

THE CUGAR Connection

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October 2019

www.vwcs.net

Superintendent's Update

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Van Wert City Schools District Newsletter. Our plan is to produce a newsletter quarterly. We have so many wonderful things happening at VWCS and we know we can do a better job of getting the information out to you, our community members. We hope you find value in our district newsletter and enjoy what you read. Other projects we hope to begin soon include a "Message from the Superintendent" video series, and videos of past and present students or their parents talking about their great experiences in our school district.

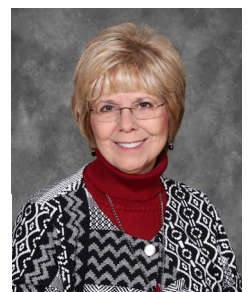
Our State Report Card data came out recently and I'm happy to report our overall grade increased one letter grade. We improved in our progress score, which measures whether or not our students are improving at least one year in a year's time, and gap closing score, which measures how well our subgroups of students perform compared to the rest of the student body. Although the State Report Card is not the most accurate measure of how well our district is doing, these two components are the two I pay attention to. We have a "C" on the report card in the area of Progress. A "C" means that we are in fact improving our students' academic progress by one year in a year's time. In order to receive a "B" on the report card, we need to demonstrate we are growing our students by more than one year in a year's time. Our gap closing score improved from a "D" last year to a "B". I am very excited about that. That shows how dedicated our teachers and paraprofessionals are to meeting each and every student where they are academically and creating meaningful learning opportunities for

every student in their classroom. Achieving a "B" also demonstrates that our programs, such as Literacy Collaborative and Project Based Learning, are making a difference.

What a wonderful time of year, with the leaves beginning to turn and Halloween right around the corner! I hope you've enjoyed the beautiful fall weather we're having this year, now that our summer-like weather is finally over. I love the crisp, cool, fall air as much as I love a cup of hot cocoa or warm apple cider. Winter is coming soon, with an unpredictable amount of snow, ice, or fog to make our traveling to school unsafe. Thanks so much for your understanding as we have to make tough decisions about whether or not it's safe to hold school and/or our extra-curricular activities. Make sure to update your contact information in our 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 our students' safety is involved. If you need to update your information, you may do so by clicking on "Alerts Sign-up" under the Parents tab on our district's website.

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.

Yours in education,
Ms. Vicki Brunn
Superintendent



Message from the Principal

Van Wert High School has gotten off to a tremendous start for the 2019-2020 school year. We have many co-curricular activities which are currently practicing and performing:

Vantage held its National Technical Honor Society induction on October 1.

Our Quiz Bowl team is this year's Whiz Quiz champions after competing on October 8 and 10. More tournaments will be scheduled throughout the year and will be added to our district calendar as they are organized.

Our marching band performed at the Hilliard Invite on October 12 and will have its Fall concert on Tuesday, October 29 at 7:30 p.m. at the NPAC.

National Honor Society recently held its induction on Sunday, October 13.

Freshmen, Sophomore, and Concert Choirs conducted their Fall concert on Thursday, October 24.

Robotics has had its kickoff to another great season and is proud to announce the addition of a third team this year. The first tournament is slated for December 13-14 in Newark, Ohio.

FCCLA was recently awarded the Families Acting for Community Traffic Safety grant for \$1,000, which will help promote bus safety within our district.

Additionally, this year we've placed a larger focus on our PAWS time. Parents, be sure to ask your son/daughter about the "Believe in You Challenge" happening at VWHS. This challenge was presented at an all-school assembly with Kevin Atlas and has led to bi-weekly discussions within our PAWS classes regarding the creation of a positive school culture.

We have numerous students participating in athletics and for more information on those, please visit cougars.vwcs.net.

Mr. Bob Priest

High School Principal

"Let's Talk Business"

College visits have already begun, and we're happy to announce another type of visit happening in the high school. Through the efforts of Mrs. Schroeder, "Let's Talk Business" was launched on October 9. VWHS is bringing in local and regional businesses to educate interested juniors and seniors on the opportunities available within those businesses, and what qualifications are necessary for each type of career offered at that particular business. The businesses will use a similar format for their visits as the universities who visit. Our purpose is for all our students to become informed in all areas when deciding on their pathway following graduation. Businesses participating in the first round of "Let's Talk Business" include the Ohio Department of Transportation, Central Insurance Companies, The Van Wert Manor, National Door and Trim, Alliance Automation, Vancrest, Van Wert Health, Braun, and Federal Mogul. Interested students are encouraged to sign up in their English class.



