



COMMUNITY UPDATE

Message from the SUPERINTENDENT



Dear Families and Residents,

These are exciting times to be in education. We have so much to be proud of as a school community. We are on the move! After a year of listening, learning and engaging with people across the school district and seven communities, I am happy to share that we have launched our Portrait of a Graduate.

Our portrait highlights skills and competencies that will assure that all of our students are future ready. Cultivating communicators, collaborators, critical thinkers, and creators is one of our top priorities as a school system.

During the first several months of the 2024-2025 school year we have been focused on rolling out many new systems, structures and programs that highlight our unwavering commitment to continuous improvement. Change is never easy, yet I remain impressed by the resilience of our staff and students. The Willoughby-Eastlake school system is a special place, and I remain grateful to serve the community during this exciting chapter in the history of our district.

Each and every day we work hard to keep a sharp focus on academics, student safety and student well-being. As a learning organization, we promise to:

- create engaging experiences for all students.
- prioritize relationships.
- inspire and nurture extraordinary growth.
- invest in the future.

As we are working through the second quarter of the school year, we remain committed to advance our shared vision in the months ahead. Thanks to the support of a visionary school board and our seven communities, I can say with confidence that our future looks bright and we are truly leading the way in education.

In closing, this is your school system. If we remain focused on students and their learning, anything is possible. I encourage all of you to get involved in our schools. Working together, we are creating wonderful experiences for our families.



If our district team can be of any assistance, please reach out. I look forward to continuing to meet with community members throughout the school year.

My choice for a world class, student-centered education is Willoughby-Eastlake! Thank you for entrusting your students to us and being a part of this important journey.

Patrick Ward

Patrick Ward, PhD. | Superintendent
[#MyChoiceWilloughbyEastlake](#)



Message from the TREASURER/CFO



Dear Families and Residents,

The school district prioritizes staying updated with legislative changes and financial requirements that impact its operations and finances. Financial updates are provided each month at the Board of Education meetings. The meeting schedule is available on the website.

- The District was awarded both the Auditor of State Award with Distinction and the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association for the 2022-2023 audit. These are the two highest awards given to school districts for their financial audits.
- The new assistant treasurer, Cami Erdani, began in August 2024 and is eager to support the district in its financial goals.
- The audit of the 2023-2024 year is underway and is set to be complete before December 31, 2024.
- The last of the American Rescue Fund dollars, awarded by the Federal government as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, were utilized and the final reporting was submitted.
- The district is doing a great job of controlling the always increasing expenses. The expenses in 2023-2024, compared to 2022-2023, increased by 3.5%, which is the same rate as inflation.
- The district appreciates the Willoughby-Eastlake unions for realizing health insurance was the fastest growing line item in the budget. During union negotiations, the district was able to limit its exposure to insurance increases to 6% per year. This will allow the district to stay off the ballot longer.
- The district was able to secure higher interest rates on our investments before the 50 basis point (0.50%) interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve in September 2024. We are expecting to see two more cuts of 25 basis points each between now and the end of the calendar year.

The first Fiscal Responsibility and Operations Steering Committee meeting held in October provided members an opportunity to learn about fiscal operations and challenges, and provide input moving forward to develop a comprehensive facilities plan. We will continue to engage our community in conversations to ensure a broad understanding of our fiscal operations.

Nick Ciarniello

Nick Ciarniello | Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer



Workforce Development

The district is currently working on ways to expand opportunities to introduce students to diverse career pathways beyond the traditional Career Technical Education (CTE) model. This year, we are excited to pilot the CareerPath+ Program, which aims to connect education with real-world employment by building strong partnerships with local businesses and industries.

Through this program, we hope to connect students with local businesses to participate in internships, workshops, job shadowing and/or certifications while also enabling them to earn high school credit. To introduce this initiative, we invited local stakeholders to join us in October for an overview of CareerPath+ and to collaborate on the creation of career pathways for our students.

If you are a local business and would like to partner with the district in any way, please contact:
Vicki Morley, Director of Workforce Development,
victoria.morley@weschools.org
440-602-5090

Portrait of a Graduate

Last year, the district sought input from students, staff, families, community members, business owners and civic leaders to develop the Portrait of a Graduate. This portrait signifies our commitment to ensure that students are future ready.

The portrait serves as a compass, guiding our students toward a successful career, military service, or college and life. By focusing on these key attributes, we empower our students to become well-rounded individuals who will be key contributors to their communities as responsible citizens.

We have committed to providing an exceptional school experience designed to meet the needs of every student. Our portrait is aligned with our four focus areas as part of the shared vision.

- Customized Learning, Innovative Programming and Academic Excellence
- The W-E Experience
- Fiscal Responsibility and Operations
- Communications and Community Relations



Operations, Safety and Security

Keeping our schools safe is more important than ever. At W-E Schools, we believe that every student should be able to learn in a place that's safe and supportive. We are always working on ways to make our buildings and learning environments safe for families.

Ohio Safety Tip Line

The Safer Ohio School Tip Line is a free safety resource available to all Ohio schools. The tip line is an anonymous reporting system that accepts tips via call, text, webform, and mobile app 24 hours-a-day. Anyone can download the Safer Ohio School Tip Line app or use the webform found at <https://app.saferohioschooltipline.com/>.

This tip line allows students and adults to anonymously share information with school officials and law enforcement about threats to student safety – whether that involves a threatened mass incident or harm to a single student.



Safer Ohio

School Tip Line

844.723.3764

Report concerns for student safety

Flock Cameras

The Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools used funds received through a safety grant to purchase five Flock license plate readers installed on the campuses of Eastlake North High School and Willoughby South High School. There are two readers at North High and three readers at South High. The license plate reader system enables law enforcement personnel to identify vehicles that have been linked to criminal activity, such as stolen automobiles, retail theft, amber alerts, or drug trafficking, as examples.

The idea for the Flock cameras was generated after collaborating with local law enforcement and local business entities who have been successful in using the system to gather information when investigating crimes. This is another tool in our toolbox that allows us to be proactive in securing our campuses.



Produce Market

Nutritional Support to the Community

The school district, in collaboration with the Cleveland Food Bank, LakeTran, United Way, and Heinen's, has successfully hosted three Produce Food Markets, offering fresh fruits and vegetables to families across the community. Held at both South and North high schools, these markets have become key hubs for providing essential nutrition to the school community and beyond. Families have expressed overwhelming appreciation for the convenience and access to healthy food that these markets provide.

At each event, the district distributed between 8,000 and 12,000 pounds of fresh produce, reaching not only families with students in the district, but also the wider community. By rotating locations each month, the district ensures equitable access to this valuable service for all residents. The next Produce Food Market will be held on December 5th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at South High School.

Thanks to the continued success of this partnership, the school district remains committed to supporting local families and expanding access to fresh, nutritious food for all.



Smiles Program Returns

The district is excited to share the successful return of the Smiles Program this fall, which provided essential dental care to more than 300 students across our elementary buildings. After a hiatus since 2019 due to COVID, the mobile dental program reintroduced much-needed services at no cost to families.

The Smiles Program offered dental exams, cleanings, fluoride treatments, x-rays, sealants, and even fillings to our students. This initiative is critical, especially when considering that 35% of student absences are related to dental issues. By bringing care directly to the schools, a significant health need was addressed while supporting student attendance and overall well-being. Looking ahead, the district plans to expand the program in the spring of 2025 to include middle and high school students, ensuring even more children will benefit from this valuable resource. This program is at no cost to families or the district.

Third Annual Senior Citizens' Night Out

Tuesday, December 10, 2024, 4–6 p.m.

South High School Cafeteria

4900 Shankland Road · Willoughby, OH 44094

Free event is open to all area seniors, ages 65 and older.

The evening will feature high school band, choir and elementary music performances, as well as displays of student art.

Doors open at 4 p.m. for dinner followed by student performances in the auditorium.

Seating is limited to 250 attendees.

**RSVP to Kristina Hill, 440-602-5099,
or kristina.hill@weschools.org.
Provide name, number of attendees, phone
number and email address when registering
by December 4th.**





Katy Nagaj
Director, Teaching,
Learning and Leadership
Development

Teaching and Learning

We are excited to share some significant developments in our district that are reshaping the learning experiences for our students at all levels. Our commitment to fostering an engaging, innovative, and customized education is stronger than ever.

