

# THE UGAR Connection

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January 2020

[www.vwcs.net](http://www.vwcs.net)

  @VWCScougars

## Superintendent's Update

Dear Van Wert Parents, Families, and Community Members,

What a wonderful time of year! I hope you've enjoyed a wonderfully restful and joyous holiday season. The Weather Channel is predicting a warmer-than-usual winter with lower-than-normal snowfall amounts. Personally, I hope they are right. One pretty three- to four-inch snowfall is enough for me and I'm ready for spring. However, if they are wrong and we have snow and ice, I want to take this opportunity to say thank you so much for your understanding as we have to make tough decisions about whether or not it is safe to hold school and/or our extra-curricular activities. I am a parent and a grandparent, and I understand how much shuffling you may need to do for your children when we delay or cancel school. Make sure we have your updated contact information in the instant alert system so that you are notified of any delays and cancellations that may occur. Please know that we take our responsibilities very seriously when the safety of our students is involved. If you need to update your information, you may do so by clicking on "Alerts & Info" on our district's website. If you have any trouble, please contact us by phone and we will gladly help you.

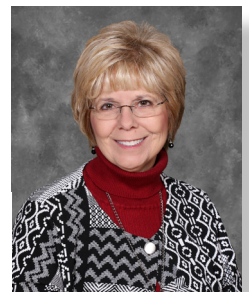
January is School Board Appreciation Month so I would ask you to say, "Thank you for serving on our board of education," as you see our board members out and about in the community. For our board members, being on the board is a labor of love by people who care deeply about our district. Many times, it is

a thankless job and difficult decisions need to be made. I have worked in three other school districts and talked with numerous other superintendents across the state of Ohio. I can tell you that the folks who currently serve on our board of education are a rarity. Each and every one of them is on the board in order to provide the best possible education for our students. Our conversations are always centered on what's best for our students and never about personal agendas. So I want to say, "Thank you from the bottom of my heart!" to all of our school board members. Van Wert City Schools is a very special district and our board members go to great lengths to keep it that way.

We are in the middle of our winter sports season and I'd like to wish all of our athletes good luck as they compete. I'd also like to remind our readers that we are currently in the process of conducting a feasibility study for our Stadium Project and the Baseball/Softball Complex. If you are interested in being a donor for either of these projects, please contact board president Anthony Adams at [a\\_adams@vwcs.net](mailto:a_adams@vwcs.net).

As always, I would like to welcome you in to enjoy our sports and other performances. Our students love seeing you there! And remember, my door is always open if you would like to come in and meet with me.

*Years in education,*  
**Ms. Vicki Brunn**  
Superintendent



## Message from the Administrative Assistant to the Principal

The winter months are always busy at VWHS and this year is no exception. Winter sports are in full swing and student athletes are busy competing in wrestling, boys' and girls' basketball, swimming, bowling, and cheerleading. Be sure to come out and support our athletes!

Our fine arts students have been busy in recent months. Theatre students concluded a fine performance in *Sherlock Holmes* and are already busy rehearsing for the upcoming spring musical. Our various school choirs were busy spreading holiday cheer in December. In addition to performing their annual Christmas concert, they took their show on the road and performed for our elementary students and at various businesses and senior-living homes.

The Concert Band joined the fun with their various concerts, which included their formal Christmas concert, a special elementary concert in the NPAC with a visit from Santa Claus, and small ensemble groups performed throughout our community. All in all, our students brought some joy during this wonderful holiday season.

Numerous student groups took on special holiday projects outside of school: Student Council, National Honor Society, Beta Club, Service Pack, and Senior Class Projects were all involved in a specific endeavor that benefited those in need in our community.

While all these great things are happening in and around our school, our priority of academic performance is still front and center. Our teachers understand our students' experiences and backgrounds as well as their needs, interests, and abilities and continue to foster rich learning opportunities in an environment that is conducive to learning for all students.

As students return from a well-deserved break, we look forward to a fresh start with a new semester.

### Mr. David Froelich

High School Administrative Assistant to the Principal

# HIGH SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

## 2018-2019 VWHS Academic Award Recipients Honored



2018-2019 Juniors



2018-2019 Sophomores



2018-2019 Freshman

Recipients of the 2018-2019 Academic Award were recognized at a luncheon held on November 5. Recipients are honored in the autumn following the school year in which the award was earned so that the fourth nine weeks can be calculated.

Freshman must maintain a 3.6 GPA, sophomores 3.5, juniors 3.4, and seniors 3.3 in order to receive the award. Students must also earn a Renaissance Card both semesters that same year. Renaissance is a tiered program that recognizes students for their academic, attitude, and attendance excellence.

## Congratulations Caylee Phillips for Placing 6th at the State Cross Country Meet!



VWHS senior Caylee Phillips wrapped up an outstanding high school cross country career by placing sixth out of 176 runners at the OHSAA Division II Cross Country State Meet on November 2. She broke her own school record with a time of 18:23.4 and was named All-Ohio.

## Mr. Koontz Nominated for LifeChanger of the Year Award



Mr. Kerry Koontz has been nominated for the LifeChanger of the Year award by VWHS Principal, Bob Priest, for the impact he is making on our students through his innovative CEO (Career Education Opportunities) Program. Read his full profile and show your support by leaving a comment on his page at [www.lifechangeroftheyear.com](http://www.lifechangeroftheyear.com).

Scan the QR code to visit Mr. Koontz's profile!



## Mr. Priest Awarded OSCA Administrator of the Year Award



Mr. Bob Priest, High School Principal, was recently awarded the 2019 Ohio School Counseling Association Administrator of the Year award. Mr. Frankie Bowen, VWHS Counselor, nominated Mr. Priest for the award which is given to a school administrator who has personally contributed to the understanding and growth of the school counseling profession.



# VWMS: FOCUSING ON SERVANT LEADERSHIP



6th grade Cougar Leaders sold "Canes for Canines" to raise money for the Van Wert County Humane Society. Students sold candy canes at lunchtime December 9-18 and were able to donate a total of **\$216.55**.

7th grade Cougar Leaders hosted a bake sale to benefit their community sponsor, the YWCA of Van Wert County, and raised **\$202.50** to donate to their Victim Services Program.



8th grade band students spread holiday cheer throughout the community during their holiday tour as they played for area nursing homes and adult day care centers on December 13.



**"WHAT YOU DO MATTERS" IS MORE THAN JUST A SLOGAN, IT'S A WAY OF THINKING AND WE ARE ALL CONSTANTLY CHALLENGING EACH OTHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.**

VWMS Cougar Leaders hosted a food drive with an original goal of collecting 1,500 items to benefit the United Way's Day of Caring. VWMS is proud to say they collected a grand total of **4,605** items!

Tristan, a 6th grade student, donated **400** items with the help of his family, friends, and neighbors.



## Message from the Assistant Principal

Van Wert Middle School has a focus on the phrase **"What you do matters"** and students and staff strive to be servant leaders. "What you do matters" can and does mean many things in the course of a school day. It refers to how we treat one another and that our actions have an impact on ourselves, others, and our world.

Middle school is a pivotal time of development and during this time, individuals are usually self-conscious and persistently judge themselves by standards that are almost impossible to attain. Because of this, we continually work hard to get students to look outside themselves and to serve others as a way to give them a feeling of self-worth. We do all this to help each student develop a healthy understanding that what they do really matters within our school, our community and our world.

At the beginning of each school year, 8th grade Cougar Leaders plan and implement the 6th grade orientation. They work collaboratively with 6th grade teachers, Mrs. White, Mr. Bagley, and myself to create a welcoming environment for incoming 6th graders. This sets the tone that we are all in this journey together and gives 6th graders an understanding that 8th graders, who have recently been in their shoes, are here to help them through the transition from elementary school to middle school.

VWMS staff work hard to serve students with an open-door policy. Staff members welcome students who need help or have additional questions during PAWS time and before and after school at TCB. Teachers help students study, give them support on homework and projects, and even help them organize binders and lockers. It's important to the staff that students know we are on this journey with them, and we'll help them be successful.

**Mrs. Darla Dunlap**  
Middle School Assistant  
Principal





## Message from the Assistant Principal

Winter greetings from VWES! It's hard to believe we are already in the month of January. The students and staff at VWES have been busy learning, teaching, and creating fun opportunities for our families.

We are extremely thankful for our amazing PTO and the continued support of our students, families, and staff through school fundraisers. Recently, our PTO hosted a Christmas Family Fun Day and students were invited to participate in a variety of enjoyable activities. This fun event was made possible through the help of our PTO and high school student volunteers. The PTO also generously approved a proposal to purchase a sensory path that will be in place for VWES students for the 2020-2021 school year. We are excited about this new addition for our students! If you would like to join us, our next PTO meeting is February 5 at 5:30 p.m. in the VWES Commons.

The VWES Family Literacy Night Committee has been busy planning the first VWES Family Literacy Night. This event will take place on the evening of February 6 with the theme "Love and Kindness." All elementary students that attend this event will receive a free book! Keep an eye out over the next few weeks for invitations being sent home with students for this awesome event!

We are proud of the continued hard work and dedication of our literacy coaches, teachers, and staff through our partnership with Literacy Collaborative. Our third grade fall Ohio State Test results revealed a 12 percent increase in reading proficiency. This score is the highest VWES has ever earned! We look forward to continuing to expand our teaching and learning of literacy. Thank you for encouraging our students to be lifelong learners and

striving to do their best every day at VWES. The value of education begins at home and grows at school.



**Mrs. Tracy Wehner**  
Elementary School  
Assistant Principal

# EXCITEMENT AT THE ELEMENTARY



Mrs. Breese's 4th grade

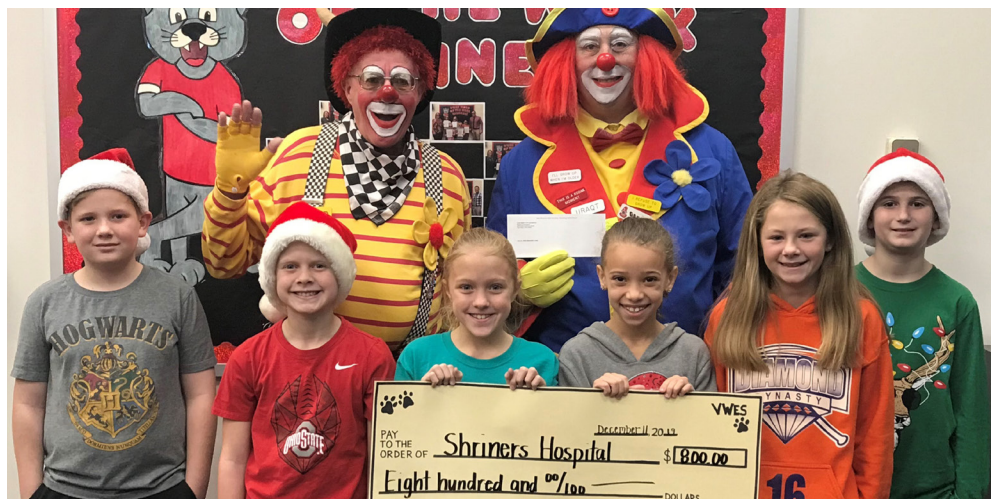


Students show off their decorations to Mrs. Wehner

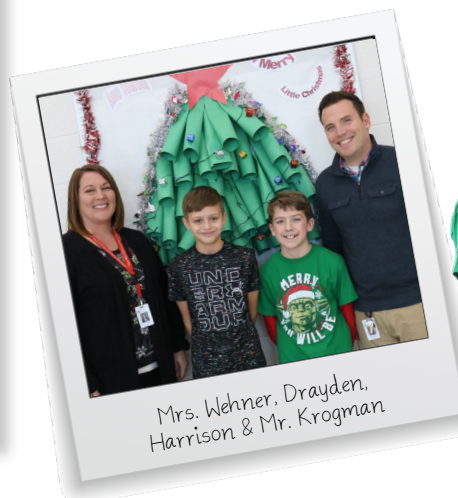


Dunlap's class enjoyed a Thanksgiving feast

Students enjoyed their Thanksgiving celebrations, eating a Thanksgiving meal with their teachers, and Miss Dunlap's class decorated their classroom as they enjoyed a feast with several staff members.



Cougar CLUB donated **\$800** to Shriners Hospital for Children after selling "Candy Canes for a Cause" at lunch December 2-6.



Mrs. Wehner, Drayden,  
Harrison & Mr. Krogman



Congratulations to Harrison Sloan, VWES Spelling Bee winner! Harrison took first place after correctly spelling the word **"remarkable"**. Drayden Hoffman was runner-up. Harrison will move on to compete in the Van Wert County Spelling Bee on February 3 at the Marsh Foundation.



# THE ECC EXPERIENCE

## ECC Honors Local Veterans During Assembly



The Early Childhood Center invited local veterans and their families to their annual Veterans' Day Assembly, held on November 8. Students made decorations, sang songs, recited the importance of each branch of our military, and the veterans enjoyed cake with their "someone special".



## Celebrating Thanksgiving with a Feast



In the spirit of the holiday, Preschool and Kindergarten students and teachers gathered together to celebrate Thanksgiving. They dressed as Pilgrims and Indians and created decorations for the tables. The cafeteria staff made a delicious Thanksgiving meal for everyone to enjoy.

## The Christmas Spirit Has Arrived at the ECC



Santa visiting Mrs. Doctor's Preschool class



Making playdough cookies at Parent/Child Activity Day



Staff raised \$550 for the YWCA's Summer Food Program

## Message from the Social Worker

“A child's social-emotional development motivates them to learn critical skills such as the ability to communicate, connect with others, resolve conflict, self-regulate, display kindness and empathy, and cope with challenges. These skills are crucial for school readiness. Without cognitive, social, and emotional self-control, learning cannot occur.”  
- Dr. Shulamit Ritblatt

There are many professionals who propose that an individual's social-emotional aptitude is equal to or more important than a person's intellectual aptitude when determining school and employment readiness. Whether one agrees with this theory or not, it is hard to ignore that an individual's ability to work cooperatively with others, manage their emotions, and solve conflicts/problems often impacts that individual's ability to successfully navigate through the various parts of their school day.

In June 2019, the Ohio Department of Education revised learning standards related to a child's social- and emotional-learning, with five areas of competency identified: **self-awareness**, **self-management**, **social awareness**, **relationship skills**, and **responsible decision making**. Teachers at the ECC identify how to “weave” these social and emotional learning standards into a child's offered curriculum and provide each child with the opportunity to practice what they are learning throughout the school day: a child listening to instructions and waiting patiently to start their work, a student using the taught steps of problem solving when upset with a friend, or a student helping a friend during an activity.

Come to think of it, it's hard to think of time during the school day when a child does not have to practice using a social-emotional skill. So maybe it's true, “All I really need to know I learned in Kindergarten.”

Mrs. Diana Morrow  
Early Childhood Center  
Social Worker





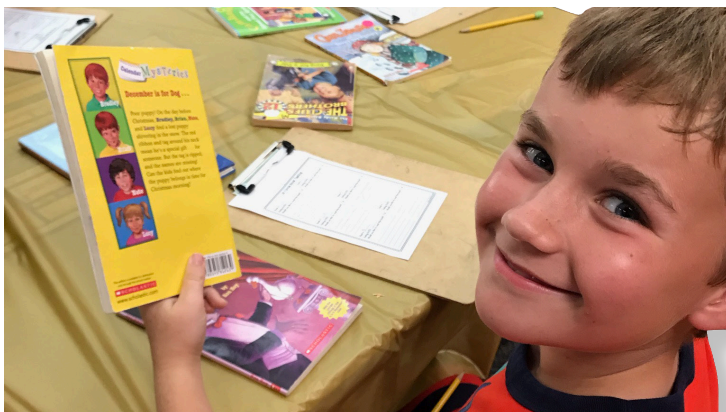
# Literacy Collaborative

## Preparing Young Learners for College & Career

Students are as unique as snowflakes, no two are ever the same. Some students require very individualized, one-on-one instruction while others are independent and learn best through exploration. Now imagine walking into a classroom where every single student is engaged in reading and writing at their specific academic level. Welcome to Literacy Collaborative!

