

Traditions

District Publication of
Fort Thomas Independent Schools



SPECIAL FOCUS:
Building Student Opportunities

FALL/WINTER 2021

From the Superintendent

It's All About Student Opportunities

Our community celebrated adding a “final piece of the puzzle” this past August when we hosted the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the completion of Johnson Elementary School. This event marked the end of two decades of school construction and renovation. Fort Thomas Independent Schools (FTIS), with the amazing support and sacrifice from the entire community, has been diligently transforming our facilities to make them

the ideal vehicles for enabling our mission: “to provide engaging and challenging learning experiences which foster creativity, curiosity and innovation, while inspiring all students to pursue lifelong learning and become productive members of the global community.”

The efforts of the past 20 years have been a clear example of why we remain *Rich in Tradition, Focused on the Future*. In this edition of *Traditions*, you'll find numerous examples of how our schools are using their spaces to create optimal learning experiences, all geared toward developing students who are:

- *Courageous leaders* who display high levels of leadership, optimism and hope
- *Empathetic collaborators* who not only know how to work with others but who respect other's perspectives
- *Global communicators* who demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively in writing, verbally and interpersonally
- *Curious and critical thinkers* who value inquiry and are always seeking to learn more
- *Creative problem solvers* who demonstrate creativity and entrepreneurship

FTIS now has five school facilities aligned with what we know all students need to be ready for their futures. Our teachers are able to provide students with the types of learning opportunities and experiences that they deserve and that will lead to personal success. Whether it's in the science labs, mass communication labs, performing arts spaces or fitness center, high school students can apply their learning in real-world settings. Our elementary schools are designed with flexible furniture, individualized technology and hallway social spaces, so teachers can personalize education for every student's needs. And in our middle school, whether through the media center, STEM lab or sensory room, students have the support systems to grow intellectually and emotionally.

We are committed to offering students the experiences they need to become contributing members of a global community—so adapting and enriching our learning spaces will be an ongoing process. We will always be looking for ways to get better at helping all students realize their potential. Thank you for supporting this endeavor.

—**Brian Robinson**, Superintendent, Fort Thomas Independent Schools



(L-R) Board Vice-Chair **Lisa Duckworth**, Board Chair **Ann Meyer**, Asst. Principal **Kristina Sheehy**, Principal **Ashley Dikeos**, Superintendent **Brian Robinson**, and Board members **Julie Kuhnhein**, **Brad Fennell** and **Jeff Beach** get ready to cut the ribbon to officially open the new Johnson Elementary School.

Cover: Johnson 4th-graders **Averie Grainger** and **Olivia Fromm** display the time capsule discovered in the old building's foundation.

Traditions is published two times a year (fall and spring) by the Fort Thomas Independent Schools. *Traditions* is sent to all homes in the 41075 ZIP code, teachers and tuition students who do not live in the district, alumni and all Fort Thomas Education Foundation donors.

Calendar 2021–22

January

- 3 Return from Winter Break
- 7 Second Quarter Report Cards Sent Home
- 10 Board of Education Meeting
- 17 Martin Luther King Jr. Day—No School
- 19 Student Late Arrival Day

February

- 14 Board of Education Meeting
- 16 Student Late Arrival Day
- 18 No School
- 21 Presidents Day—No School

March

- 5 FTEF Bluebird Palooza
- 11 No School
- 14 Professional Development—No School
- 18 Third Quarter Report Cards Sent Home
- 21 Board of Education Meeting

April

- 1 No School
- 4–8 Spring Break—No School
- 18 Board of Education Meeting

May

- 9 Board of Education Meeting
- 17 Election Day—No School
- 30 Memorial Day—No School

June

- 2 Last Student Day
- TBD HHS Graduation



Welcome New Faculty & Staff

Certified

Brian Robinson, Superintendent
John Darnell, HHS Principal
Jennifer Forgy, HHS Assistant Principal
Stacey Behrensmeier, HHS Math
Jessica Gross, HHS Special Education
Joe Rivers, HHS Vocal Music
Hayden Sphire, HHS Special Education
Erika Volpenhein, HMS Principal
Brian McDowell, HMS Science
Jason Harnish, HMS Social Studies
Lubitz Hersberger, HMS/HHS Strings
Shannon Kennedy, HMS Special Education
Juli Martin, HMS Health/PE
Laura Rittinger, HMS Social Studies
Michelle Fair, JES Preschool
Jennifer Ragan, MES Kindergarten
Claudia Hills, MES 5th Grade
Chrissy Barlow, WES 1st Grade
Jessica Ginter, WES Special Education
Marti Jo Houlehan, WES 1st Grade
Stephanie Pinguely, WES 4th Grade