High School Highlights

We've seen early success in our core academic classes, particularly with some of Mrs. Brown's students being named recipients of the "Young Writers 2019 Creativity Award". This honor means their written stories will be published in the 2019 *Young Writers' Anthology*.

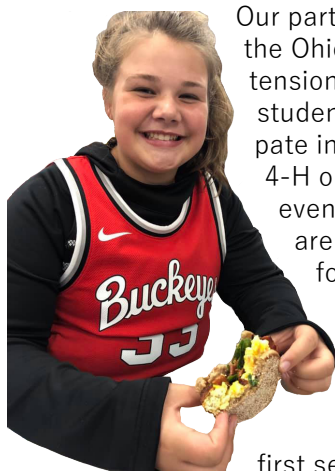
Graduation is a goal of every student, and aside from all our local requirements, the Ohio General Assembly has mandated seven different End of Course Exams which must meet a combined score of 18 out of a possible 35 points. This year, we have created two Math Lab courses which will provide students who have scored a one on their End of Course Exams the opportunity to devote a class period each day preparing for this test. These courses are semester long courses focusing on Algebra I and Geometry, and credit can be earned as a math elective.

After-School Opportunities at VWMS

For many years, 7th & 8th grade students at Van Wert Middle School have had the opportunity to participate in OHSA (Ohio High School Athletic Association) sponsored athletics after school. Many students participate and it's a great way for them to develop friendships and teamwork skills that will last a lifetime. VWMS currently offers football, volleyball, cross country, cheerleading, basketball, wrestling, and track for students to participate in.



To compliment the athletic opportunities, Van Wert Middle School also offers a variety of after school clubs. A few of these opportunities include After-School 4-H, the History Club, Run Jump Throw 6.0, and Taking Care of Business (TCB).



Our partnership with the Ohio State Extension office allows students to participate in After-School 4-H on Wednesday evenings. There are three to four 10-week sessions each year, and each session has a theme. The first session this year is "Let's Eat".

Students get together each week to learn about foods and cooking. Mrs. Markward works together with Rachel Hoverman of the OSU Extension office overseeing the After-School 4-H program.

We're proud to offer a brand-new club this year, the History Club, which meets on Tuesday nights. The Van Wert County Historical Society supplies volunteers who share their knowledge on different topics such as the history of flight through the Wright Brothers, as well as an array of historical artifacts. The History Club received a Martha Holden Jennings grant to help supply the club with hands-on activities and games to engage the students in history.



Run Jump Throw 6.0 is a 6th grade-only club that meets on Tuesday and Thursday nights for six weeks at the beginning of each school year. This is sponsored by the YWCA and promotes fitness and a healthy lifestyle.

Another before- and after-school opportunity for VWMS students includes TCB (Taking Care of Business), a time where students can find tutoring and extra help on school work. Students work in the Media Center with our middle school teachers while using computers and other supplies that they might not have access to outside of school.

With the variety of clubs and athletics offered, we encourage all our students to get connected outside the school day!



Message from the Principal

Welcome to Van Wert Middle School!

VWMS has a saying that starts like this, "Life is 10% what happens to me, and 90% how I react to it." And so it is with you...You are in charge of your ATTITUDE.

The beginning of each school year brings new experiences, new expectations and new friendships. How we react to the newness will measure our success in school. We ask students to get involved and be in charge of their education. It is their attitude that will get them to participate, and it's their participation that will bring them success!

"What you do matters at VWMS!"

We hope you realize the important role a positive attitude plays in middle school. Be sure to check out our website at www.ms.vwcs.net where you can find school policies, procedures, and services available to students at our middle school. Knowing the rules of the school will help everyone enjoy all the best our school has to offer. The teachers and support staff are ready, and now the ATTITUDE and RESPECT are up to the students! Failure is NOT an option at Van Wert Middle School because We Take Care of Business!

So, welcome, Class of 2024, 2025, and 2026 to Van Wert Middle School. It is our hope you begin the year ready to participate in your education and trust we will help you along the way. You must make the decision to enter school with an attitude to learn and to take advantage of the opportunities that a good education has to give you.

Mr. Mark Bagley
Middle School Principal



Message from the Principal

Welcome back! Van Wert Elementary School is off and running to a great start this school year! Staff and students have been very busy teaching, learning, and exploring, and there have been some exciting highlights to mention as we've started the school year:

VWES is continuing several of our successful programs this year:

- **The Walking Program.** Students have a healthy start to their day and prep their brains for learning. This provides them physical activity first thing in the morning and helps minimize disciplinary issues prior to school.
- **Weekly W.O.W.** (Word of the Week) winners. These students are recognized on announcements, our VWES Facebook page, and the local newspaper.
- **Cougar CLUB**, which reinforces positive behavior in students.
- **Watch D.O.G.S.** invites positive male role models into our building to mentor and serve in various activities.

Mrs. Wehner (Assistant Principal) and I are working hard with all teachers this year to make ourselves present in each and every classroom so we can team teach with the staff. We both enjoy seeing the kids and helping implement the AWESOME ideas, strategies, and teaching practices our staff come up with.

To end, we would like to reiterate our VWES Mission Statement that is read during morning announcements by our fifth grade students, 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

VWES Health Fair

Promoting Health and Safety in Our Students

What do you get when you combine the police, sheriff K9 unit, firefighters, state highway patrol and an air ambulance? (It sounds like the start of a bad joke, right?) The truth is, that combo makes it a great day at Van Wert Elementary School!

VWES kicked off its annual Health Fair on Friday, September 27 with guest speaker Jim Steffen, owner of XT Fitness in Findlay, Ohio. Jim spoke of the importance of daily physical activity and nutritious eating habits in children while emphasizing how crucial optimism and confidence are for healthy living. He encouraged students to adopt a positive attitude and say, "I can!" rather than "I can't".

Third, fourth, and fifth grade students also participated in a morning one-mile Fun Run. It was inspiring to watch students complete the mile; they gathered together, shouting out congratulations and handing out high fives to their classmates as they crossed the finish line. We're proud of our students for the support and encouragement they showed to their classmates.



We'd like to recognize the boy and girl first place finisher for each grade level:

3rd Grade:
Whitney Holliday & Cal Byrum

4th Grade:
Alliance Hernandez & Evan Keuneke

5th Grade:
Noelle Byrum & Talan Mosier

Congratulations!



After lunch, students moved into stations where they experienced some hands-on learning with the Van Wert Sheriff's K-9 unit, the Van Wert post of the State Highway Patrol, Officer Greg Blackmore representing DARE, the Van Wert Fire Department, and Lutheran Air. Each group spoke of the importance their role plays during an emergency and gave the kids tips for staying safe, such as wearing a seat belt or designating a family meeting spot in case of a fire.



Students were encouraged to walk through the air ambulance and fire truck, and they even got up close and personal with Kane, Sheriff Roehm's German Shepard.

We'd like to extend a tremendous thank you to Van Wert Health for sponsoring this event and all the activities our students were able to experience, as well as providing lunch for staff and students in grades 3-5.

We hope that everyone walked away with a greater respect for our emergency responders and the knowledge to make safe and healthy choices every day.

Why Do We Play in Preschool?

As a preschool teaching staff, we're working through a book study for our Step Up To Quality designation called *Play – The Foundation of Children's Learning* by Lisa Murphy, M.Ed.

Ms. Murphy, founder of Ooey Gooley, Inc., is an early childhood expert with nearly 25 years of experience as an educator, researcher, and keynote speaker. She's written several books and produced training DVDs for early childhood educators, and is known as the "Ooey Gooley Lady".

In her book, she challenges early childhood educators to rethink how they approach "teaching" our youngest learners. What should our classrooms look like? What should our outdoor classrooms look like? (And yes, I said classrooms – not playgrounds.) What experiences should young children have, and how should those experiences be delivered?

Ms. Murphy compares the educational experience to that of building a house. In order for a house to stand through time, it must be built on a strong foundation. Without a solid foundation, the house will not stand the many "storms" it will face throughout the years. However, a house with a solid foundation can stand strong for over 100 years!



The same is true for learning. We, as early childhood educators, need to provide a strong foundation for children through experiences that will produce "crystallizing moments". Howard Gardner, Ph.D., and author of the *Theory of Multiple Intelligences*,

defines a "crystallizing moment" as an experience that produces a lifelong impact. Think back to your own childhood. Did you learn and retain information by doing worksheets day after day? Or did you learn best by being involved in hands-on activities?

As educators, we never know when a crystallizing moment may happen, but we need to always provide opportunities for children that encourage these moments. When a child experiences a crystallizing moment, they will retain the learning experience and be able to build upon it.

In order for these experiences to occur, we need to provide seven key components for children each and every day: the time to create, move, sing, discuss, observe, read, and play.

All of that is done through children playing and interacting with their environments. Our job is to give them a hands-on environment while they are in our care and in our program.

So parents, please know that your children are learning! We work on number and letter recognition, shapes and colors, beginning sounds and rhyming words, one to one correspondence, adding and subtracting, and science experiments. We work on sharing, kindness, character building, and self-regulation. We work on hand strength for handwriting, and lots of large muscle development through time in physical education or being outside. We work on singing, dancing, and rhythm. We work on so many concepts as outlined through our early learning standards. The difference is - we do all of this through PLAY!

Amanda Morgan, MS., of www.notjustcute.com, states it this way:

ACADEMICS is the subject!
PLAY is the method!
LEARNING is the outcome!

Message from the Principal

Greetings from the Early Childhood Center. We have had a wonderful start to our school year!

Each year, the ECC has an overall theme for the school year. The annual theme inspires our teachers' building and classroom decorations, songs they teach, creative art projects, and some of the monthly themes they choose to tackle with their respective standards. For the 2019-2020 school year, our staff created the color theme "Bold, Bright, and Brilliant Kids"!

The main goal of the building theme is our platform, to build "character traits" in our students. Each month, a character word is chosen for the children to work on. The word is explained to children at school, information is sent home to parents, and the teachers, paras, and therapists work with the children to model and observe the character trait during daily activities here at school. Our character traits are also very appropriate for us as adults too. For example, we started our year off with "Be Kind"! Educating our children is so much more than academics, as we all know!

We want your child to have a very successful and exciting year here at the Early Childhood Center. For some of you, this is your child's first school experience and we want it to be a very positive one. We encourage you to stay in contact with your teacher through the various classroom apps they use, and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Watch for special activities during the school year where we invite parents and grandparents to get involved with our program. We could not do all that we do without the wonderful support from all of you, our students' families!

Here's to an awesome, "Bold, Bright, and Brilliant" year!!!

Mrs. Lori Bittner
Early Childhood Center
Principal



PBL What is Project Based Learning?

Project Based Learning, or PBL, has been around for decades but someone finally decided to brand it as a catchy buzzword. In a nutshell, PBL is simply the application of real-world skills throughout the learning process. Teachers combine the standards they're required to teach with engaging assignments that ends with a culminating project in order to give students a deeper understanding of the content, and how it's applied outside the classroom.

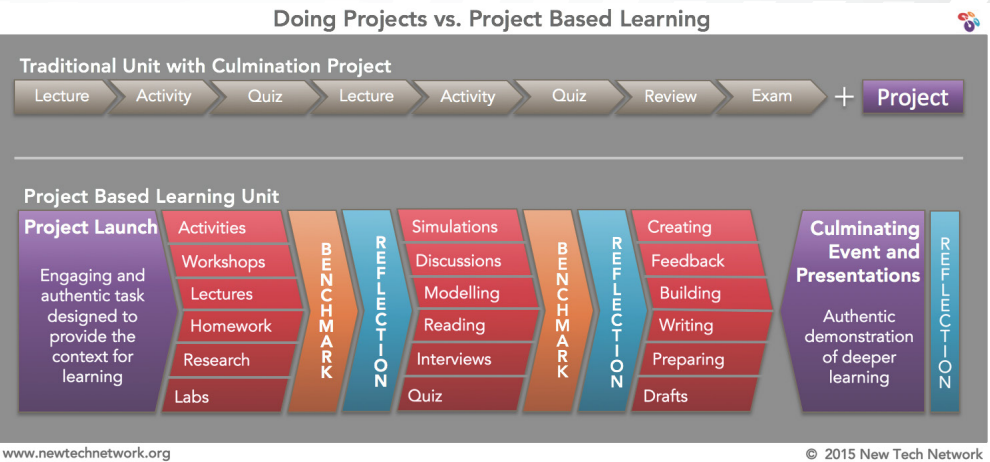
Van Wert High School first introduced PBL to the 2012 freshman class, after having spent an entire year planning its inception. The graduates of 2016 were the first to experience PBL throughout their entire high school career. Van Wert Middle School first introduced PBL to its students in 2014, with the Elementary School following in 2015. The PBL model has continued to expand and be improved upon in the subsequent years and is currently implemented in grades 1-12.

Concerns with the PBL model were voiced in the beginning. "It's not fair my student's grade depends on the work of others." Fortunately, that's simply a misconception of how PBL works.



Collaboration certainly plays an important role in PBL, but it's not the only form of assessment used. In fact, there are five "soft skills" students develop and are graded on in PBL:

KNOWLEDGE AND THINKING – the biggest piece of the grading pie; does a student have a comprehensive understanding of the content?



AGENCY – taking ownership of one's work; the development of a growth mindset, or the idea that anyone can improve through effort, practice, and challenge.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION – the ability to answer a question using technical writing, and the ability to "write across the curriculum", meaning writing is no longer just an English/Language Arts skill as it's used in all subjects.

COLLABORATION – the ability to work as a team toward a common goal where students give and get feedback; to grow from positive criticism and dissect problems as they arise.

ORAL COMMUNICATION – being able to speak knowledgeably and fluently in small groups, large groups, and even one-on-one.

Students are graded at various points, called benchmarks, throughout the PBL process. They're assessed on an individual basis through tasks such as worksheets, quizzes, discussions, and so forth. If students struggle to meet the benchmark requirements, more time is spent in the learning process, digging deeper into the content in order for them to walk away with a richer understanding. A rubric is a tool teachers use to communicate their expectations for a project; it explains

how a student is assessed against the defined standards. It's a way for students to reflect on their work prior to reaching a benchmark.

Statistically speaking, students who graduate from schools that employ the PBL method are more successful in sustaining college and careers. At Van Wert City Schools, our vision reflects that **"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."**

Stacy Adam, Executive Director of the Van Wert Area Economic Development Corporation said, "During a survey of Van Wert companies, businesses identified their concern with a gap in soft skills (dependability, communication, customer focus). They commented that it would be helpful if we'd work together to continue to reinforce these important skills. They were confident that many job-specific skills could be taught on the job, but these life-long skills had to be taught and reinforced over the years until they became second nature."

By using Project Based Learning as the basis of our instructional model, we offer our students much more than just knowledge; we provide them the tools they need to succeed in life.



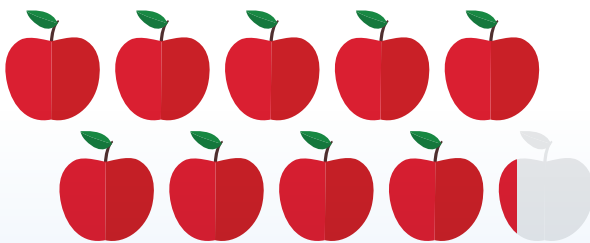
PE + Health = Student Success

Benefits of Health & Physical Education to 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**

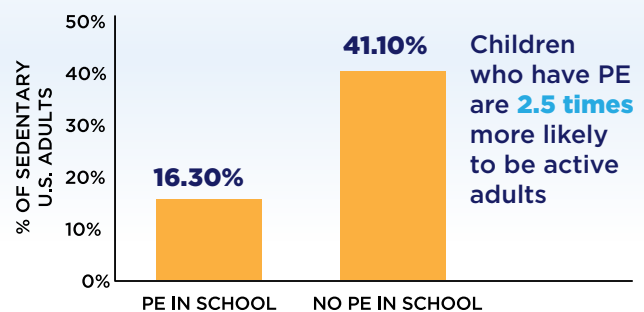
SCHOOLS CAN INFLUENCE HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

Nearly **92%** of students that attended health education class believe it is important to their future health.