The purpose of Literacy Collaborative (LC) is to ensure all students become literate and college- and career-ready and yes, this begins as early as preschool! LC is a researched-based instructional model for literacy that was developed by The Ohio State University. It's a student-centered teaching method that starts our young learners out with substantial teacher support but allows their independence to be nurtured according to their ability as they progress through the school year.

Van Wert City Schools uses the LC model in preschool through third grade. LC engages students in authentic learning experiences that consist of **interactive reading aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, community writing, writing workshops, and phonics, spelling, and word study.**



Third graders enjoyed exploring mysteries during a “book tasting” where they sampled a variety of genres.

Students are given the opportunity to think, talk, read, and write as a whole class, in small groups, and individually. Even our youngest students have daily conversations about books, characters, topics, and events that help them understand themselves, as well as the world around them. When given the opportunity to share their thinking, students thrive.

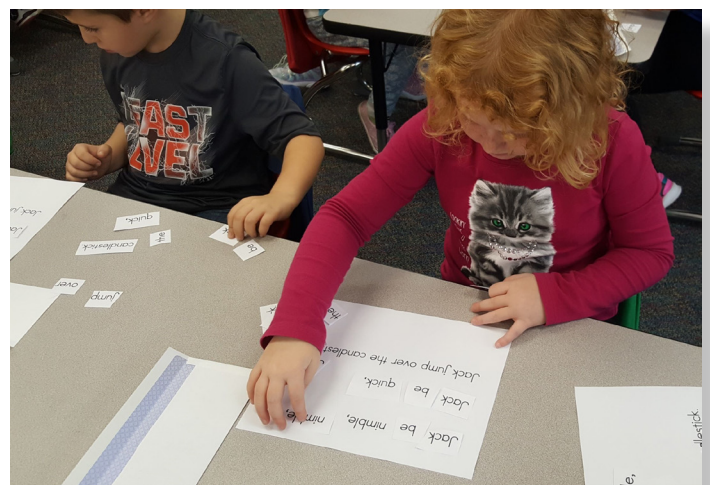
So, what is an “authentic learning experience”? It means our teachers find ways to connect what they’re teaching with real-life events, turning their lesson into a real-world application of learning. For instance, Mrs. Mohr’s second graders hosted Mr. Aufderhaar’s high school German students, who had written books in German to share with the younger students. Following the visit, the second graders

wrote a letter during Interactive Writing class, thanking the high schoolers for sharing their stories. Mrs. Mohr took it one step further and used an online service to translate the students’ letter to German. The story doesn’t end there, though. When relying solely on technology, there is often room for error, and Mr. Aufderhaar was able to use that letter, and its online translation, as a teachable moment for his high school students.



The staff at VWCS is extensively trained on how to implement Literacy Collaborative in the classroom, as well as measure its success. Our Literacy Coaches, who manage the LC program at VWCS, undergo 230 hours of training to become the implementation trainers and coaches for our teachers. Our classroom teachers then receive 60 hours of professional development during their first two years of implementation. Our Literacy Team meets monthly to discuss how LC is being applied in the classrooms and to monitor both the accomplishments and challenges teachers experience.

Research has proven that the earlier we can immerse children in language and provide support for independent reading and writing, the more likely they will be successful and lifelong learners. By providing students with a safe learning environment where they can explore and learn at their own pace, we can then help all students identify as readers and writers.



ECC students match words of a familiar poem left to right across the text.



## VAN WERT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*Active Bodies = Active Minds!*

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS of health and physical education for students?

- Positive relationship with **academic achievement** and **test scores**
- Positive association with **attention**, **concentration**, and **on-task behavior**
- Encourages **lifetime healthy habits**
- Strategy for **reducing childhood obesity**
- Reduces **discipline referrals** and **participation in high-risk behaviors**
- Encourages positive **social-emotional wellness**:
  - Builds self-esteem*
  - Eases symptoms of depression and anxiety*
  - Reduces stress and tension*
  - Improves mood*



### STUDENT HEALTH & WELLNESS INITIATIVES



#### WALKING PROGRAM

1st and 2nd graders are encouraged to walk, rather than sit, before the school day begins.



#### 100 MILE CLUB

Running/walking program for 3rd-5th graders; challenging students to run or walk 100 miles during the school year.



#### FALL HEALTH FAIR

One-mile fun run and interactive stations where students learn about safety, physical fitness, making healthy choices, etc.



