

THE UGAR Connection

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May 2021

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  @VWCScougars

Superintendent's Update

Dear Van Wert Parents, Families, and Community Members,

What a year it has been for everyone! As we head to the finish line of the 2020-2021 school year, I'd like to say, "Thank you! Thank you for your support, encouragement, and understanding as we made it to the finish line in our buildings nearly every day."

We have a goal at Van Wert City Schools and that is to be a model district for all to follow. We will always be a We>Me district who will love, serve, and care. Our culture is extremely important and each year we will continue to inspire and challenge our staff to reach for the highest level of achievement.

Even in a pandemic, Van Wert City Schools' dedicated teachers, paraprofessionals, and staff members continued to meet each and every student where they were academically, every single day. They created meaningful learning opportunities for every student in their classrooms. As a district, we were able to continue offering innovative educational opportunities, such as our high school CEO (Career Education Opportunities) program that allows students to obtain internships in many local businesses.

We are very proud of our Project Based Learning (PBL) curriculum model that is implemented district-wide in grades 4-12. We are continually expanding on it and hope to have it K-12 in a few short years. Our Early Childhood Center uses a Play Based Learning method to engage preschool and kindergarten students. Another shining example in our preschool, kindergarten, and elementary grades is our Literacy Collaborative program. We are also incredibly pleased to offer 70+ STEAM (Science,

Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) classes throughout our district. VWCS is extremely proud of our robotics teams, as well as our talented students who participate in art, music, theatre, and athletics!

Beginning next school year, we're excited to offer students in grades 6-12 **Van Wert School at the Goedde**, an opportunity for those who may simply need a different educational setting. We believe it is vital to educate and care for the whole child as we prepare our students to leave our district and go on to successful post-secondary experiences, whether it be directly into the workforce, a two- or four-year college experience, or the military. This is exemplified by our Vision Statement, which states, "In partnership with our community, Van Wert City Schools will ensure that all students develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes they need to thrive in post-secondary education, careers, and civic life."

VWCS was blessed this year: we were in our buildings for the entire year, we were able to host prom and will host graduation, and our high school football team won the State Championship. As always, I encourage you to get out and see what great things are happening at VWCS in both the educational and extra-curricular settings, when possible.

Thanks for your support, and you are welcome to call or meet with me any-time!

Have a great summer,
don't stop believing,
and **Go Cougars!**

Mr. Mark Bagley
Superintendent



Message from the Principal

Using the song lyrics, **“Nothing’s gonna stop us now ...”** is a great way to describe Van Wert High School’s 2020-2021 school year! We couldn’t be more pleased with how our students have handled the adversity of the COVID pandemic.

We have been so privileged to have been in-school for the entire year, and our students have taken full advantage of that opportunity. This past fall was highlighted by our first school team State Championship, as our football team won the Division IV State Championship. The school spirit and community cohesiveness will remain fresh in the hearts and minds of many for years to come.

I am so very proud of the focus and mental toughness our students have displayed with life being full of adversity, new “normals” and limitations coming from all directions. They have maintained a level of focus and positivity, which in turn has created an electric and upbeat culture within our school.

Academically, our students continue to excel: we aired a fall musical, conducted band and choir concerts, held Quiz Bowl competitions, advanced from Regional Robotic Competitions to the State Championships, have earned awards in Art competitions, and students’ essays/poetry are being published!

As we wrap up the last month of the school year, I am excited that we were able to once again have a Senior Award Convocation on May 10, and am pleased that graduation will be in-person in our gymnasium on Sunday, May 23, 2021.

We have all experienced a world we couldn’t have imagined, and as difficult and frustrating as it has been, I am so proud to have gone through this with our current staff and students! Quite simply, they have been AMAZING!



Mr. Bob Priest
High School Principal

What A Year!

Van Wert High School is proud to have four of our athletic teams represented at the state championships this year:



The Cougar football team defeated Mentor Lake Catholic 31-28 and claimed the school’s first-ever football State Championship!



The boys Cross Country team shined at State with a 9th place finish in the Ohio High School Athletic Association’s D-II cross country championships at Fortress Obetz. Hunter Sherer led the team, earning All-Ohio honors with a 16th place finish.



