

Give to Grow

December 2024

A Message from Mark - December 2024

Hello friends! Welcome to the December edition of the West40 newsletter, where we highlight our continuing dedication to student success and growth!

It seems this school year has flown by with the holidays fast approaching. But the students we serve have achieved so much in such a short time. In every program and service we offer, West40 team members strive to meet students needs and provide opportunities for new and exciting adventures. From providing critical support to students facing housing instability through McKinney-Vento initiatives to ensuring educational equity for those navigating unique challenges, West40 empowers learners to thrive academically and personally. By working alongside educators and communities, we create pathways that inspire growth, resilience, and lifelong achievement.

I hope you have a wonderful holiday season. Enjoy your time with family and friends.

Dr. Mark A. Klaisner



Opening Doors to Employability

At West40, we constantly ask “What else?” Building on our existing Student Program continuum by looking past high school graduation, we thought about college, career and life readiness at an early age.

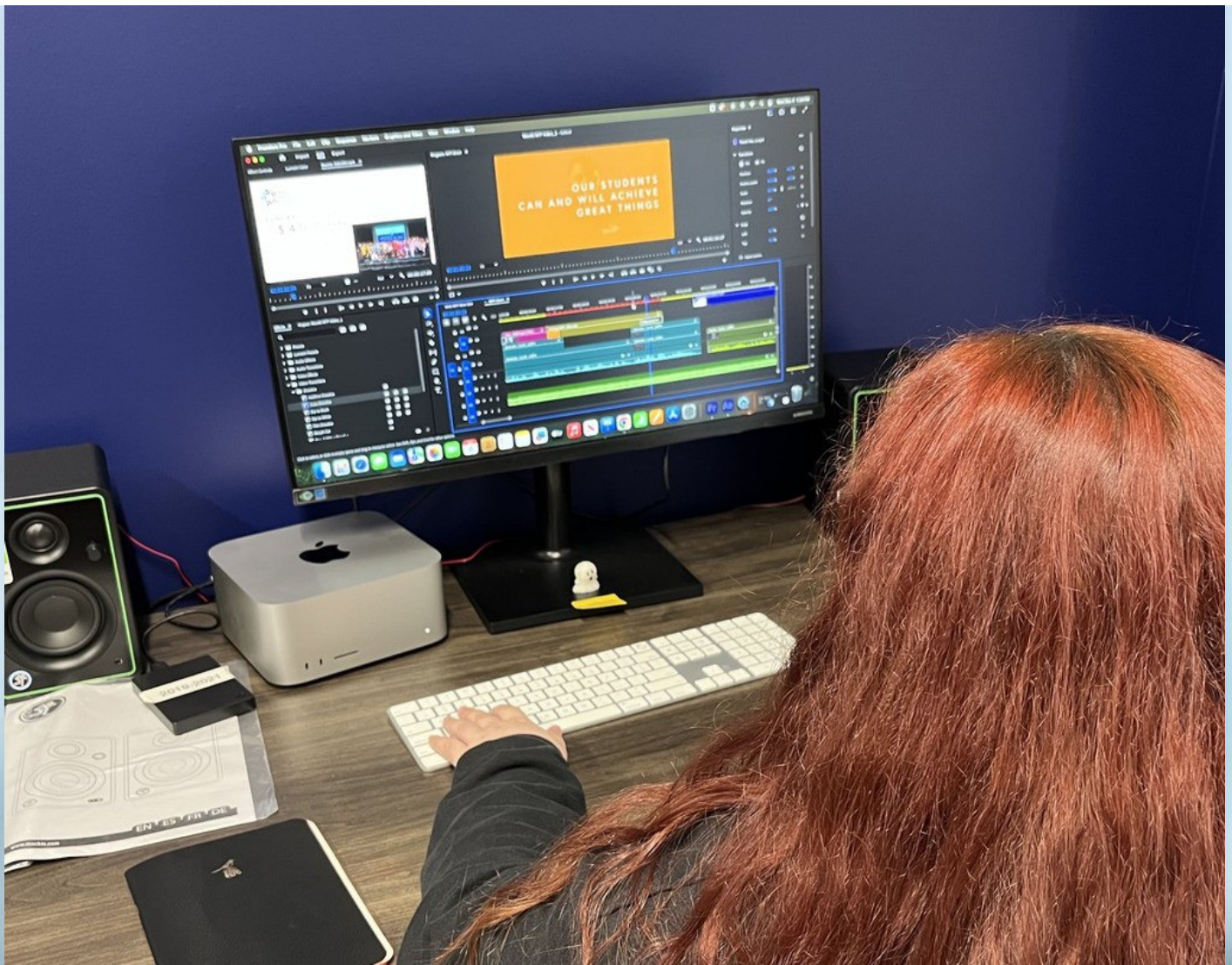
This fall West40 introduced various careers, job shadowing, and internships through our new Employability Program to 11th and 12th graders from the ALOP, Regional Safe School, Remote School and Seniors Plus programs.