Classified

Amanda Jones, District Occupational Therapist
Jon Stratton, District Bus Monitor/Dir. Transportation
Susan Morrow, District Bus Monitor
Christopher Martin, District Computer Technician
Kevin Hester, District Network Administrator
Lance Bucher, HHS Administrative Assistant – Athletics
Michele Daunt, HHS Cafeteria
Kelly Griffith, HHS Cafeteria
Julie Sarakatsannis, HHS Secretary – Guidance
Jason Linkous, HMS Custodian
Taylor Newman, HMS Instructional Assistant – Special Ed.
Hannah Sargent, HMS Instructional Assistant – Music
Marian Sphire, HMS Secretary – Nurse/Attendance
Frances Wetterich, HMS Cafeteria
Ashley Chomyszak, JES Instructional Assistant
Jodi Luhn, JES Instructional Assistant
Amy Parna, JES Cafeteria Manager
Gina Passarella-Auer, JES Instructional Assistant
Avram Steuber, JES Cafeteria
Jill Taylor, JES Instructional Assistant
Ann Argo, MES Instructional Assistant
Stephanie Laake, MES Cafeteria Monitor
Chris Middendorf, MES Custodian
Amanda Pfetzer, WES Instructional Assistant

Save the Date: March 5

Mark your calendars now for the annual Fort Thomas Education Foundation (FTEF) **Bluebird Palooza!**

WELCOME

FTIS Classrooms: Where All Students Can Access Quality Opportunities

We're proud of our innovative and new buildings at Fort Thomas Independent Schools (FTIS); they set the standard for learning spaces across the state. Classrooms propel students to exhibit what we want them to know, do, and be like—to create, perform, communicate, collaborate, design and solve problems.

FTIS has transformed our learning environments into spaces that encourage every student to develop the five competencies identified in our Portrait of a Graduate: creative problem solving, global communication, curious critical thinking, courageous leadership, and empathetic collaboration. All of our facilities are designed to give students access to individualized and shared learning experiences that prepare them to be successful. Each building is distinctively outfitted to meet the unique learning styles and needs of every student. For example:

- Academic acceleration spaces at **Moyer Elementary** allow for specific supports for students in the English Learner (EL) program.
- At brand-new **Johnson Elementary**, carefully constructed classrooms offer conditions conducive to an effective preschool program for the district's youngest learners.
- **Woodfill Elementary** maximizes its physical design for targeted instruction and services for students who are differently abled.
- **Highlands Middle School** has transformed its building into a myriad of collaborative learning environments where students showcase their learning in innovative and academically focused ways.
- At **Highlands High School**, increased opportunities for career and technical education have been accompanied by establishment of integrated learning spaces. Students can become fully immersed in specific areas of study, such as Media Arts, Culinary Arts, Business Entrepreneurship and Engineering.

We have also invested in technology that leads students to employ advanced presentation skills to communicate creatively and effectively, as well as to access opportunities all over the world. (This year, every student received a brand-new device!)

We've prioritized flexible furniture so students can collaborate in meaningful ways. Our schools have turned classrooms into laboratories where student knowledge gets applied, tested, and demonstrated in relevant ways.

The Fort Thomas Independent Schools is committed to implementing solutions where we find gaps in achievement and performance.

Within our curriculum, students can explore career options through pathways, from educator preparation to mechanical engineering to fashion and design to early childhood development. Students can even tackle real-world problems at our Launch @ 20 Grand Professional Studies Center and explore work around healthcare, entrepreneurship, and business analytics.

As much as we've accomplished through our successes in building world-class facilities, we are further devoted to continuous growth and improvement. This year, we've taken extra steps to address the mental health needs of students. We provided professional development around trauma-informed care for our teachers so our staff can address the social and emotional needs of students in the school setting.

We are regularly evaluating student needs, learning conditions and programs. The Fort Thomas Independent Schools is committed to implementing solutions where we find gaps in achievement and performance.

As we refine and improve upon delivering the most effective individualized learning experiences, our facilities serve as the backdrop for possibilities. They will remain our students' catalysts for exploring curiosities and laboratories for highlighting student work.

—**Bill Bradford**, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

Frank Twehues, Civil Engineer

By HHS Journalism; **Chelsie Cooley**, editor-in-chief; **Jenna Richey** and **Owen Yelton**, staff writers

Creating, designing and planning for projects that provide new and innovative opportunities has long been part of Frank Twehues's personal and professional experience. Influenced by the people around him, Twehues was inspired from a young age to be a civil engineer. With his father being in the construction field and his brother-in-law working as an engineer, he had the perfect opportunity.

Twehues grew up in the Camp Springs area of Campbell County. He attended the University of Kentucky for both his undergraduate and graduate degrees. After college, Twehues worked for the Illinois Department of Transportation in Chicago and for the City of Fort Thomas as the zoning administrator, city engineer and building inspector. Now working at CT Consultants, Twehues has a unique title: market share manager. He encourages the project managers to grow relationships with clients and helps technical staff make efficient design solutions.



Frank Twehues

After his first job, he learned many things that he applies to his job today, like trusting his intuition. "I can think of several instances when my gut told me to look further into a design or send that additional email or make a call to make sure that something was getting done, and I didn't, which created extra work, stress and headaches."

While the workplace has experienced changes in the past 20 months, Twehues chooses to see the positives. "Before the pandemic, I spent all of my week either in my office or on a jobsite. Since COVID-19, our company has been working from home, so my work/life balance has been recalculated in a positive way. I didn't even know it was off balance. While I still go into the office about once a week, I love working from home."

Some of this flexibility also allowed Frank to support the finishing touches on the Johnson Elementary project. "I was brought in late to the project to look at the new plaza in front of the gym. The district and the city are always looking at improving and providing the best-quality, topnotch facilities. However, the best part of being brought into that project was getting a sneak peek of the almost completed school. It's a beautiful building."

Frank has also supported student opportunities through his volunteer work with the Fort Thomas Education Foundation (FTEF) as vice chair. Twehues describes his time on the board as "a lot of work but a lot of fun."

"Once my kids entered the district, I knew that I wanted to know more about the school system and be more involved," says Twehues. "FTEF's single mission is to support the schools. So, being involved has given me a much better understanding of the challenges the district faces and the opportunities my kids will have. I've gotten to know many of the people and learn about their hard work and dedication."

J

Johnson Elementary School

JOHNSON
elementary

The Best Place to Learn

Johnson Elementary School's (JES) brand-new building—designed to facilitate collaboration, performances, presentations, problem solving and hands-on learning of every kind—is a paragon of a 21st-century learning environment.

Classrooms are connected with soundproof, fold-open doors, allowing teachers to easily share space and team up to provide unique learning opportunities. Third-grade teachers **Aimee Shadwell** and **Anne Snider**, for instance, have collaborated on social studies/science projects.

Beckett Sharp says, "It was a perfect way to do a shadow puppet show between our two walls to represent our Cultural Diversity unit." Additionally, the glass doors double as whiteboards, upon which students and teachers can work out problems and demonstrate learning.

Social Steps

The Social Steps, found at the center of a converging set of hallways, is where students can gather to collaborate. Fourth-grader **Mackinnon Gracey** says, "I like going to the Social Steps because we are all together, and we do fun things." The deep and lengthy stairs offer students a place to spread out and work in small groups.

Fourth-grade teacher **Sally Schoellman** says the steps are an additional space where she can facilitate learning

MakerSpace and Green Room

JES has also gained a MakerSpace and Green Room where students can create using a 3D printer, sewing machine, button maker and robots. Library Media Specialist **Marie Zimmerman** says that having access to the MakerSpace equipment "exposes students to real-world applications." Fourth-grader **Elijah Shearer** captures the space succinctly: "This room has everything!"

Plus, students use the recording studio in the Green Room to implement a variety of projects. "Fifth-graders are using the button maker for a Veterans Day project," says Zimmerman. "Third-graders are using the space for a country research project and 1st- and 2nd-graders are rotating through a BeeBot and Dot robot center."

Fourth-grader **Hannah Poteet** describes one of her favorite Green Room recording features. "I'm probably most excited about changing the background, like doing a weather forecast," she says.

activities that aren't bound by the limits of her classroom. "The Social Steps provide more room for activities that require small groups and allow the kids to get out of traditional seats and classrooms and work in a more open, casual space."

Students and teachers can find a wide range of seating areas throughout the building. Fifth-grade teacher **Katie Huber** uses the unique seating areas right outside her classroom daily to give students other places to meet in small groups, complete work in quiet or have undisturbed conversations. Huber describes the seating areas as having a "coffee-shop feel" and reports that they are some of the most coveted places to work. "They've become so popular that I've started rotating who is using them to give everyone the opportunity."

Emma Clair Shaffer says the seating areas make learning easier. "It's not as cramped, so you don't hear all the chatter of other people. You can hear just yourself and your partner."



Johnson 5th-graders **Bailey Richey** and **Emma Claire Shaffer** put the finishing touches on their Veteran's Day poster.

As enthusiastic as Principal **Ashley Dikeos** is about all of JES's intentional learning environments, she's more eager about how the spaces will further JES's mission. "All of the features in our building are for something greater: our students' access to the kind of learning that will give them the building blocks to be courageous leaders, critical thinkers, global communicators, empathetic collaborators and creative problem solvers."



Students in **Sally Schoellman's** 4th-grade class use the Social Steps to spread out and work individually or in groups.

M

Moyer Elementary School

MOYER
elementary

Where Curiosities Become Creations with Places to Perform

When Moyer Elementary moved into its newly renovated building in 2017-18, students gained additional spaces to create, collaborate and communicate in imaginative ways.

As students enter the library, they now have access to a MakerSpace and Green Room on the upper level. In the MakerSpace, students turn their curiosities into creations. Using TinkerCad, students design objects and print them using the 3D printer. Additionally, they can access the sticker machines, a button machine and the school's robots, including Sphero, Dot & Dash, and Ozobots.

The room is outfitted with tables and chairs, carpets to sit on, plenty of storage and places for students to clean up after



Moyer 5th-grader **Ben Bertasso** runs the audiovisual equipment during the news broadcast.

they work. Plus, windows into the hallway allow students passing by to see creators in action. "Here, students can bring to life what's in their imagination, work as teams, and fail and try again," says **Laura Robinson**, library media specialist.

Robinson and 5th-grade students also use the soundproofed Green Room, equipped with computer equipment, cameras and microphones, to produce Moyer's weekly *Mustang News* stream. Students learn how to run the camera, operate a soundboard, and research and write stories.

"Students leave elementary school with broadcasting knowledge, and that's pretty unique," says Robinson. It's an opportunity younger Moyer students anticipate. "I can't wait to be a 5th-grader so I can run the *Mustang News*!" says 4th-grader **Claire McIntosh**.



Moyer 5th-graders **Quincy Grubbs** and **William Twehues** use the Green Room to produce the weekly *Mustang News* stream.

New Gym Has Multiple Uses

Moyer's remodel also gave students a gymnasium. After construction was complete, Principal **Dawn Laber** met with the PTO about how to increase the functionality of the gym. The PTO knew Moyer not only needed the seating capacity of the gymnasium but also the equipment to support learning opportunities. "They agreed from the start to partner with us on this endeavor," remembers Laber.

Ben Rutledge, Moyer PTO volunteer, says, "At any given school function, you're bound to see not just parents, guardians and siblings but grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, neighbors and friends. The thing about Fort Thomas is that when it comes to our kids, we go big!" He adds, for example, "Installing a permanent AV system in the gym is precisely the kind of long-term investment the PTO is here to make."

Over the course of two years, the PTO used monies raised by the annual fundraiser, Santa House, to acquire three additional media screens and another projector for the gym. The district also provided blackout blinds so the projectors can be used during the day. Now students can present information to large audiences.

"As students learn to communicate and create, they now have a space that gives them an authentic culminating experience," says Laber. The entire school can gather in one place, and there's room for the community to join as well. "Having all of our students in one location allows us to create shared experiences that give students meaningful memories," says Laber. "It's these things that make Moyer special."

W

WOODFILL
elementary

Woodfill Elementary School

Growing Happens Everywhere

At Woodfill Elementary School (WES), students are surrounded by spaces that offer them novel ways to create, design, collaborate and communicate. From rooms designed to foster learning in particular disciplines to intentional seating found in the hallways, WES is constructed to optimize 21st-century learning.

Adaptable seating is a hallmark feature at WES. The Spanish classroom has comfortable stools that can be arranged in a variety of configurations for specific lessons. The hallways have benches that accommodate individual and small-group learning, so students can change their environment and learn outside the classroom.

Rocking seats, yoga balls, tall stools and a variety of other types of unique seating are found in classrooms throughout the building. “Adjustable seating options not only give students various ways to learn but also flexibility in how and where they complete their tasks,” observes **Alicia Wittmer**, kindergarten teacher. “It mimics the myriad ways adults work today.”

Students can also make their way to a Sensory Hallway to help them regulate their bodies. Students test their coordination and balance on marked pathways on the floor or find devices on the wall to assist in sensory needs or relaxation strategies. Individual students and classes are invited to use the Sensory Hallway in whatever ways they need.

“Some students require more sensory input than others or need places where they can move freely or discharge energy or anxiety,” says Wittmer. The Sensory Hallway is the ideal environment where students can meet their individual needs.

Innovative Learning Opportunities

You can't find 10 raised flower and garden beds right outside the classrooms in most schools. At WES, students learn how to garden and how plants grow while also learning about the food chain and how to cook what they grow.

Fourth-graders get to manage the Grow Tower, a device that grows plants around a tower in a self-sustaining way. “The gardens give students a chance to see the natural way things grow, while the Grow Tower demonstrates what innovation and technology can accomplish,” says Wittmer.

To celebrate the efforts of their work, 4th-grade science teacher **Elizabeth Waymeyer** hosts a salad party with the

plants from the Grow Tower, and every student has a role in preparing the salad. Fifth-grader **Jessie Brink** remembers, “The plants took a lot longer than I expected to grow. My favorite part was how we all got to be part of making the salads.”

Even WES's Media Center is distinctive. Beyond exposing students to a wide range of reading materials, unique learning spaces and technology devices aid project-based learning. Students can meet at The Nest where tables let them spread out and work in small groups. Devices give them research access and offer a variety of STEM activities.



Woodfill 4th-graders (L-R) **Harrison Smith** and **Kameron Lanich** try out the different devices in the Sensory Hallway.

Third-grader **Chloe Berg's** favorite part of the library is the access she has to all of the books. She's also discovered her interest in engineering. “I've gotten to use the Dots [robots that can act based on students' coding input]. I love to engineer, and that makes me want to engineer more,” says Chloe.

“All WES spaces are meant to engage students so they acquire knowledge in innovative ways,” says Principal **Keith Faust**. “Then they apply that knowledge in ways that imitate the real world.”

H

HIGHLANDS
MIDDLE

Highlands Middle School

HMS Spaces Promote Discovery and Support

At Highlands Middle School (HMS), teachers use every resource, including their physical spaces, to leverage student learning objectives. Whether it's a studio or lab that simulates a workplace or seating options that optimize focus, students have access to the resources they need to become courageous leaders, empathetic collaborators, global communicators, curious and critical thinkers, and creative problem solvers.

The STEM production lab, for example, is set up to give students as many real-world experiences as possible. A collection of materials can be used to build prototypes for numerous solutions, including technology tools such as 3D Printers or Microbits. “It's the perfect place for students to discover a number of career fields, including medical, engineering and computer science,” says STEM teacher **Brian McDowell**.

The HMS library also provides students with the equipment they need to build 21st-century skills. The library includes six collaboration stations where small groups meet around a table and a large screen TV equipped with Apple TV to collaborate on projects. In addition, students use three whiteboards to plan video



HMS 8th-graders (L-R) **Liza Zengel**, **Eden Hargis**, **Saryn Stepner** and **Brianna Horner** gather at one of the HMS library collaboration stations to share ideas for their project.

projects, review math problems, study and quiz one another.

The library has a Green Screen room to support audio and visual recordings. “The design and structure of the library offers students space to collaborate and develop critical thinking skills as they work on projects together and give one another feedback,” says Library Media Specialist **Stephanie Griffith**.

Flexible Seating and Sensory Support

Language Arts teacher **Amy Fry** uses flexible seating to encourage students to discover how they learn and work best. Options include standing desks, wobble cushions, balance ball chairs, rocking chairs, floormats and gaming chairs. “Research shows that students learn best when they are comfortable emotionally and physically,” says Fry. “I rotate students through all available seating options to test them out and then allow them to pick their top choices for the quarter.”

Eighth-grader **Morgan Davis** is reaping the rewards of



HMS 8th-graders (L-R) **Morgan Davis**, **Madeline Lance**, **Devika Gidhesh** and **Rafe Pinkston** enjoy the many flexible seating options they can select in **Amy Fry's** Language Arts class.

flexible seating. “It makes us more willing to work harder if we are in an environment we enjoy!”

At HMS, students can even find spaces to regulate their nervous system. Those who need sensory processing support can go to a carpeted room with light-dimming filters. Students use a large bubble light with mirrors, a crash pad, platform and cuddle swings, mats, light boxes, music with speakers and a variety of other smaller items.

Andrea Smith, special education teacher, explains: “When a student is becoming anxious, overwhelmed or underwhelmed we use the tools in this room to help them get to a comfortable level, in a private and safe setting.” With sensory support, students can continue with their classwork and meet the demands of the day. One middle school student shared, “I like to go to the sensory room when I'm excited or anxious because it's calming.”

“All of our spaces are meant to support the kind of teaching experiences and hands-on learning we are committed to offering students,” says Principal **Erika Volpenheim**. “That means not only the equipment available to teachers but also the support systems students need to operate at their best throughout the day.”

Highlands High School

Classrooms Boost Creativity, Collaboration and Communication

The Mass Media Department is not only one of the bedrocks of Highlands High School (HHS), but it's also a model for how the school is adapting spaces and advancing programs to offer students the 21st-century skills and experiences they need to be world-class leaders, thinkers and communicators.

Beth Brubaker, English teacher and adviser to HHS's publications program (<http://hhsjournalism.com>), has transformed her classroom into a publications newsroom. Students have access to multiple Apple TV's for designing as well as dedicated space for camera equipment and conferencing. Besides producing *Hilltopper Online* and the *Highlander* yearbook, students have started a sports podcast, *The Bluebirds Sports Show*. Publication students are collaborating with the HHS film and broadcast students to record and edit using HHS's audio lab.



Film and Broadcast students senior **Faith Broering** and junior **Jonah Listerman** work on recording a news broadcast.

“Students have an opportunity to lead by example and create content that rivals professional media.”

The publications program is intentionally designed and resourced to prepare students to be leaders, collaborators, communicators, critical thinkers and problem solvers. “Students have an opportunity to lead by example and create content that rivals professional media,” says Brubaker. “Some students have interviewed state representatives, Fortune

All of these endeavors are providing students with transferrable, real-world skills they can take with them after graduation. “These spaces and projects allow my student editors to be the leaders; I’m just the facilitator,” says Brubaker. Because of HHS equipment, students are continuously pushing the boundaries of student media. “In four years, we’ve transitioned from a printed newsletter to an online news platform with video, photography and writing,” points out Brubaker.

500 executives and more. They are trailblazing what it means to be global communicators and creative, critical thinkers, even in high school.”

Senior **Chelsie Cooley**, editor-in-chief this year, says, “Journalism has impacted my life. Due to the everyday life skills I learn in this class I’m more confident in myself and my leadership skills. I’m more extroverted, determined and self-assured.”



The HHS Library Media Center offers students a variety of comfortable options for learning.

Collaboration Studio Empowers Students

HHS students now have access to a collaboration studio designed to support teamwork and creativity. Outfitted with adaptable furniture, lounge seating and five Apple TV's, it's where students present ideas and work together to solve problems.

Library Media Specialist **Jason Gay** says, “In the collaboration studio, students engage one another in deeper learning through cooperation and use of technology.” In a comfortable space like the studio, students feel supported and acclimated to success. Personalized learning and team-based challenges on campus reflect real-world, modern work/design spaces.

Senior **Foster Shuett** finds the space inspiring and useful. “The studio is comfortable and adaptable for our needs. We like going there because it’s less distracting, and it’s cool, like a college campus library.”

Principal **John Darnell** is excited about all the ways HHS's spaces and resources are enabling students to gain invaluable skills to take into the next chapter of life. “We want all students to be practiced in creating, performing, designing, collaborating, communicating and engaging with their community. We continue to leverage our spaces in remarkable ways to accomplish this goal.”



HHS Journalism students senior **Ryne Wiseman** and freshmen **Owen Yelton, Ella Cox and Kayla Lehn** use a collaboration station to complete their edits on a yearbook spread.

Rich in Tradition on the Future Focused on the Future

Highlands High School



Highlands Middle School



Moyer Elementary School



Woodfill Elementary School



Johnson Elementary School



Follow the QR codes to view videos from Highland High School and Johnson Elementary School.

Focus on the Future:

A Five-Year Strategic Plan

Over the past five years, Fort Thomas Independent Schools (FTIS) has focused on integrating the Portrait of a Graduate (POG) competencies across the curriculum. From preschool to 12th grade, FTIS has aligned its teaching and learning frameworks so that each grade level lays the necessary foundation for the next. We're confident that our students are learning and growing in their ability to effectively lead, communicate, think critically, collaborate with others and solve problems. As FTIS looks to the immediate future and beyond, we want to further explore and expand how the POG competencies are realized for students while simultaneously demonstrating a valiant commitment to academic achievement and postsecondary readiness.

FTIS continues to operate with a "yes, and..." mentality—believing we can be academically rigorous and successful while also excelling at equipping students with essential life readiness skills. To help us promote the highest levels of academic attainment and outfit our students with quality deeper learning skills, the FTIS administration is working with the Board of Education and the District Leadership Team to establish a five-year strategic plan around five primary focuses:

1. Positive and Engaged Culture
2. Achievement
3. Student Experiences and Opportunities
4. Individual Student Growth
5. Portrait of a Graduate – The FT Graduate

You may have heard about these focus areas as we've been seeking additional feedback from a variety of our constituents. "We've been drafting goals and next steps around these primary focuses and determining the action steps we need to take in order to achieve measurable change," says Superintendent **Brian Robinson**.

Through a positive and engaged culture, FTIS intends to institute a system where trust is built, passion is

inspired, relationships are developed, authenticity is respected and solutions are determined. A laser-like focus on achievement will lead to the sustainment of top performance levels and expand honors across the system, including the closure of academic achievement gaps and assurance of success for all student subgroup populations.

As we maximize student experiences and opportunities, our aim is to provide all students in preschool through 12th grade an enriched learning experience that incorporates intentional preparedness for college, career and life. Our District is

As we maximize student experiences and opportunities, our aim is to provide all students in preschool through 12th grade an enriched learning experience that incorporates intentional preparedness for college, career and life.

concentrating on individual growth for all learners. We will promote continuous growth and individual success for each student based upon an articulated, collaboratively developed plan that addresses needs, aptitudes, and interests. Our commitment to the Portrait of a Graduate shall remain steadfast with an insistence that personalized learning will foster students' ability to develop essential competencies that lead to the ownership and reflection of their personal growth.

The hope is to have a published strategic plan in place by the end of January 2022, says **Bill Bradford**, assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, who is leading the efforts to develop the plan. The overall plan will clearly articulate for stakeholders the objectives embedded within each goal area, and it will detail the strategies that our District and schools are leading in order to promote favorable change.

"This five-year strategic plan will give us a filter by which to base all our decisions, to determine what's most important to us and how we apply our resources," says Bradford. "It will clearly define our continuous improvement efforts and unite us in what we hope to have realized in five years' time."

ALUMNI Homecoming Weekend

We welcomed all alumni and friends back to the Nest on October 1 at the Homecoming Tailgate before the football game. Classes of 1990, 1991 and 2001 celebrated reunions during Homecoming Weekend. Many attendees stopped by the Homecoming Tailgate to visit with other alumni before heading in to see Highlands play Conner.



All set up and ready to go!



Chad ('06) and Kristi Hudepohl and family and Beth (Dobbling) Hudepohl ('79) and Jeff Hudepohl ('79)



Members of the HHS Alumni Association: Megan (Hosea) Abner ('91), Mark Collier ('01), Diane Alexander ('71), Ann (Davis) Meyer ('74)



Maggie (Fennell) McCluskey ('04) with her son



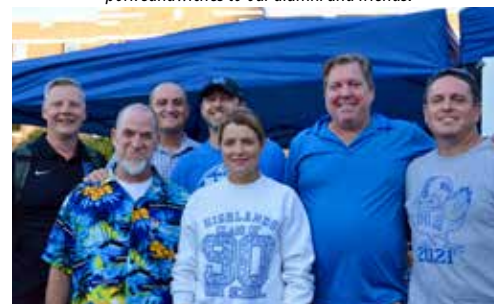
Kelly (Parks) Shiell ('91), Megan (Hosea) Abner ('91), Jennifer (Turner) Smith ('91)



Ron Dill ('81) and members of the HHS wrestling team served pork sandwiches to our alumni and friends.



The HHS marching band played the alma mater and HHS fight song.



Lou Class, Matt Zin ('90), Jim Caywood ('90) Sean Donelan ('90), Alison Murphy ('90), Steve Hunt ('90), Clark Richter ('90)



Julie, Nick ('22) and Brian Robinson



Tradition Never Graduates



Alumni Spotlight

Ron Dill ('81)

Ron Dill, 1981 graduate of Highlands High School, loves Fort Thomas, Fort Thomas schools and the Fort Thomas community. You can hear it in his voice: "I absolutely enjoyed my time at Highlands High School where I met many of my lifelong friends whom I have literally shared my life with and who have been so important to me. I just celebrated with my classmates at our 40th class reunion and had so much fun visiting with old friends."

It was evident from graduation day that Fort Thomas Independent Schools (FTIS) prepared Dill for the future in many ways. "Dennis Bradford taught Mechanical Drawing. He connected me with my first employer after high school," says Dill. "The day after graduation, I started as a draftsman with Trenwa Inc. where I worked while also attending Northern Kentucky University (NKU). From my experiences at Highlands High School I brought advanced skills to my design and drawing classes and to employment opportunities that followed, setting my course professionally." Dill obtained his degree in Construction Management from NKU.

Employed with the City of Fort Thomas since 1987, Dill has been in his role as City Administrative Officer since 2015. In this position, he sees the unique relationship between the City of Fort Thomas and the FTIS, which is different from most communities. Dill says they share a collaborative spirit that helps leverage resources for the "greater good."

Dill is proud of the partnership. It allows the city and school district to provide first-class recreational facilities for all users, including a baseball field at Winkler Fields, baseball fields at Highland Park, tennis courts at Tower Park and the soccer complex. The city also has provided space to house buses and transportation services, which allows school property to be used advantageously for student-related activities.