Findings from 2016 myCollegeOptions®/SHAPE America research study:
National sample includes 132,096 high school students.

PE in Schools and Long Term Effects



Physical Activity Council. 41,000 Interviews on Sedentary Lifestyles. 2010.

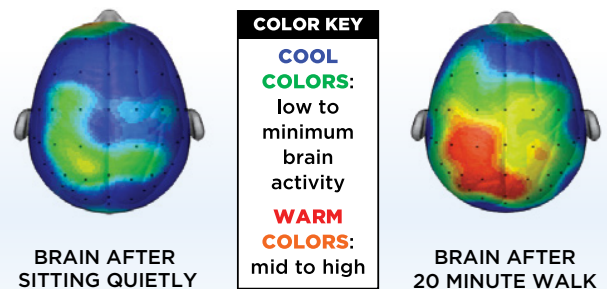
ACTIVE & HEALTHY STUDENTS ARE BETTER LEARNERS

Physical Fitness and Achievement Test Performance



Castelli, D.M., Hillman, C.H., Buck, S.E., & Erwin, H.E. (April 2007). Physical fitness and academic achievement in 3rd and 5th grade students. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 29(2), 239-252.

Average Composite of 20 Student Brains Taking the Same Test



Hillman, C.H. *The Effect of Acute Treadmill Walking on Cognitive Control & Academic Achievement in Preadolescent Children*. 2009.



shapeamerica.org/advocacy #SHAPEadvocacy

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.*

OCTOBER

25	Football vs. Bath	7:00 p.m.
29	High School Band Concert	7:30 p.m.

NOVEMBER

1	Football vs. Celina	7:00 p.m.
6	High School Student Council Blood Drive	7:30 a.m.
	PTO Meeting	5:30 p.m.
8	End of 1st Trimester (ECC / ES / MS)	
16	Girls Basketball vs. Lima Senior	10:00 a.m.
19	Boys Basketball vs. New Bremen (scrimmage)	5:30 p.m.
20	Board of Education Meeting	5:00 p.m.
22	High School Theatre Fall Play	7:00 p.m.
23	Boys Basketball vs. Tinora/Liberty Benton	9:00 a.m.
	High School Theatre Fall Play	7:00 p.m.
25	NO SCHOOL - Professional Development (Evening: Parent/Teacher Conferences)	
26	NO SCHOOL - Parent/Teacher Conferences	
27-29	NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Break	
30	Boys Basketball vs. Lincolnview	6:00 p.m.

DECEMBER

2	Bowling vs. Defiance	4:00 p.m.
3	Swimming vs. Kenton	6:00 p.m.
4	PTO Meeting	5:30 p.m.
5	Girls Basketball vs. Celina	6:00 p.m.
	HS / MS Band Concert	7:30 p.m.
12	Swimming vs. Ft. Recovery/Marion Local	6:00 p.m.
	Wrestling vs. Defiance	6:00 p.m.
13	Boys Basketball vs. Defiance	6:00 p.m.
16	Bowling vs. Lima Shawnee	4:00 p.m.
	HS Choir Concert	8:15 p.m.
17	Girls Basketball vs. Wayne Trace	6:00 p.m.
	Swimming vs. New Bremen	6:00 p.m.
18	Board of Education Meeting	5:00 p.m.
19	Girls Basketball vs. Wapakoneta	6:00 p.m.
	Swimming vs. Ada/Elida	6:00 p.m.
20	End of 2nd 9 Weeks (HS)	
21	Boys Basketball vs. Wayne Trace	6:00 p.m.
23-31	NO SCHOOL - Christmas Break	
23	Girls Basketball vs. Delphos St. John's	6:00 p.m.
27	Bowling vs. Elida	9:30 a.m.
	Boys Basketball vs. Ottoville	6:00 p.m.
28	Boys Basketball vs. Columbus Grove	6:00 p.m.

#EducationInnovationTradition

#VWCougarPride

#WeAreVanWert

205 West Crawford Street • Van Wert, Ohio 45891

Education • Innovation • Tradition

Van Wert
City Schools