#### ROADRUNNERS

After-school running club.



#### HEALTHY HEART CORNER

Students learn about the heart, how it works, and how to keep it healthy during the last five minutes of phys ed class during the month of February.



#### NUTRITION EDUCATION

2-3 minute videos created from the Balance My Day curriculum, covering topics such as MyPlate, healthy eating habits, clean hands and food, etc.



#### FAMILY GET MOVIN' NIGHT

Students and their families learn about living a nutritious and active lifestyle. Includes a 5th grade cook-off, prize giveaways, and sessions on:

- healthy snacks and meals
- simple gardening
- staying fit and activities like yoga, Zumba, relays, etc.
- exploring nutrition games online



#### JUMPIN' JAMMERS

Jump rope team for students in grades 3-5 that performs at Family Get Movin' Night.



#### BRAIN BREAKS

3-5 minute bursts of physical activity in the classroom throughout the school day.

"Teaching a child how to watch what they eat [and] how to stay active is just as important as teaching them math or science."  
-Kelly, parent

Thank you to the following entities for their monetary support of our Van Wert Elementary School health and wellness initiatives:

Van Wert Health, YMCA, VWCS PTO, Van Wert County Foundation, Rotary Club, grants from Action for Healthy Kids (local and national), General Mills Champion for Healthy Kids, New York Roadrunners, and Billion Mile Race grant.



# Upcoming Events

Athletic events shown are HOME Varsity contests. Events and athletic contests are subject to change without notice.  
For a full list of events, visit our website at [www.vwcs.net](http://www.vwcs.net).

## JANUARY

14	Girls Basketball vs. Paulding	6:00 p.m.
16	Girls Basketball vs. Ottawa-Glandorf	6:00 p.m.
20	<b>NO SCHOOL - Martin Luther King Jr. Day</b>	
23	Wrestling vs. Lima Shawnee	6:00 p.m.
24	Boys Basketball vs. Lima Shawnee	6:00 p.m.
25	Boys Basketball vs. Coldwater	6:00 p.m.
28	Girls Basketball vs. Fairview	6:00 p.m.
30	Girls Basketball vs. Kenton	6:00 p.m.

## FEBRUARY

01	VWHS Robotics Competition	10:15 a.m.
05	PTO Meeting	5:30 p.m.
06	Wrestling vs. Elida	6:00 p.m.
07	Boys Basketball vs. Elida	6:00 p.m.
08	Girls Basketball vs. Lima Central Catholic	11:00 a.m.
	Boys Basketball vs. St. Henry	6:00 p.m.
13	Girls Basketball vs. Lima Bath	6:00 p.m.
17	<b>NO SCHOOL - Staff Professional Development</b>	
	<b>High School only: Parent/Teacher Conferences</b>	
	<b>4:00-7:30 p.m.</b>	
21	End of 2nd Trimester (ECC / ES / MS)	
26	Board of Education Meeting	5:00 p.m.

## MARCH

02	2nd Grade Spring Music Program	6:30 p.m.
	4th Grade Spring Music Program	7:45 p.m.
04	PTO Meeting	5:30 p.m.
09	1st Grade Spring Music Program	6:30 p.m.
	3rd Grade Spring Music Program	7:45 p.m.
10	High School Spring Band Concert	7:30 p.m.
13	End of 3rd 9 Weeks (HS)	
19	Baseball vs. Antwerp	5:00 p.m.
16-20	<b>NO SCHOOL - Spring Break</b>	
25	Board of Education Meeting	5:00 p.m.
26	Softball vs. Coldwater	5:00 p.m.

*\*Please note - Board of Education meetings will now be held on the fourth Wednesday of every month at 5:00 p.m. in the Niswonger Performing Arts Center's First Federal Lecture Hall. November and December meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of the month. This is different than what was published at the January 8 board meeting.*

*Be sure to visit [www.vwcs.net](http://www.vwcs.net) or download the VWCS app for a current list of all events.*

#EducationInnovationTradition

#VWCougarPride

#WeAreVanWert

205 West Crawford Street • Van Wert, Ohio 45891

Education • Innovation • Tradition  
**Van Wert City Schools**