Sophomore Jayden Welker qualified for State after competing in the D-II Sectional Tournament and Northwest District Tournament. Welker finished as sectional runner-up in the 100 yard butterfly event and 14th at the district level. Welker finished 17th at State.

Senior Lorrie Decker, four-time State Qualifier for D-II Girls Bowling, finished her VWHS bowling career with an impressive list of awards. Decker was named the 2020-2021 WBL Bowler of the Year, Sectional Runner-Up, and District Champion. At the 2021 Ohio State Girls Bowling Tournament, Decker finished in 7th place.



Students were thrilled to be able to experience Prom on Saturday, April 24.

Go “Explo’ing” at VWMS

As part of the curriculum, Van Wert Middle School gives its students experiences in courses called “exploratories”, or **Explos**. These classes include the arts, music, fitness, healthy living, engineering, and STEM.

Students can explore music through **Band, Choir, Voice, Music Appreciation**, and **General Music** courses. 6th graders can choose to sign up for Guitar. In 7th grade music, students learn many different concepts including an exploration of rhythm. In 8th grade Music Appreciation, students listen to different types of music including the blues and early rock & roll.



7th grade students play an eight-measure rhythm independently as they wrap up their Bucket Drumming unit.

6th grade students can sign up for a voice class to determine if Choir is a good fit. 7th and 8th graders who join Choir will perform twice a year, at Christmastime and in the spring. Students who are interested in Band can join as early as 5th grade. The goal is that throughout their three years at VWMS, students will have many diverse exposures to music so that they can appreciate it in many ways.

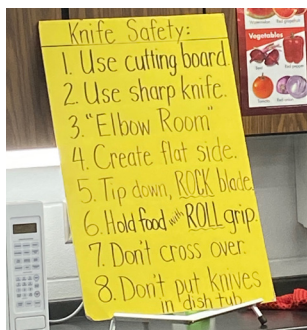
In **Art**, students learn standards through different activities and experiences. Art Appreciation allows students to travel the globe looking at art and learning about artists. They use Google Earth and other tools like virtual reality goggles to explore different countries and cultures.

Life Fitness allows students to explore different sports as well as learn different ways to stay active if they are not interested in sports. Students learn about a healthy lifestyle, how to exercise, and how health and nutri-

tion, go hand in hand.

Healthy Choices

also teaches about a healthy lifestyle through cooking. Students learn how to make healthy eating choices and how our food choices can impact our mood, energy level, and so much more. Students make salsa, learn to cut vegetables, and even prepare soup. In 8th grade, students create a business plan and sell their handmade products with the end goal of making a profit.



Students in Healthy Choices learn about knife safety.

Exploratory classes also give middle school students experiences in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). **Gateway to Technology** has multiple units offered that focus on robotics, the design process, and programming. Students gain a basic understanding of skills needed in Van Wert High School's Project Lead the Way courses. Both VWCS Gateway to Technology and Project Lead the Way programs are award-winning programs that give students experiences that can lead them into many tech and engineering careers.

VWMS also offers students a class we simply call **STEM**. In this class, 6th grade students explore space and NASA, in 7th grade they become city planners, and in 8th grade they explore career clusters.

VWMS knows that during these middle years, students need many diverse experiences. These experiences also allow them to develop the skills they will need as they grow into young adults and begin thinking about careers and their future. As students move on to Van Wert High School, they will be able to choose electives that will further their learning in these areas.

Message from the Principal

We at VWMS believe that middle school is a time when students begin to emerge as independent thinkers and start taking ownership of their learning. During these years, students are shaping their beliefs and creating habits while developing the knowledge, skills, and attributes they will need to be successful in the years to come. Our goal is to always provide students with engaging and authentic learning experiences that will allow them to thrive educationally, emotionally, and socially. We strive to become partners with families and Van Wert community stakeholders so that we can support each student in a positive manner.

2020-2021 has been a different and challenging year. It has caused us to grow together as we tackled new protocols, new expectations, and new learning. Staff and students have been able to learn in-person and have supported one another through the learning, challenges, and celebrations. As a VWMS community, we displayed the characteristics of “Cougar Pride”. **“It was once said of a Cougar; a strong proud climber is he. But it is only because of his hope and desire that he can make it up that tree.”** Characteristics of Cougar Pride include being trustworthy, respectful, and responsible. Every day we **P.A.W.S:** show **P**ride, **A**ct with kindness, are **W**illing to lead, and practice **S**elf-awareness. We learn together from new challenges and sometimes failures. We are reminded that “the only true failure is when you stop trying.”

We are already planning for a terrific year in 2021-2022! As we return next year from summer break, we will all “love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning” (Carol Dweck) because we believe **“What You Do Matters”** every day at VWMS!



Ms. Darla Dunlap
Middle School Principal

Message from the Principal

What a year it has been at Van Wert Elementary School! We have had a tremendous year despite the worldwide pandemic. Staff and students have been working their hardest since August, learning and exploring the school year away. Even with the safety restrictions in place, we have had a very successful academic year. Mrs. Wehner (Assistant Principal) and I are very proud of the hard work and dedication being shown forth by all students and staff.

We have worked very hard this year to maintain safety as our primary goal, alongside giving the best education possible for our elementary students. We have worked collectively as a building, district, and with our local health department to ensure the safest environment for students and staff. We feel very fortunate and blessed to have remained in-school for this year and know it has tremendously benefited our VWES students and families.

With the pandemic, our staff had to get creative and think outside the box. This included room structure, academic instruction, and the inability to have field trips due to safety concerns. One of our favorite events of this school year was our first-ever VWES Fall Fest. We had many generous donors who donated pumpkins, wagons, hay, an animal petting station, and even a tractor to allow for a fun fall event. Students enjoyed petting animals, making crafts, eating donuts, taking tractor rides, and even receiving a free pumpkin as well. Students and staff were able to enjoy a beautiful Fall Fest on Friday, October 23.

To end, we would like to reiterate our VWES Mission Statement that is read each morning during our announcements, to which all are expected to follow: **"We, at VWES, work our hardest to demonstrate responsibility, kindness, and compassion for those within our building and in our community. We strive to make every day a great day and have fun as we extend our learning."**



Mr. Justin Krogman
Elementary School Principal

A Wagon Full of Fun at Fall Fest

With careful planning and safety as a top priority, it has been a pleasure to have students in-person for the entire school year.

Since field trips were limited this year due to the pandemic, VWES wanted to provide a fun fall activity for students to experience at school. To kick off the 2020 school year, VWES had the first annual Fall Festival on Friday, October 23.



Our staff and administration worked collaboratively with our Cougar C.L.U.B. for a month, planning this event for our students which included a delicious donut breakfast station, wagon rides, chalk station, pumpkin patch, two full-sized obstacle courses, a mask decorating station, and a Midwestern petting zoo that included chickens, pigs, turkeys, and a horse.

Cougar C.L.U.B. is a school-wide behavior program that fosters a positive school environment. The C.L.U.B. is reserved for students displaying positive behavior in Character, Leadership, Understanding, and Being Your Best. The goal of Cougar C.L.U.B. is to recognize and reward students who meet VWES's behavioral expectations.

There was an overwhelming support from donors that helped make this event special and memorable for the elementary school. VWES is looking forward to creating more memories for staff and students as we begin to plan for our end-of-year activities.



A Day in the Life of a Literacy Coach



Mrs. Jennifer Arend
VWECC Literacy
Collaborative Coach

Look in any preschool through third grade classroom in Van Wert City Schools and you will find students who are “thinking” and teachers who are continually working to

turn the act of teaching into the art of teaching and learning. At the Early Childhood Center, students as young as four years old learn what readers and writers do, think about books, and practice thinking like authors and illustrators. This is the heart of Literacy Collaborative.

My role as a literacy coach at the ECC has four facets: co-teaching with a classroom teacher, providing 30 hours of professional learning to teacher teams, working with classroom teachers in coaching cycles, and leading our Literacy Leadership Team. Each role is vital and moves us forward in the mission and vision of Literacy Collaborative.

As a co-teacher, I spend a large portion of the day with one classroom teacher. We are thinking partners, looking into strategies that provide modeling and support our readers and writers. By reading and writing

for children, with children, and giving children opportunities for independent practice, we observe our students to see what they can do on their own and where we need to focus next.

Continuing professional learning is the core of successful implementation of Literacy Collaborative. I participate in trainings throughout the year with our partners at The Ohio State University, as well as bringing that learning to our teacher teams. Best practices are modeled and we learn to think about our students in terms of what they know right now, what they need next, how to teach for it, and how we know they have learned it.

Coaching teachers is another key area in my work. We learn to be curious about our students’ thinking and learning, and I have the privilege of supporting each teacher individually through a system of three-day coaching cycles. We decide together in what area to focus and study, and formulate a question about teaching and learning to explore. I get into classrooms so we each have an opportunity to observe and teach, studying what will assist us in answering our question. We also plan time each day of the cycle to have conversations related to our questions. Teachers feel supported and we learn from each other.

Finally, our Literacy Leadership Team consists of several teachers as well as administrators. Our goal is to continually evaluate our implementation of the initiative, look at data that supports and advises our next steps, and ensure the decisions we make are aligned with our vision.

Literacy Collaborative has changed the face of literacy instruction for all students at the ECC. It has helped us see the potential in even the youngest students in our community to be thoughtful readers and writers, to be curious about their learning and, most importantly, to find and experience a love of literacy.



A student counts syllables in the word that is associated with the picture as part of Literacy Collaborative.

Message from the Principal

As I reflect upon this year, I realize how much we have to be thankful for during this very unusual school year. For exam-



ple, we were able to stay in-school, in session, with our children for almost the entire school year. We had very few children contract the COVID virus in our building. Our staff worked extremely hard to make sure your children were safe and their areas were sanitized on a daily basis. You, our parents, supported us and helped put into place requirements that were hard and inconvenient. For that, and so much more, I am truly thankful.

We began our year at the ECC putting forth the message “**We’re All Wonders**”. This theme was based on the book by R. J. Palacio of the same title. Staff were challenged to find the uniqueness and wonder of every child who came through our doors and into our building this school year. It was a challenge embraced by staff and children alike. Also, tied into this theme was a short video called “Float” by Pixar that you can view on YouTube. Again, it shows how we can celebrate every child with their own unique talents, skills, and personality. If you have never read this book or seen this video, I encourage you to check them out. Celebrate your child and who they are! **They are all WONDERS!**

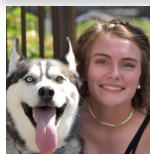
We are all excited to put this year behind us, and move back to a little bit of normalcy. However, we have learned some of the restrictions of COVID have been a good thing for our center, and we will continue these as we move forward. We thank you all for your support and encouragement this year. **You and your children are OUR WHY!**



Mrs. Lori Bittner
Early Childhood Center
Principal

Career Education Opportunity

The Community's Program



*Written by McKenna Gilbert
Van Wert High School senior & CEO student*

The Career Education Opportunity Program, or CEO Program, is set up throughout Van Wert County to open the doors of career education and readiness to the high school seniors of Van Wert, Crestview, and Lincolnview.

HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

Eight years ago, Mr. Kerry Koontz, a Van Wert High School counselor, began researching and developing a program that would assist high school students in their transition from high school to college or the workforce. By reaching out to community members, school faculty members, and his peers, Koontz was able to create the CEO Program at VWHS by the start of the 2016 school year. This marked the beginning of what is now a county-wide focus on career readiness.

Koontz's goal was to bring attention to specific career fields within the community and connect seniors with experts in those fields; he wanted to help students gain an idea of what they want to do after high school. Through this opportunity, community members were able to provide knowledge and hands-on experience not found in a typical classroom setting.

During the first year, Koontz expected five students to sign up. However, he was able to place 17 students with a total of 13 businesses, surpassing his expectations. The following year, 34 students were placed in 22 businesses. For the 2018-2019 school year, Lincolnview and Crestview expressed interest in joining, and they were welcomed into the CEO Program. That year, 33 businesses agreed to mentor 56 students from the three schools. The Class of 2020 has been the largest group yet, with 72 students spread out across 56 businesses.

Even in these unpredictable times, the Class of 2021 is still able to participate with a few minor adjustments. With fewer businesses participating due to the pandemic, Koontz has 46 businesses mentoring 49 students.

PAST PARTICIPANTS

Almost 200 students have participated in the CEO Program over the span of five years, many of which are still involved in the same career field. Ryan Pratt, a 2020 VWHS graduate, is just one example of the positive impact the CEO Program had on his life after high school.

Ryan interned with Foster Family Chiropractic during his senior year. Today, Ryan knows that the work he did at FFC

provided him with hands-on training and experience prior to any college education; his CEO placement was perfect because it was in a field that he wanted to pursue, chiropractic medicine. He is still a part-time employee at FFC while also attending college, majoring in exercise science with a minor in nutrition. Ryan recommends the program to anyone thinking about it, even those who may be unsure of what they want to do.



2020 VWHS graduate, Ryan Pratt, with CEO mentor and current employer, Shad Foster.

CURRENT PARTICIPANTS

This year's seniors have been flexible with their tasks and placements, further earning the respect of local businesses. A great example is Tayzia Havill who is paired with Community Health Professionals after going through three different interviews. Due to COVID-19, Tayzia started her internship a week later than some students but still had the opportunity to work in nursing, her field of choice. She has observed many things that make healthcare work, such as pre-claims, house visits, and an infusion. Tayzia now understands the number of people it can require to complete a simple task. Along with the hands-on work she has experienced, she has also gained skills in bedside manner and general hospitality. Tayzia has enjoyed her time at CHP and is looking forward to seeking summer employment while also working towards her STNA.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

The CEO Program has become a staple throughout the county. Prior to its creation, some businesses would never have had the opportunity to connect with a high school student, much less been given the opportunity to mentor a teenager in this capacity. However, it's become so successful that businesses are now asking Koontz for CEO students, welcoming them with open arms. Some even hire their CEO students after graduation, keeping local companies staffed with local talent.

The CEO Program truly is a program for the community. It benefits all involved, students and businesses, with experiences of a lifetime. We are lucky to have a program as wonderful and community-based as this one.



VWHS senior Tayzia Havill with mentor Cindy Sinning, CHP Nursing Supervisor.

Thank you to our 2020-2021 CEO Program Business Partners

Advanced Biomedical Marketing (ABM)
Alspach-Gearhart Funeral Home
Bee Gee Realty & Auction Co.
CHP Home Care & Hospice
CNT
Common Pleas Court
Dental Center of NW Ohio
Distinct Creations
Family Health Care of NW Ohio
Foster Family Chiropractic
Hair
HB Salon
JJ's Hair & Daughters Spa
Jeffery-Mohr Family Dentistry
Kitchens Inc.
Lincolnview Local Schools

Main Street Van Wert
National Door & Trim
Ohio Means Jobs
PHD Precision Tool
Ridgeview Hospital
Sealscott CPA
St. Mary's Elementary
Taco Bell
Total Reflections
Touch of Grace
Trinity United Methodist
United Way of Van Wert County
Universal Lettering
Van Wert Chamber of Commerce
Van Wert County Engineer
Van Wert County Humane Society

Van Wert County Sheriff's Office
Van Wert Early Childhood Center
Van Wert Economic Development
Van Wert Elementary School
Van Wert Family Dentistry
Van Wert High School
Van Wert Middle School
Van Wert Parks Department
Van Wert Vision
Vancrest
Walmart
Wendy's
YMCA of Van Wert County
YWCA of Van Wert County



Visit www.hs.vwcs.net/1/Content/ceo-program or scan the code to learn more about the Van Wert High School CEO Program. Be sure to check out the CEO Spotlights on participating seniors!

Introducing School at the Goedde Opportunity Awaits!

Van Wert City Schools is excited to announce the addition of our new **opportunity education** school, Van Wert School at the Goedde!