“Our goal is to give hope to dreams by helping students align their interests, strengths and values to various career options including many they may not be aware of,” said Heidi Bellm, Champion of Experiences at West40.

The landscape of work is changing rapidly, with new fields and job titles emerging almost every day. According to published reports, the average student knows only about 10 of the more than 1,300 career opportunities.

In the Employability Program, we walk students through a journey that starts with a career exploration questionnaire. Students then watch day-in-the-life videos from a library of videos in 17 industry sectors. We then connect them with professionals in their field of interests where students can learn more. Students then apply for internships within West40 providing them a safe and trusted space where they are guided to build employability skills such as interpersonal communication, critical thinking, adaptability and more.

“These activities not only dimensionalize what they are learning in the classroom, but help them build confidence and connections, connecting their interest, values and passions with a career path and plan beyond graduation,” said Partnerships & Engagements Coordinator Kathleen O'Hara.



Since the summer, the West40 Employability team has offered internships in Communications where our high school students have designed and built websites, created and produced podcasts, helped produced videos and created music for day-in-the-life videos featuring local businesses.

"My summer internship with West40 has opened countless doors in terms of future opportunities," said recent West40 graduate Melany. "My soft skills were challenged throughout the experience. It pushed me to grow in many ways and see a new perspective to the challenges I face. I am glad to have this experience and knowledge with me to use in my future."

The program also connected many students to professionals of their interest such as flight attendant, electrician, entrepreneur and fashion designer.

"Guiding students as they discover their passions and realize who they're meant to be is a privilege I deeply cherish. There's nothing more rewarding than watching their dreams grow as they unlock the power of education and opportunity. Their boundless energy and vision inspire me every day to dream bigger and strive for more alongside them," said Lytaka Allen, West40's Cooperative Education Program Educator.

West40 continues to build out our Employability program to include internships with community entities supporting workforce development. We are very grateful to community members for their enthusiasm in engaging with our students and investing their time for student growth.



Full Podcast Internship (Interviewing, Editing, Logo and Channel Creation)



Full Video Production Internship (Interviewing, Narrative Assembly, Recording, Editing, Music Creation)

West40 Leaders Excited to Share Insights Learned at National Conference

Artificial intelligence is here to stay. So how do we best leverage this powerful tool in the classroom?

That's the big question West40 leaders brought back from the AESA (Association of Educational Service Agencies) annual conference in Orlando, Florida earlier this month. The conference also made it apparent that educational offices across the nation are at different places regarding the appropriate use of AI and some of the challenges that need to be addressed with AI include balancing the exploding technology with the human aspects of our work.

Other topics covered at the conference include the need for mental health supports for students and adults and the role of educational foundations in the work of educational service agencies.



Walk In Their Shoes - West40 Support Services

John Milosovic is West40's Director of Support Services. His work often involves trips to stores to pick up food items and working with donors to help support West40 families and community members. This video goes behind the scenes as John and a group of West40 team members prepare Thanksgiving meal bags.

Walk in Their Shoes - West40 Director of Support Services





Upcoming Administrator Academy Events

AA3000 Teacher and Administrator Evaluator Retraining: Student Growth

January 16, 8:30AM - 3:30PM (VIRTUAL)

[REGISTER](#)

AA3664 More Than Mindfulness: A School-Wide Approach to Building Emotional Literacy (Revised 2023)

January 22 8:30AM - 12:30PM (VIRTUAL)

[REGISTER](#)

AA1801 Gathering Evidence During Observations and Conferencing Using the Danielson Model (Revised 2016)

January 23, 8:30AM - 3:30PM (VIRTUAL)

[REGISTER](#)

AA4114 Using Student Growth Data from Diverse Population in Teacher Performance Evaluation

January 24, 8:30AM - 3:30PM (VIRTUAL)

[REGISTER](#)

AA4050 Illinois Performance Evaluation: Principal Evaluation Training (INITIAL & RETRAINING)

January 28, 8:30AM - January 29, 4:30 PM

[REGISTER](#)

Key Dates and Deadlines (Courtesy of IASA)

REMINDER:

Meet with IASA Mentor and Attend IASA Region Meetings

DUE DATES:

January 6 - Property Tax Relief Grant application

January 15 - Opt out of summer food service program & IDEA Excess Cost Worksheet

January 20 - Quarterly grant expenditure reports

January 28 - ESSER III funds must be liquidated

January 31 - Annual affidavit for exempt property & School lunch program on-site reviews

TASKS TO ASSESS IN JANUARY:

5 Essentials Survey begins

Review cash flow analysis - halfway mark
Visit some classrooms
Attend some student activities



West40 Communications Department

West40 is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters