



## **Just the Facts . . .**

**WCSU's EdD in Instructional Leadership program has**

**Admitted over 150 students.**

**A May 2015 graduation rate of 88%, the national average after 10 years is 50%.**

**Nationally accredited doctoral and administrative leadership programs.**

**A program satisfaction rating of 2.9/3.0, on an 80-item survey.**

## Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership

### EdD in Instructional Leadership: Program Description

WCSU's EdD in Instructional Leadership is the only doctorate of its kind in Connecticut and is one of approximately 16 doctoral programs in the country to focus on instructional leadership. The dynamic curriculum prepares educators, such as teachers, curriculum specialists, counselors, school psychologists, and administrators to create innovative learning environments; to respond to reform at the national, state and local levels and; to transform educational organizations. Graduates of this program will be able to apply advanced curricular systems and strategies in classrooms and schools. The program will prepare teachers to be instructional leaders within their districts, able to assist with many decisions related to academics and assessment. More information can be found at [www.wcsu.edu/EdD-Leadership](http://www.wcsu.edu/EdD-Leadership).

Faculty members include Dr. Marcy Delcourt, Dr. Karen Burke, and Dr. Jody Piro. Their profiles can be found at [www.wcsu.edu/edd-leadership](http://www.wcsu.edu/edd-leadership)

The following questions are addressed in this document:

1. **Is this an accredited program?**
2. **What types of courses are offered?**
3. **How do I apply for the Doctor of Education (EdD) in Instructional Leadership?**
4. **What are the admission requirements?**
5. **What is the cost of the program?**
6. **Are there any prerequisite courses?**
7. **What does it mean to be part of a cohort model?**
8. **How long will it take for me to complete the program?**
9. **What is the sequence of courses and experiences?**
10. **What will my schedule look like?**
11. **What if it takes me more than 6 years to finish the program?**
12. **When do I complete my dissertation?**
13. **Do I choose a major advisor or is one assigned to me?**
14. **How do I select my doctoral advisory committee?**
15. **Is there a residency requirement?**
16. **Can I transfer in courses?**
17. **May I take courses at other universities?**
18. **Are the courses offered every semester?**
19. **How do I register for classes?**
20. **How is the Administrative Certification incorporated into the program?**
21. **What else do I need to know?**
22. **What are key outcomes of the program?**

**1. Is this an accredited program?** This **Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership degree program** is approved by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

Once accepted into the EdD in Instructional Leadership program, students may also enroll in the program to obtain a **Certificate in Intermediate Administration and Supervision (Endorsement**

Prepared by: Dr. Marcia A. B. Delcourt, Coordinator, EdD in Instructional Leadership, Revised 9/9/2016

**#092).** This certificate program is also accredited by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). Additionally, it has received national accreditation from the Educational Leader Constituent Council (ELCC) of the National Policy Board for Educational Administrators (NPBEA) and from NCATE. Please note that as State and national policies change, the programs will be updated accordingly.

**2. What types of courses are offered?** Based on the reflective practitioner model, all courses are designed to assist doctoral candidates in taking leadership roles to improve the curriculum and instruction in their classrooms, schools, and districts. The EdD in Instructional Leadership at WCSU has three major components:

**Leadership Theory and Foundation.** In one of our first courses of the program, students participate in a leadership exercise and construct an individualized Leadership Development Plan. This plan acts as a blueprint for the acquisition and enrichment of leadership behaviors and skills. Additionally, students develop individual, group, and organizational competencies throughout the program.

**Area of Specialization.** Students investigate cognitive-developmental and socio-cultural theories and research-based strategies to design and modify classroom curricula as well as to create professional development experiences in schools.

**Inquiry Strategies and Dissertation Sequence.** Doctoral students interpret and apply a full complement of in-depth research strategies to educational settings. Students develop skills and extend their knowledge in the areas of evaluation, interpretation, and research implementation.

Courses included in each area are listed below.