"Perhaps the best collaborations have been realized when the school campuses were being designed and rebuilt," says Dill. "Providing safety in and around the schools is paramount. The cooperation has resulted in building designs, exiting sidewalks, crosswalk signage,



Ron and Cora Dill, 20th Anniversary Gala

vehicular access, vehicular/pedestrian conflicts, etc. to be comprehensively addressed. I believe our campus's access and pedestrian movements around our schools are the safest they have ever been."

Dill is also a founding member of the Fort Thomas Education Foundation (FTEF), which is celebrating its 20th year. Ron says his involvement with the FTEF has helped him understand and appreciate the issues most important to the schools and relate them to how the city can be a partner.

"Partnering among the schools, city, FTEF and other civic groups has resulted in a great community," says Dill. "The citizens have the best amenities without duplicating effort and expenditures, and everyone benefits from that type of collaboration."

Dill is married to **Cora Dill**, a 3rd-grade teacher at Moyer Elementary. He also has three children: **Corey** ('10), **Nick** ('12) and **Brooke** ('18), and two stepsons (**Nick** '16) and **Cole** ('18).

FTEF Grants in Action

Thanks to your generosity, the FTEF has given over **one million dollars** in teacher grants since our founding in 2001. Over those years, teachers have highlighted the need for musical instruments, books, software, a soundboard, cameras and so much more! We are hard at work raising funds for our 2021-22 grant cycle.

Please help us give our educators everything they have asked for with a generous donation to the FTEF Annual Appeal. **GIVE TODAY! ftef.org**



A grant paid for instruments and bows for students in the strings program.



New camera lenses and cameras are improving the quality of HHS students' photos.



Theatre students use the new soundboard, learning on cutting-edge equipment and producing high-quality student-run productions in the PAC.



Marching band students play their new drums for fans during a home football game this season.



Students at Johnson Elementary use their 3D printer.



Students in the Art Department use a large format printer for promo materials and other art projects.

It's ANNUAL APPEAL Time!

Consider a gift to the FTEF in support of our mission of enhancing educational excellence.

We can't do what we do without YOU!

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Roaring 20's

On October 23, the FTEF celebrated its 20th anniversary with a Roaring '20s Gala. Anniversary donors and FTEF supporters met at the Queen City Club in Cincinnati to celebrate 20 years of enhancing educational excellence. Donors were treated to a VIP reception in the Library Room and a performance by the HHS Jazz Band. All guests enjoyed a delicious dinner and dancing with Floyd and the Walkmen.



Anthony ('03) and Jessica England and Traci and Matt Nestheide, inspired by our theme.



All set up and ready to go!



Partygoers all dressed up and having fun.



Elise Hyder, Becky Hug, Kevin Duke ('03) and Megan deSola enjoying the gala.



Amy (Meyer) Shaffer ('91), FTEF executive director, honoring our Alumnus of the Year.



The HHS Jazz Band performed during the VIP reception with instruments bought using your contributions.

ANNIVERSARY GALA



Floyd and the Walkmen kept party-goers on their feet.



Partygoers dancing the night away.



Jean Farley, Bev (Helmbold) Erschell ('52), Barbara (Erschell) Sweet ('74), and Char Bankemper enjoying the VIP reception.



Ron ('81) and Cora Dill decked out in '20s inspired attire.



2000 Alumnus of the Year, **Fred Haas ('57)** and his wife **Betty Jo.**



Guests enjoying their dinner.



FORT THOMAS

I N D E P E N D E N T S C H O O L S

H	H	J	M	W
HIGHLANDS HIGH	HIGHLANDS MIDDLE	JOHNSON elementary	MOYER elementary	WOODFILL elementary

Rich in tradition and focused on the future, the Fort Thomas Independent School District provides engaging and challenging learning experiences which foster creativity, curiosity, and innovation, while inspiring all students to pursue lifelong learning and become productive members of the global community.

Fort Thomas Independent Schools is on social media!



Find and like us on Facebook at **Fort Thomas Independent Schools.**

Follow us on Twitter @FTSchools



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You're Invited!

The Board of Education of Fort Thomas Independent Schools meetings take place the second Monday of each month at 6:30pm at Launch located at 20 N. Grand Ave. Visit our website to confirm the time and place.

Board of Education

- Ann Meyer, Chairperson
- Lisa Duckworth, Vice-Chairperson
- Jeff Beach
- Brad Fennell
- Julie Kuhnhein

Central Office Administrators

- Brian Robinson, Superintendent
- Jamee Flaherty, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
- Bill Bradford, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

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