

The History of West Noble School Corporation

The West Noble School Corporation was formed in 1961 by incorporating the Wawaka, Perry, Cromwell, Ligonier, Kimmell and Washington Center Schools into one central location. Included within the geographical boundaries of the school corporation are the Noble County towns of Ligonier, Cromwell, Wawaka and Kimmell, as well as the townships of Elkhart, Perry, Sparta and Washington. Covering an approximate total of 132 square miles, the community is mainly composed of industrial and agricultural business.

When the Corporation formed, many students began the process of attending schools outside of their particular town or township. Sparta and Washington township students in grades K-3 began attending Kimmell School. For a few short years, kindergarteners attended class in the Cromwell Fire Department building. Later, a portable school building was erected behind the Cromwell School for kindergarten students to attend. This building was used for kindergarten until 1983 when the elementary schools were consolidated. The fourth graders from Sparta and Washington townships attended Cromwell School. The fifth and sixth graders attended Washington Center School.

Ligonier K-6 students attended Ligonier School; Perry township K-6 students attended Perry School; and North Elkhart School housed Elkhart Township students in grades K-6.

All four townships sent students in grades 7 and 8 to Cromwell School, all ninth graders to Wawaka School and all tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders to Ligonier School.

The late 60s found deteriorating conditions of some buildings, continued growth of population in the city of Ligonier and updated educational requirements. The need for a new school was imminent. After much discussion, a decision was made to build a new high school two miles south of Ligonier, and in 1971, West Noble High School was completed. West Noble High School held its first commencement in May of 1971 (although that class of seniors attended the Ligonier High School). The first class attending West Noble High School was the 1972 class, though students graduating from Ligonier High School in 1969 and 1970 are also considered West Noble graduates.

With West Noble High School now in place, three schools (Kimmell, Washington Center and North Elkhart) would be closed. Sparta and Washington township students in grades K-6 would now attend Cromwell Elementary School; Ligonier K-6 students would attend Ligonier Elementary School; Perry Township students K-6 would attend Perry Elementary and Elkhart Township K-6 students would now attend Wawaka Elementary School. Students in the seventh and eighth grades from all four townships would attend Ligonier School, now called West Noble Junior High and ninth through twelfth grade students would attend West Noble High School.

In 1972, consultants made a recommendation that the West Noble Junior High School, which was attached to Ligonier Elementary, be eliminated from further educational use as soon as it was possible to accommodate the students elsewhere. Consultants recommended the building be retired from educational use, razed and removed from the site. Although the exterior of the building appeared impressive, the interior was such as to create highly undesirable educational and safety situations.

With the recommendations from 1972, a plan of action was put into place. A new middle school would be built on the same campus as West Noble High School. This new school would house students in grades 6, 7 and 8. After the Junior High portion of the old school was demolished, a new wing was added to Ligonier Elementary to accommodate elementary students that were attending classes in the Junior High section of the old building. The new West Noble Middle School was completed and ready for occupancy the fall of 1976.

When the 1980s arrived, three of the four remaining elementary buildings were deteriorating. After much discussion it was decided to renovate Ligonier Elementary and build one new elementary on the West Noble Campus. This new building would house students in grades K-5 from Elkhart, Perry, Sparta and Washington Townships. Students from Ligonier would attend Ligonier Elementary. West Noble Elementary was completed and occupied in 1983.

Cromwell Elementary was sold to the town of Cromwell. The cafeteria/multi-purpose room, along with the gym was kept intact while the oldest portion was demolished. The Cromwell Community Center is still in use today.

Wawaka Elementary was razed and became a park.

Perry Elementary School was purchased by a local church and is still in use today.

The early 90s saw an influx of families to the area. An increase in students warranted an addition to the middle school. This addition enabled the moving of all fifth grade students in the corporation to the middle school. West Noble Middle School would now house students in grades 5-8. Ligonier Elementary and West Noble Elementary would accommodate grades K-4.

With the additional influx of the Hispanic population in the late 90s and the expansion of full-day kindergarten classes in the early 2000s, the need for additional space become apparent. With the support of the community, the high school, middle school and West Noble Elementary saw major additions completed in 2008.

During the 2009-10 school year, a difficult decision was made to realign the two elementary schools. Many months of planning brought the announcement that the 2011-12 school year would start with Ligonier Elementary – newly renamed as West Noble Primary School – housing students in grades K-1 and West Noble Elementary would serve as the new home for all students in grades 2-4.

West Noble School Corporation has had only seven superintendents in its history. Keith Carper served as the first superintendent from 1961-1964. The second was Glen Longenbaugh, who served from 1964-1980. Bruce Hippensteel served as the third superintendent from 1980-2004. Twenty-four years as a superintendent is an extremely long time, as most educators who achieve such a level do so later in their careers. Mr. Hippensteel became superintendent at a young age and quickly established himself as a very capable manager. Dave Speakman served from 2004-2009. Prior to becoming superintendent, Mr. Speakman served as the assistant superintendent at West Noble, under the tutelage of Mr. Hippensteel, for 18 years. West Noble's 5th superintendent, Dr. Dennis VanDuyne, served from 2009-2017.

Dr. VanDuyne served as assistant superintendent under Dave Speakman from 2006-2009. Mr. Galen Mast. served as 6th superintendent from July 2017 to December 2022. Our current superintendent is Dr. Nate Lowe, which started May 1, 2023.

West Noble High School, West Noble Middle School and West Noble Elementary School are located on approximately 130 acres, two miles south of Ligonier on U. S. 33, at the State Road 5 junction. West Noble Primary (formerly Ligonier Elementary School) is located in Ligonier at 500 West Union Street.

The total student enrollment is approximately 2,503 for all grades Kindergarten through grade 12. West Noble Primary, formerly Ligonier Elementary, houses students in grade K-1. West Noble Elementary houses students in grades 2-4. West Noble Middle School includes grades 5 through 8, with West Noble High School including grades 9-12.

The West Noble School Corporation has a comprehensive curriculum offering at all grade levels, including programs for the gifted and talented, for those needing special services in special education, English as a second language (ESL) and vocational programs at the high school level. West Noble also offers a varied and balanced extra-curricular and co-curricular program for students.

The Central Administrative offices for the West Noble School Corporation are located at the south end of the West Noble High School facility, just off of Charger Avenue. The Central Administrative office hours are 7:30 am - 4:00 pm Monday through Friday.

Superintendent: Nate Lowe

School Board Members:

Joe Hutsell - President
Joe Saggars - Vice President
John Schwartz - Secretary
Paul Fought - Member
Jeremy Brown - Member
Parrish Kruger– Member
Travis Stohlman - Member

Sources:

- Ligonier, Indiana – Memories of the First 150 Years 1835 – 1985, Ligonier Sesquicentennial Book Commission
- A Consultant Study of the West Noble School Corporation, Ball State University 1972
- A Cooperative Study of School District Reorganization and School Building Needs, Studies in Education No. 2, 1957