*Courses in the EdD in Instructional Leadership*

<b>Core Courses in Leadership Theory and Foundations</b>	<b>Area of Specialization</b>	<b>Inquiry Strategies and Dissertation Sequence</b>
ED800: Foundations of Instructional Leadership	ED820: Topics in Curriculum and Instruction	ED860: Quantitative Methods Applied to Educational Research
ED801: Group Leadership, Group Processes, and Team Building in Education	ED821: Leadership Assessment and Development	ED861: Qualitative Methods Applied to Educational Research
ED802: Emerging Instructional Technologies	ED822: Talent Development Across the Curriculum	ED865: Introduction to Educational Research Designs
ED803: National Standards Current Practices, and Policies in Education (Summer Institute)	ED823: Models of Creative Thinking	ED881: Dissertation Seminar 1
ED804: Learning, Cognition, and Teaching	ED824: Diversity Issues in Schools	ED882: Dissertation Seminar 2
ED805: Research and Evaluation in Education	ED826: Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods Applied to Educational Research	ED883: Dissertation Seminar 3
		ED884: Dissertation Seminar 4
		ED885: Dissertation Seminar 5
18 SH	18 SH	24 SH

**3. How do I apply for the Doctor of Education (EdD) in Instructional Leadership?** The application is located online at our website: [www.wcsu.edu/EdD-Leadership](http://www.wcsu.edu/EdD-Leadership).

**4. What are the admission requirements?** The following information is requested:

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1. A completed [application form](#).
2. Evidence of three years of full-time educational experience in a PK-12 setting:
  - a. a copy of your educator certificate(s)and;
  - b. a letter from an administrator who works in an accredited institution.
3. A one- to two-page résumé.
4. A \$100 nonrefundable fee.
5. Official transcripts from all colleges and universities you have attended; a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.67 for all previous graduate course work is required.
6. A copy of your master's degree diploma (in education or a related field).
7. An official score from the Miller Analogies Test (MAT) is required ([www.wcsu.edu/testing](http://www.wcsu.edu/testing)). The MAT must be taken within the past five years. In addition, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is required for all international students.
8. Three recommendations attesting to your professional educational qualifications and ability to complete a doctoral program. At least one of these recommendations must be completed by someone in a supervisory capacity in an educational setting. The official WCSU form must be used for the completion of all recommendations.
9. Three recommendations ([download recommendation form](#)).

For additional information, please contact the program Coordinator. Contact information is located at [www.wcsu.edu/EdD](http://www.wcsu.edu/EdD).

All materials should be sent to:  
Doctoral Admissions Review Committee  
Division of Graduate Studies  
Western Connecticut State University  
181 White Street Danbury, CT 06810  
Website: [www.wcsu.edu/EdD](http://www.wcsu.edu/EdD)  
E-mail: [graduateadmissions@wcsu.edu](mailto:graduateadmissions@wcsu.edu)

**5. What is the cost of the program?** Costs are set by the Connecticut State University Board of Regents. Graduate tuition and fees are located at <http://www.wcsu.edu/registration/grad-tuition.asp>

**6. Are there any prerequisite courses in order to apply to the program?** Students applying for the EdD in Instructional Leadership must already have completed a Master's degree in education or a related field. There are no specific prerequisite courses, however applicants are asked to indicate their experiences related to the topics of curriculum and instruction, educational technology, foundations of education, measurement and evaluation, and special education.

**7. What does it mean to be part of a cohort model?** A new cohort is accepted into the program every other year (e.g., Fall 2013, 2015, etc.). Approximately 20-25 students are in each cohort. Students complete courses together in the same sequence. Accommodations can be made for students who request changes to the program sequence. The model provides the opportunity for candidates to form study groups and to serve as a support system while advancing through the program.

**8. How long will it take for me to complete the program?** This program is designed for full-time educators to complete a doctoral degree while taking classes on a part-time basis. Participants are accepted into the program every other year (e.g., Fall 2013, 2015, etc.) and may complete all requirements over a 57-month period, or just under 5 years as a part-time graduate student. Students

have completed the program in 4 years. Candidates are expected to complete all course work during 3 academic years, including two summers. After completing the comprehensive exams in the summer of the 3rd year, the dissertation process begins in the fall. An individual may take up to 6 years to complete the program, otherwise an application for an extension is required. The overall sequence is illustrated below.

### *Program Sequence*

Academic Year 1 (12 SH) 2 courses/ semester	Summer 1 (6 SH) 2 courses	Academic Year 2 (12 SH) 2 courses/ semester	Summer 2 (3 SH) 1 course	Academic Year 3 (12 SH) Coursework Completed Summer Comprehensive Exams	Academic Year 4 (6 SH) Dissertation Seminars 1 and 2	Summer 4 (3 SH) Dissertation Seminar 3	Academic Year 5 (6 SH) Dissertation Seminars 4 and 5
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*Note.* SH = Semester Hours. Courses are 3 credits each.

**9. What is the sequence of courses and experiences?** The timeline for courses is available on our website: [www.wcsu.edu/EdD-Leadership](http://www.wcsu.edu/EdD-Leadership). The program is also designed to provide candidates with a variety of experiences including publishing, program evaluation, professional development activities, and conference presentations. Every other year, students and faculty members organize an Instructional Leadership Conference to highlight student accomplishments, activities of educators in local school districts, and pertinent research conducted by colleagues in other institutions.

### *Course Timeline*

Date	Program Requirement	Cohort Entry Date- Fall 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, etc.
Fall 1	EdD and Admin. Cert.	ED800: Foundations of Instructional Leadership
	EdD	ED821: Leadership Assessment and Development
Spring 1	EdD	ED801: Group Leadership, Group Processes, and Team Building in Education ED822: Talent Development Across the Curriculum
Summer 1	EdD	ED802: Emerging Instructional Technologies ED803: National Standards Current Practices, and Policies in Education (Summer Institute)
Fall 2	EdD and Admin. Cert.	ED804: Learning, Cognition, and Teaching
	EdD	ED860: Quantitative Methods Applied to Educational Research
Spring 2	EdD and Admin. Cert.	ED820: Topics in Curriculum and Instruction
	EdD	ED861: Qualitative Methods Applied to Educational Research
Summer 2	EdD	ED824: Diversity Issues in Schools
Fall 3	EdD	ED865: Introduction to Educational Research Designs ED826: Quantitative and Qualitative Applications of Educational Research Begin pre-Dissertation Advisement
Spring 3	EdD and Admin. Cert.	ED805: Research and Evaluation in Education
	EdD	ED823: Models of Creative Thinking pre-Dissertation Advisement
Summer 3	EdD	Comprehensive Exams
Fall 4	EdD	ED881: Dissertation Seminar 1 Proposal; Chapter 2 started
Spring 4	EdD	ED882: Dissertation Seminar 2 Proposal Review Process;

		Proposal Revisions; Set-up and Permission; Data Collection started
Summer 4	EdD	ED883: Dissertation Seminar 3; Chapters 1, 2 and 3 completed; Data collection
	Admin. Cert.	EDL618: Understanding the Political and Ethical Environment of School Leadership EDL656: Leadership and Supervision in Teaching and Learning
Fall 5	EdD	ED884: Dissertation Seminar 4; Data collection completed; Research completed; Chapters 4 and 5 started
	Admin. Cert.	ED660: Internship & Seminar in Educational Leadership: Theory, Research, & Practice I
Spring 5	EdD	ED885: Dissertation Seminar 5 Chapters 4 and 5 completed; Editing Dissertation Defense
	Admin. Cert.	ED665: Internship & Seminar in Educational Leadership: Theory, Research, & Practice II
Summer	EdD	Dissertation Defense
Fall	EdD	Dissertation Defense

*Note.* Course sequence may be subject to change.

## 10. What will my schedule look like?

The EdD program includes 60 credits

- 15 courses (45 credits) over 3 years are followed by a comprehensive exam
- 5+ courses (approx. 15 credits) to complete the dissertation process through 5 or more semesterly seminars
- The seminar requirements “chunk” the dissertation process into manageable bits
- A dissertation committee under the guidance of a primary advisor directs the process

### Year 1

- 2 courses in the fall, on the same night from 5:00-7:00 and 7:15-9:15 (once/week plus 1 Saturday class/course)
- 2 courses in the spring, on the same night from 5:00-7:00 and 7:15-9:15 (once/week plus 1 Saturday class/course)
- 2 courses in the summer, 1 during June/July, 1 the last week in July from 8:00 AM–4:00 PM

### Year 2

- 2 courses in the fall, on the same night from 5:00-7:00 and 7:15-9:15 (once/week plus 1 Saturday class/course)
- 2 courses in the spring, on the same night from 5:00-7:00 and 7:15-9:15 (once/week plus 1 Saturday class/course)
- 1 course in the summer, during July

### Year 3

- 2 courses in the fall, on the same night from 5:00-7:00 and 7:15-9:15 (once/week plus 1 Saturday/course)
- 2 courses in the spring, on the same night from 5:00-7:00 and 7:15-9:15 (once/week plus 1 Saturday/course)
- Comprehensive Exams, the last 2 Saturdays in July

### Year 4

- Fall (dissertation proposal), Spring (data collection), Summer (dissertation chapters 1-3)

### Year 5

- Fall (dissertation chapters 4 and 5), Spring+ (revisions/defense)

**11. What if it takes me more than 6 years to finish the program?** An individual may take up to 6 years to complete the program, otherwise an application for an extension of the 6-year time limit is required. This extension is subject to approval by the Graduate Council.

**12. When do I complete my dissertation?** The dissertation process begins as soon as you start to think about possible topics for your investigation. This should commence with your first course. Collect ideas, discuss them with your peers and professors, and begin to investigate the feasibility of each by reviewing the literature.

You will formally begin the dissertation process after completing your comprehensive exams, which are scheduled in the summer of the third year of study. This program has been designed to assist you to complete your dissertation by having a series of seminars for each stage of the process. The proposal, proposal defense, data collection process, and chapter revisions are incorporated into the seminars. The dissertation process culminates in the Dissertation Defense.

**13. Do I choose a major advisor or is one assigned to me?** Your major advisor will be determined according to the topic you choose and the type of research methodology that is best for your study. While a major advisor is assigned by the Program Coordinator, changes might be made as a candidate refines ideas based on research content and procedures.

**14. How do I select my doctoral advisory committee?** A doctoral committee includes at least three people who have earned doctoral degrees. They will guide you through your dissertation process. With guidance from your major advisor and the Program Coordinator, you will select and contact two individuals to serve as secondary advisors on your doctoral committee. These individuals, in addition to your major advisor, will be your doctoral advisory committee.

**15. Is there a residency requirement?** This is a part-time program and there is no requirement for full-time commitment to coursework, therefore, there is no residency requirement.

**16. Can I transfer in courses?** Yes. Up to 9 hours of prior coursework may be transferred into a program of study. These courses can be no older than 6 years when the candidate graduates from the present program, each course must be at the doctoral level, and each course must be equivalent to the course it is replacing. Consult with the Program Coordinator in order to apply to transfer any courses. Both a course description and syllabus must be reviewed in order to make this determination. No course can be transferred if it was a requirement for a formerly completed degree. Courses from Sixth Year Certificate (SYC) programs are eligible for transfer into the EdD program.

**17. May I take courses at other universities?** After acceptance to the program, courses may be transferred if each meets specific criteria. Each course must be: from an accredited institution, equivalent to a course in the EdD program, within the total course credit transfer limit of 9 SH, approved by the Program Coordinator. Before registering for any course outside of the EdD in Instructional Leadership program, an approved form must be filed with the graduate office.

**18. Are the courses offered every semester?** The courses in this program are offered in a given sequence only. When a cohort is accepted, it is expected that all students enroll in the set sequence of courses. While these courses are offered in a presented sequence, a student seeking any change in the sequence must apply for a change through the Program Coordinator. For example, changes could occur if a student transfers credits from another institution.

**19. How do I register for classes?** Each semester, registration procedures are handled by the Program Coordinator, who sends the schedule and a list of students/course to the office for the Division of Graduate Studies.

**20. How is the Administrative Certification incorporated into the program?** The Certification for Intermediate Administration and Supervision (Endorsement #092) is an optional program for WCSU's EdD in Instructional Leadership candidates. Four courses incorporated into the EdD program are a part of the course sequence for the accredited administrative endorsement (ED 800: Foundations of Educational Leadership, ED 804: Learning, Cognition, and Teaching, ED 820: Topics in Curriculum and Instruction, and ED 805: Research and Evaluation in Education). Students who wish to obtain this certificate, apply to the "092" program and complete an additional 4 courses. Two of these courses are offered in collaboration with Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) and the other 2 courses constitute the required program internship. Students may complete the courses for the administrative certificate beginning in Summer 2, Summer 3, or after obtaining the doctoral degree. A schedule for both programs is indicated in the program timeline ([www.wcsu.edu/graduate/edd/edd-timeline.pdf](http://www.wcsu.edu/graduate/edd/edd-timeline.pdf)). This timeline represents a schedule for beginning the additional administrative courses in Summer 3.

**21. What else do I need to know?** Take some time to read the graduate catalog ([www.wcsu.edu/catalogs/graduate/](http://www.wcsu.edu/catalogs/graduate/)) and the EdD in Instructional Leadership website ([www.wcsu.edu/EdD-Leadership](http://www.wcsu.edu/EdD-Leadership)). The catalog contains the basic academic rules and regulations of the university and provides course descriptions, while the program website contains all documents pertaining to the EdD procedures.

**22. What are key outcomes of the program?** Our greatest outcomes are represented by the accomplishments of our students. Of the 38 candidates who were eligible to defend their dissertations, 34 (89.5%) will have completed their work by August 2011. The national average for dissertation completion is 50%. Candidates are indeed becoming active leaders and researchers in their school communities both before and after they graduate. They influence their local schools and districts by accepting the following roles: Department Chair, School Dean, Principal, Assistant Principal, District Language Arts Coordinator, Mentor Program Director, Grant Director, NEASC Coordinator, Director of Technology, etc. They have also led their schools to becoming award-winning institutions at the state, regional, and national levels.

In order to prepare for an Accreditation Review in Spring 2008, an external consultant, Dr. Dennis Shirley from Boston College, was asked to review all aspects of the program. He reviewed all program documents and held individual and group interviews with faculty members, students, community members, and university administrators. Among other comments, Dr. Shirley made the following two points:

As a professor of education who is well aware that one of the persistent criticisms of schools of education for decades has been that they are excessively theoretical and irrelevant to the concerns of teachers, principals, and superintendents, I found myself admiring the commitment, talent, and vision of the faculty and staff at WCSU who created and are sustaining the Instructional Leadership doctoral program.

Second, the collaborative nature of the instructional leadership doctoral program was evident throughout this site visit. Within WCSU, the program is viewed by students, faculty, and administrators to be internally coherent and well sequenced. Discussants held that the doctoral program is embedded in a broader, university-wide commitment to the improvement of public education that they find praiseworthy and worthy of emulation by other universities. Significantly, local educational leaders on the Advisory Board agreed, confirming that the doctoral program is meeting their needs for highly qualified teachers and administrators.

Dr. Shirley's very positive assessment of the program is reinforced by the following student comments:

The excitement of working with classmates who are experienced practicing educators and faculty members who are dynamic and engaging, challenges my thoughts and ideas about education. Frank LaBanca, Oxford Public Schools

This doctoral program enables me to not only be a stronger, more knowledgeable leader, but it also inspires me to be a better educator.

Joan McGettigan, New Canaan Public Schools

I have learned so much about myself as an educator and a leader through participation in this program. Nora Marrinan, Ridgefield Public Schools

I have no regrets about choosing to participate in this challenging program.

Mike Obre, Danbury Public Schools

I came to WestConn's Ed.D. Program for the education, but I am staying because of the inspiration. Lori Kolbusz, Norwalk Public Schools

Her school rules: WCSU graduate at the helm of 'Elementary School of the Year'  
Principal of Danbury's Western Connecticut Academy of International Studies Dr. Helena Nitowski earned her  
Ed.D. in instructional leadership at Western



**DANBURY, CONN.** — A recent graduate of the [Educational Doctorate program in Instructional Leadership](#) at [Western Connecticut State University](#), Dr. Helena Nitowski is the principal of “Elementary School of the Year” for 2014-15

Nitowski, a principal in Danbury for 13 years, has been at the helm of the Western Connecticut Academy of International Studies (AIS) since it opened in 2006. The public magnet school has a mission of developing socially responsible global citizens who use technology to access the world. Prior to AIS, Nitowski was the principal of Mill Ridge Intermediate School.

The AIS magnet school, located on property adjacent to the university’s Westside campus, is open to all Danbury students as well as students from area towns through a lottery system. With a theme of International and Global Studies, the school’s 412 students in kindergarten through fifth grade are also taught a foreign language.

Nitowski said she chose to earn a doctorate degree at Western after looking at several online degree programs. “I preferred programs that had face-to-face time,” Nitowski said. “Also, I really liked the cohort model, which builds on being able to complete things. I enjoyed working with the professors and connecting with other members. It’s a supportive process.”

The Western graduate said the program was a rigorous one that prepared her for looking at the role of leader in terms of instruction, management and goal-setting. It also helped her develop her skills in conducting more quality research with a deeper understanding of the issues. “I’m looking at things through a different lens now,” Nitowski said. “We are always lifelong learners. In a program such as the Ed.D., you are learning at a higher level and applying at a practical level.”

The K-5 school was selected by the [Connecticut Association of Schools](#) (CAS) as “Elementary School of the Year” for 2014-15. AIS was chosen from a number of Connecticut elementary schools and “clearly distinguished itself as a consummate elementary school,” according to the nonprofit organization.

The school’s international studies theme centers on the concept of peace and the role of peacekeepers in the world. Students start the day reciting the AIS Peace Pledge in both English and Spanish. An emphasis on international studies and world language facilitates critical thinking and broadens mastery of the district curriculum. Students learn about environmental awareness by food composting in their cafeteria, tending to a community garden, bonding with local organizations and recycling.

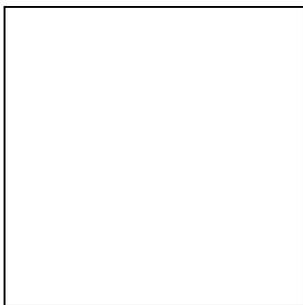
The criteria used to evaluate the school included whether the school was welcoming to students and visitors, and whether the school had an appropriately developed and research-based curriculum. Other items rated included whether technology at the school supported instruction.

Most importantly, as indicated in the CAS award, the AIS magnet school is centered on the students, not the teachers, and provides a learning environment that supports instruction and encourages higher-order thinking skills. CAS is a nonprofit educational organization. An informed leader in Connecticut’s education

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system, CAS provides services to the state's K-12 schools in areas ranging from academics to athletics. The association represents more than 1,100 schools in the state.

**Western graduate chosen principal of new STEM and global academy  
Alumnus says WCSU's educational doctorate program a 'community of thinkers'**



**DANBURY, CONN.** — When [Danbury Public Schools](#) opened the doors to its newest school this month — a state-of-the-art STEM and global academy — Frank LaBanca, a graduate of the [Western Connecticut State University doctorate in education program](#) (Ed.D.), was at the helm as its principal.

LaBanca, of Newtown, said that the Westside Middle School Academy will be progressive in the way that teaching and learning will take place; he credits WCSU with instilling in him the ability to focus on what is going on in the classroom to make it a valuable experience for students.

“The Ed.D. program at WCSU is a very unique one,” LaBanca said. “Most doctorate programs are about leadership, which includes management and vision. The program at Western focuses on instruction, what’s happening in the classroom and how you change practice in the classroom.”

LaBanca isn’t the only WCSU graduate who will be at the school. More than 1,400 people applied for the school’s 30 open positions and a third of those hired or transferred from other Danbury schools are WCSU graduates: Joseph DiGuiseppi, Alessandra de la Vega, Natalie Locke, Beth Manning, Joshua Meade, Laura Muller, Julie Pokrinchok, Jennifer Power and Kristy Zaleta.

The school will accommodate 600 students by 2016-17 and will open with 300 students in [STEM](#) (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and 100 students in global studies. More students will be phased in over the next two years being chosen through a districtwide lottery system.

“It will be an ‘inquiry school’,” LaBanca said. “Students learn well when they ask meaningful questions they can investigate. This is what schools today are moving toward.”

The school is considered a magnet school because it draws students from all over the district and also has a theme of exploration. The STEM exploration will be scientific challenges, whereas the global academy will explore challenges based on global issues.

For instance, LaBanca explained that if students were faced with the current issue of water quality around the world, the STEM students will look for ways to purify water and devices necessary for that process. The global students would explore the geo-political point of view and campaign to educate people to find solutions.

“Each can take an issue and develop real solutions that are useful,” LaBanca said. “We’re asking them to take ownership of their education and the teachers are there to help students construct understanding and meaning.”

LaBanca’s goals as principal are to create an environment that involves project learning and uses technology, and increases teacher capacity where students are being guided to learning at a more-involved level.

“I want to create an environment where kids feel connected to their school,” he said. Hoping to be paper-free in three years, LaBanca also wants to increase the use of technology in the classrooms. There are charging stations in every classroom and two project rooms equipped with 3-D printers.

Prior to the WSMSA, LaBanca ran a STEM program in Connecticut through [Education Connection](#) where he prepared 120 teachers in 50 schools to instruct 3,000 students.

“Now I am looking forward to being in an environment where I can lead teachers and students and be a direct part of their learning,” he said.