Haines to students: So, you guys, do you understand why the title is important to the story?

Haines: Another instructional support that we offer our students, is the fact that we are team-based school, and on a team-based school, you get a chance to know the students. You get to know them on a personal level, which also helps them with their standards and with their academics. They perform better because the students see that we have a personal interest in these students.

Another instructional support that we use is a program on our computers, which we do our grade book on, and it also allows parents access through the internet into our grade books so that they can see what their individual student is doing in our classroom, how they are performing. They can also see some of the comments that I might be writing on a section, where you put in assignments. Sometimes I write comments at the bottom: “Doesn’t understand,” “Needs more work on...” whatever they need work on. And the parents can see this so that they can understand what their student needs or their child needs additional help with. They can also receive e-mails. We can send e-mail through that system, and I can send individual e-mails conferencing with the parents, like this is what he or she needs help on.

What’s great about this program that we use, in terms of connection with the parents, is that they have a deeper understanding of the standards that we are addressing in the classroom. They can also see what their children are missing, and therefore, they can provide additional help at home. Maybe they can seek tutoring outside of the school. Sometimes the parents like to contact us and say, “Let’s come up with a plan together.” We don’t always get the greatest parental involvement, but this is a way that we encourage our parents to get involved with our students, is that continual contact at home, that open-door, 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, they can get in, and they can see what their kids are doing.

Haines to class: So, we talked about word choice the other day. My question to you is: Why these words? Why couldn’t they just put it into terms that we all can understand?

Student: I think it's because they want us to brighten our horizon, basically.

Haines: Another instructional support that we use is the seminar program. We just stop school every Wednesday morning. We come in, the kids get with the teacher, and we sit in a circle, and we just discuss a piece of literature. And what it does is it makes the students delve into the content a little bit deeper, where maybe in the classroom, they just get basic recall, but during seminar, they get to express their opinions. They get to express their views, but they do it by using textual support to say what they really mean.

Student: I've grown in better reading because I can analyze text better than I used to. I can understand the story better.

Haines: The students have really increased in their knowledge through this program. They understand things at a deeper level. They're actually questioning things during class, and sometimes you can even see the class slip into a seminar mode. This is where the deeper levels of understanding began, and this is where the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy are achieved, it's thorough this analysis, this synthesis, thorough all of that. And the students aren't just looking at a story as a story anymore. They realize that there is more going on in the deeper levels. This doesn't only help English; it also helps social studies, it helps science, and it helps the math content. And we even read stories and those other content areas, even in a math class, so they get the time to understand what the standards are and how to apply them in a classroom at a deeper level.