



# ROLLING UP OUR SLEEVES

HOW WEST40 IS ADVOCATING FOR EDUCATION IN 2024

February, 2024

## A Message from Mark

Greetings! Welcome to our February Newsletter.

The theme for this issue is "Roll up your sleeves and help get the work done!" Many of you within the West40 region see us working in your local school, district or community. We are very proud of all the work we are doing this month, which has included a Board Dinner at Leyden, a community connection in Broadview with the UIC Cancer Center, work on a Digital Equity Plan across suburban Cook County, and discussions with the Village of Westchester and the Illinois Speaker of the House. Additionally, we worked with leaders and school districts to address some issues in county ordinances. Now we look forward to rolling up our sleeves again to have our collective voice be heard in Springfield during the spring legislative session.



West40 is fortunate to have built substantial relationships with many elected legislators in both chambers of the General Assembly. We have also connected with the Executive Branch of Illinois Government to establish partnerships and ways to collaborate. Many of you know that West40 enjoys opportunities to work alongside the Illinois State Board of Education on a number of initiatives. With all of these connections, we intend for our work this spring to benefit students across Illinois.

There is a lot of work ahead as we advocate for more education-related funding and support for young learners, but we are the ones with the voices and relationships to make important changes happen. Let's roll up our sleeves together and champion for students across Illinois.

Dr. Mark A. Klaisner

# Advocacy in Springfield

## What Will West40 Advocate for in Springfield?

We are focused on several items, in particular, during the spring 2024 legislative session.

- We will engage in the discussions about Evidence Based Funding and the need to increase funding to our school districts.
- We will ask decision makers to allow Alternative Learning Opportunity Programs (ALOP) to go all the way down to Kindergarten (current law only allows grades 4-12). Expanding service in this capacity to include grades K-3 will lay the foundation for early intervention and tailored support, setting the stage for academic success and holistic development.
- We have heard loud and clear from every corner of the state that schools are looking for more SEL support and because of that our team will advocate for additional resources for SEL work.
- We will ask legislators and the Governor to approve language changes and additional funding for Regional Safe School programs. HB4800 proposes 1) using average student enrollment in the distribution calculation instead of best three months of average daily attendance and 2) changing the first part of the calculation to distribute \$100,000 to each ROE/ISC instead of \$30,000, but only if there is an additional \$2.73 Million added to the appropriation amount over FY24.

At least a dozen West40 staff members will be going to Springfield on March 13 to meet with legislators and advocate for bills and funding that will strengthen the ability of ROEs and ISCs across the state to best serve our students enrolled in alternative education programs. We plan to include bringing the stories of our students to our legislators by the servant leaders who make up our advocacy team and who represent over 200 West40 staff members who are tireless in their efforts to provide equitable educational opportunities to our students.

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## Ask Mark Anything!

**Dr. Klaisner Answers Your Questions in the Latest West40 Podcast.**

[Listen to the Podcast](#)

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## Concerns Mounting Over Illinois' Early Childhood Education Content Exam



## ILLINOIS TEACHERS RAISE CONCERNS ABOUT LICENSURE EXAM

Imagine earning great grades in college and receiving strong letters of support for your hopeful teaching career, but hitting a roadblock due to a licensure exam. West40 recently heard from two new educators who shared their experiences taking the state's early childhood education content exam, which has a pass rate of less than 50% among first time test takers across the state. Above is the second in a series of videos West40 has produced on how the state's teacher certification process may be discouraging people from pursuing their teaching dreams at a time Illinois needs more educators.

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### Should Educator Licensure Content Exams be Required?

Absolutely, with no changes to the current passing score.

Yes, but the passing score should be lowered in some cases.

No, the exams may discourage otherwise qualified educators.

 Voting ends in 8 days

 Votes are anonymous but results are public

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### West40 Members In Action

Here at West40, we are always moving forward, whether it is meeting with legislators, working alongside students, teachers, and administrators, building capacity, sharing stories of hope or building the future, we stand strong with what we believe in.



Members of West40 Leadership Team at the EdRed Legislative Dinner



Student Advocates at Mannheim Middle School



Communications Team Recording a Story of Change



Dr. Klaisner assisting the Vision 2030 Task Force



Learning to Think Differently at "Today at West40"



Walking Alongside Komarek District 94 for Professional Learning

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## West40 Spring 2024 Educator Job Fair

West40 will be hosting its first educator job fair on **Saturday, February 24 from 10am to 2pm** at 415 Lexington Street, Maywood, IL 60153. Thirty school districts from the West Cook County region will be represented.

The West40 school districts are in need of Teachers, Substitute Teachers, Paraprofessionals and School Support Personnel. If you have questions about licensure requirements for these positions, the West40 licensure specialists will be on hand to answer any questions. Additional information about the job fair can be found [here](#) and at this QR code.



## Update on West40's Renovation Efforts at St. Joseph High School

West40 will begin the demolition process of the former St. Joseph High School and the adjacent Brother's House at the end of the month. Prior to the actual demolition of the structures, asbestos abatement will be taking place in both buildings. A pre-demolition asbestos inspection was performed and identified all the asbestos containing materials (ACM) from the interior and exterior of the buildings. West40 has hired Nationwide Environmental and Demolition LLC (NED) to conduct the asbestos abatement. NED is an Illinois licensed asbestos contractor and will be overseen by a third-party environmental consulting firm, Jacob & Hefner Associates Inc. (JHA). NED has notified all applicable regulatory agencies, including the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) and Cook County Department of Public Health. Abatement activities will begin February 26, 2024, and take place for approximately two months. All abatement activities are highly regulated and shall be performed in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. JHA will be monitoring the entire project and will be collecting daily air samples to ensure NED is performing their work properly.

Celebrate. Share. Inspire.

### Share Your Education Stories with Us

We love to hear how lives have been changed in partnership with your school or district. If you'd like to join us in inspiring others, [please send your story our way.](#)



#### West40 Communications Department

West40 is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters