AgriScience Program Changes
Questions and Answers

Q: Why has West Shore ESD decided to move the morning section of AgriScience from Hart High School to the CTE center at West Shore Community College?

A: There are three primary reasons why this decision has been made:

1. Moving the morning AgriScience program to the CTE Center at WSCC provides students attending with significant instructional benefits:

   The class will have more instructional space and lab facilities. Students will have access to an indoor lab facility, a lecture room, and improved outdoor lab spaces including a new hoop house and animal barns. A large outdoor cold storage space will also be constructed during the 2016-17 to be shared by AgriScience, Auto Mechanics and the college.

   The facility is in close proximity to the partnership that WSCC is working on with Michigan State University’s Agriculture of Technology department, which will offer agriculture students the opportunity to earn an associate’s degree from WSCC and a certificate from Michigan State University.

2. Moving the morning AgriScience program to the CTE Center at WSCC provides increased accessibility to the program:

   Currently, only Hart and Shelby students have school-transported access to the morning session of AgriScience. Hart and Shelby juniors and seniors make up 25% of the juniors and seniors in the West Shore ESD CTE service area. The other 75% of students only have access to the afternoon section of AgriScience. Offering both sections of the AgriScience program on the campus of WSCC provides all students within the WSESD service district equal access to the program for both the morning and afternoon sessions and thereby offers the program to the maximum number of students in our service area.

3. Moving the morning AgriScience program to the CTE Center at WSCC allows the ESD to expend CTE resources more efficiently.

   Investing resources in high-cost programs such as AgriScience in two locations which are only utilized half of the time is not cost-beneficial. The ESD strives to make every CTE program offered a premier quality CTE program. Since 1988, WSCC and WSESD have had a strong partnership and as a result of this relationship, students have benefited by having access to more resources, better equipment, and enhanced facility spaces. Locating this high-cost program in partnership with West Shore Community College at the CTE center allows us to accomplish that goal within budgetary constraints.
Q: Does this potential program relocation mean that Hart and Shelby students will no longer be able to access the program?

A: No. Hart and Shelby students will be able to access the improved facilities in the relocated AgriScience program in the same manner they access all other CTE programs offered at the center. The ESD staff is committed to working with counselors and administrators to minimize the access challenges created by this program relocation. We sincerely want Hart and Shelby students to have access to this valuable program and all other CTE programs offered at our CTE center. Due to transportation time, students in Hart and Shelby taking AgriScience at the CTE center will have one less instructional class than when the class was offered in Hart. Although this is an educational challenge to the relocation of the program, the teaching and learning improvements resulting from this move will far outweigh this challenge. This same challenge is faced by students in several school districts whose students have longer bus rides to the CTE center. Other districts whose students have long bus rides to the CTE center facilitate addressing this challenge in a variety of ways. In some cases, students are scheduled for one on-line course to make up for the lost classroom instructional time. On-line learning is becoming increasingly utilized to address a number of educational challenges such as this.

To help facilitate the on-line work option, school districts with a bus ride longer than 30 minutes such as Hart and Shelby are being offered Wi-Fi access paid for by West Shore ESD on the buses which transport students to the CTE Center. This Wi-Fi service would allow students to have additional internet connected work time while riding the bus to the CTE center location.

Q: Did West Shore Community College require that the ESD move the morning section of AgriScience as a condition to allocating new facility space for AgriScience?

A: No. The college remained neutral about the location of the AgriScience morning section. The decision to move the class was made solely by West Shore ESD.

Q: Did the AgriScience Advisory take a position regarding this decision.

A: No. At their February 4th meeting, the potential move was discussed, but there was no official position taken by the AgriScience Advisory. The final decision to have both sections of the class in the new upgraded facility was made solely by West Shore ESD.

Q: What about the local community and FFA connections in Hart and Shelby which have been established while the program was located there? Will those connections be lost or diminished?

A: Definitely not. Moving the morning AgriScience session to WSCC will allow for more diversified livestock education and improved space for plant science curriculum-including fruit and vegetable production. Although the two current FFA chapters will need to be combined into one West Shore ESD chapter, the community involvement will be maintained within all areas of the region through involvement with local area advisory groups, supervised agricultural experiences, guest speakers, field trips and participation in judging of various FFA leadership contests. We believe it is critically important that the AgriScience program remain closely connected to our agricultural community supporters and we plan to keep and enhance those connections.
Q: When AgriScience is moved to the CTE center next year, won’t Hart, Shelby and Walkerville students be short changed? How is the $600,000 of annual CTE tax revenue generated by Hart, Shelby, Walkerville taxpayers since the merger of the two ISD’s being utilized?

A: Hart, Shelby and Walkerville students are not being short changed. This year there are 91 Hart, Shelby and Walkerville students taking CTE classes through West Shore ESD and another 34 students taking CTE classes at the Newaygo County Career Tech Center.

- The year before the merger occurred, Hart, Shelby and Walkerville sent at total of only 65 students to any CTE programs and paid for those programs on a per pupil basis.
- When the merger occurred, Hart, Shelby and Walkerville immediately obtained free access to millions of dollars of capital investments in the CTE programs at the CTE center at West Shore Community College paid for by Mason-Lake ISD taxpayers over the previous twenty-five years.
- After the merger of the two ISD’s the additional new tax revenue has helped to facilitate the addition of three new CTE programs which are now available to all students in the West Shore ESD service area; AgriScience, Information Technology, and Educator Academy. An additional section of Allied Health has also been added. Starting up new programs requires significant initial investments as well as creates ongoing costs.
- At the end of first semester of 2015-16, there were 91 Hart, Shelby and Walkerville students taking CTE classes through West Shore ESD and another 34 taking CTE class from the Newaygo County Career Tech Center. These classes are paid for entirely with CTE tax revenue generated from the West Shore ESD service area. The $3,846,397 budgeted CTE dollars for 2015-16 served a total of 492 students in West Shore ESD programs and another 34 students at the Newaygo County Career Tech Center at an average cost of $7,313 per student. Multiplying that per-pupil amount by the 125 Hart, Shelby and Walkerville students taking CTE classes equals a total benefit of $914,125 for taxpayers’ $600,000 investment.