Van Wert School at the Goedde (VWSG) intends to start small, enrolling approximately 50 students in sixth- through twelfth- grades. This new opportunity school will allow us to offer students more individualized attention and flexibility than a typical classroom. Counseling will be available through a partnership with Westwood Behavioral Health Center, and mentors from the community will be asked to take an active role in our students' lives.

High school students who attend VWSG will be encouraged to join the workforce for part of the day through a different branch of Van Wert High School's CEO Program, while middle school students will participate in community service events on a regular basis. Project Based Learning will still be a priority for students, although it will be adapted to fit the vision of VWSG.

Alternative education at Van Wert has gone by many names in recent years. Through varying approaches, we have always tried to do what is best for our students. Ultimately, that means absorbing the classrooms currently housed at the Goedde back into the district.

Superintendent Mark Bagley is deeply passionate about

Van Wert School at the Goedde. "These are our students. We know that college is not the right path for everyone, and this is our opportunity to provide our students with the support and skills for life beyond high school. Van Wert City Schools wants to create responsible young adults who are capable of more in the workplace. We want to help them obtain certifications or train them in a trade that will benefit them for years to come."

By creating an environment where students can focus on their individual skills, we aim to provide them with an educational experience that grants them opportunity: opportunity to grow, opportunity to learn, and opportunity to succeed.

Our Mission

Van Wert School at the Goedde will deliver alternative education opportunities designed to enhance our students' academic ability to acquire knowledge and skills, and to develop the values of responsibility and respect, leading to productive citizenship and lifelong learning.

Fall 2021 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.

AUGUST

16	VWCS District / Building Meetings	
	Golf vs. Wayne Trace	4:30 p.m.
17	VWCS Staff Professional Development	
18	First Day of School Grades 1-12	
19	Golf vs. Bath	4:30 p.m.
21	Girls Tennis vs. Elida +4	9:30 a.m.
	Girls Soccer vs. Coldwater	11:00 a.m.
23	Girls Tennis vs. Defiance	4:30 p.m.
	Golf vs. Celina	4:30 p.m.
	Girls Soccer vs. Delphos Jefferson	5:00 p.m.
	Volleyball vs. Paulding	7:30 p.m.
24	Girls Tennis vs. Bryan	4:30 p.m.
	Golf vs. Ottoville	4:30 p.m.
	Volleyball vs. Lincolnview	7:30 p.m.
25	First Day of School Preschool & Kindergarten	
26	Boys Soccer vs. Bryan	5:00 p.m.
27	Football vs. Celina	7:00 p.m.
30	Golf vs. Wapakoneta	4:30 p.m.

SEPTEMBER

02	Girls Tennis vs. Shawnee	4:30 p.m.
	Golf vs. Ottawa-Glandorf	4:30 p.m.
	Boys Soccer vs. Celina	5:00 p.m.
	Volleyball vs. Defiance	7:00 p.m.
07	Boys Soccer vs. Miller City	5:00 p.m.
09	Girls Tennis vs. St. Marys	4:30 p.m.
	Golf vs. Kenton	4:30 p.m.
	Girls Soccer vs. Defiance	5:00 p.m.
10	Football vs. Wapakoneta	7:00 p.m.
13	Girls Tennis vs. Elida	4:30 p.m.
	Volleyball vs. Coldwater	7:30 p.m.
14	Boys Soccer vs. Wapakoneta	5:00 p.m.
	Volleyball vs. Delphos St. John's	7:30 p.m.
16	Girls Soccer vs. St. Marys	5:00 p.m.
	Volleyball vs. St. Marys	7:00 p.m.
23	Boys Soccer vs. Ottawa-Glandorf	5:00 p.m.
24	Football vs. Ottawa-Glandorf	7:00 p.m.
25	Boys Soccer vs. Lincolnview	11:00 a.m.
27	Girls Soccer vs. Shawnee	5:00 p.m.
	Volleyball vs. Crestview	7:30 p.m.
28	Golf vs. Crestview / Lincolnview	4:30 p.m.
30	Volleyball vs. Shawnee	7:00 p.m.

#EducationInnovationTradition

#VWCougarPride

#WeAreVanWert

205 West Crawford Street • Van Wert, Ohio 45891

Education • Innovation • Tradition
Van Wert City Schools