At the high school level, we are proud to introduce Flex courses that empower students to take charge of their learning. This approach allows students to progress through the curriculum at their own pace, enabling them to master concepts before moving on to new material. This flexibility supports diverse learning styles and promotes a deeper understanding of the material.

For our middle school students, we have implemented a new teaming model that encourages collaboration among teachers and students. Middle school teaming promotes caring, communication and collaboration, and pairs groups of students with groups of teachers for core subjects. The goal is to create a more personalized learning experience for students, while also helping teachers build relationships with students and foster collaboration.

New Elementary Programs Engage Students

English Language Arts Adoption and Professional Learning Communities

At the elementary level, we implemented a new literacy curriculum, CKLA, designed to be engaging, rigorous, and aligned to the Science of Reading. This knowledge-building curriculum emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, laying a strong foundation for future learning.

Additionally, we have implemented a Professional Learning Community (PLC) model that fosters ongoing collaboration among educators. This ensures that our teachers are continuously learning with one another, discussing data, and sharing best practices, ultimately benefiting our students.



K-5 STEAM Classes

Have you ever wondered how bridges are built, why rockets launch into space, or how video games are created? Our elementary students are diving headfirst into these exciting questions and more through our STEAM program!

STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. By integrating these subjects, we are fostering a new generation of creative thinkers and problem-solvers.

What is happening in our Makerspaces and Innovation Labs?

- **Building and Designing:** Constructing structures, coding robots, and creating 3D models
- **Experimenting and Innovating:** Conducting science experiments, testing engineering designs, and exploring artistic techniques
- **Collaborating and Communicating:** Working together to solve challenges and present their ideas



THE W-E EXPERIENCE

The W-E Experience ensures the intellectual, emotional and physical development of all students. With a focus on well-rounded experiences, students are part of engaging experiences every day.



Edison Elementary

Third grade students spent time with a chemical engineer who visited their classroom. They had a blast conducting an experiment with Skittles and M&Ms while also learning about the scientific method. The students are fortunate to have local business and community members as guest teachers!



Grant Elementary

Grant Elementary had their first House Huddle and House Assembly of the year in September. This is year two of their House System initiative to enhance relationships and school spirit. Each student and staff member was placed in one of eight "houses" and they do a variety of activities as individual houses and as an entire school. Working together, they build a community and family atmosphere in the school.



Longfellow Elementary

What is going on in this classroom? If you said "a whole lot of fun," you are right! These students are putting their critical thinking skills to the test as they complete design challenges. These challenges are fun and engaging, and also provide them opportunities to be creative in so many ways.



Royalview Elementary

Willoughby Mayor Vanni emphasized the importance of leadership and the impact of giving back to the community when he met with the Royal Council, a student leadership group. The fourth and fifth graders learned about taking responsibility and the importance of helping others. The students were chosen by their classmates to represent the school.



Eastlake Middle School

Red Oak Camp was the perfect location for sixth graders to take their teamwork skills to the next level and enjoy a variety of activities designed to challenge and excite them. They had an amazing experience as they worked on communicating, collaborating, and creating, while also engaging in outdoor adventures.



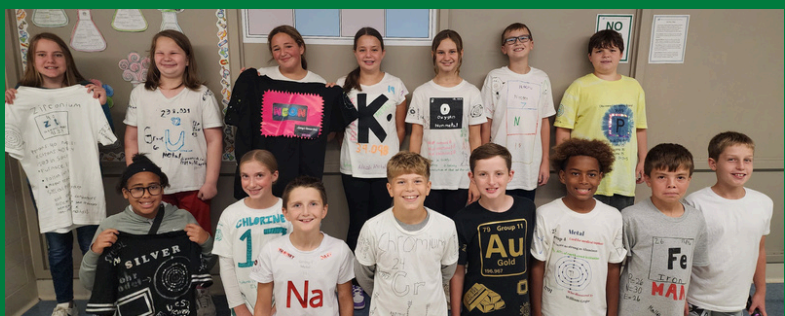
Jefferson Elementary

Kindergarten students at Thomas Jefferson Elementary love to learn using the innovative Newline Q Pro Series touch panel displays. The students know how to navigate the display screen and the apps. It is a great tool for student engagement and teaching the students valuable technology skills. Sixty-four of the new display screens were installed across the district to replace aging technology.



School of Innovation

The U.S. Department of Education recently designated the school a 2024 National Blue Ribbon School for exemplary academic performance. Among only 14 schools in Ohio to receive this prestigious honor, this is the first time since 2005 that a Lake County school has earned this distinction. The district's Royalview Elementary School was previously honored in 1997. This is a testament to the collective efforts of staff, students, families and the community.



Willoughby Middle School

The students mixed science and art as they researched the elements and designed t-shirts to showcase their learning. Along with hands-on learning experiences in their teams, they worked together to share ideas and had great fun presenting their final projects for all to see and enjoy!



Willowick Middle School

Students in the middle school are placed into grade level teams where they develop strong relationships with their teachers and fellow classmates. With the new schedule and flex time, students get more individualized attention. Teachers also have Professional Learning Communities. The PLCs meet regularly for common planning time to share their expertise as they develop meaningful lessons and support student learning.



South High School

It isn't often that you find students who run a school store with \$81,120 in sales, but that is the reality for the Rebels Express Store. The business students take on the roles of business owners and managers in the areas of marketing, accounting, design and production to sell spiritwear. They also create spiritwear for other schools in the district, and other items such as mugs and pennants.



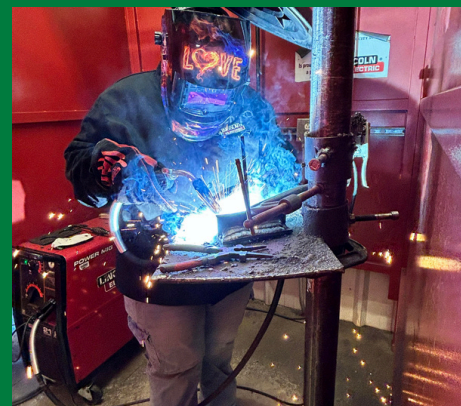
North High School

Teacher Mrs. Tomb led a team of both North Rangers and South Rebels, cleverly named the Screaming Pumpkins, to win the annual City of Willoughby Pumpkin Chunkin' contest. Under the guidance of Marous Brothers Construction, students worked with engineers to design and build their own trebuchet.



W-E Preschool

At Willoughby-Eastlake Preschool, our future scientists are diving into hands-on experiments, sparking curiosity and igniting a love for discovery. Who knows what amazing breakthroughs they'll achieve next!



NCI – Eastlake

Step into the future of nursing education. The new simulation program offers learners an immersive experience that bridges the gap between theory and practice. The opportunity to learn with technology that simulates real medical situations provides students with realistic learning experiences. They are well-prepared when they begin their clinicals.

NCI – Willoughby

By learning welding techniques, students gain practical experience in metalworking, problem solving, and critical thinking, preparing them for various industries such as construction, manufacturing, and automotive. The welding programs foster teamwork and communication skills through collaborative projects, and promote creativity and design thinking.



Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools
35353 Curtis Blvd
Eastlake, OH 44095

School Board Members

Stacy Menser, President

Jaime Shatsman, Vice President

Krista Bair, Member

Gabrielle Miller, Member

Denise Verdi, Member

Follow the district on social media!

 [willoughbyeastlakecityschools](#)

 [Willoughby-Eastlake Schools](#)

 [@WESchools](#)

WIN THIS CAR! 2025 CHEVROLET TRAX 1LS

The school district is holding a car raffle with all proceeds supporting student groups in the schools. When you make your donation, you can fund the school of your choice. Get your tickets now and you could drive a new car! We appreciate Serpentine Chevrolet of Willoughby Hills for donating the car.



2025 CHEVROLET TRAX 1LS

WIN THIS CAR!

WILLOUGHBY - EASTLAKE CITY SCHOOLS RAFFLE

 **TICKETS \$10 EACH**
DRAWING 1-24-25
AT NORTH-SOUTH
BASKETBALL GAME

 **PROCEEDS**
FUND STUDENT GROUPS
OF YOUR CHOICE



**DETAILS, RULES AND TICKET
INFORMATION ON WEBSITE
OR USE QR CODE**

 [BIT.LY/WEARRAFFLE24](https://bit.ly/wecarraffle24)