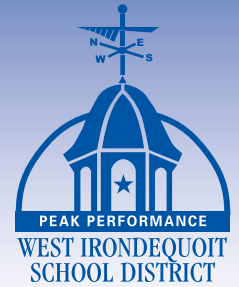


“THE QUOTE”



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST IRONDEQUOIT CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

IHS students already well-positioned for financial literacy



Finn Schlaefer

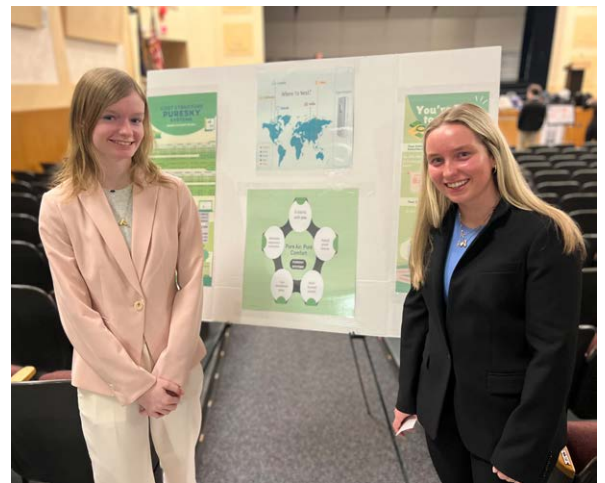
The summer before his junior year, Finn Schlaefer was excited. The Irondequoit High School student was a lifeguard at Seabreeze Amusement Park and earning his first decent paycheck. By that winter, though, he had a problem. He was running out of money. It was a major reason he wanted to take the Career & Financial Management course at IHS.

“I’m a little smarter than I was a year ago,” the senior says, smiling.

Every IHS graduate will soon feel the same way.

Ensuring that students who earn a diploma are “financially literate” is one of two NYS Department of Education proposals projected to be graduation requirements by the 2026-27 school year. West Irondequoit students are well-positioned for success because of its dream team of business teachers. Mr. Lou DiCesare, Mrs. Jeanine Lent and Mrs. LaVon Bucciarelli have worked together for 17 years.

Continued on page 3



From left to right, seniors Tessa Coeny and Alley Armitage are two of the 39 students from the Irondequoit HS DECA Club who competed in this month’s state competition.

A Message from the Superintendent



Dear West Irondequoit families/residents:

Thanks to our staff’s expertise and enthusiasm, we’re not just keeping up with changes in education – we’re leading the way. Our teachers and staff have been working tirelessly to create lessons that truly engage students, making learning exciting and meaningful under the direction of our Office of Instruction. Their dedication is reflected in the


fresh, dynamic experiences they bring into classrooms every day, sparking curiosity, building critical thinking skills and preparing students for success in an ever-evolving world.

We remain committed to staying ahead of best practices and aligning our instruction with the latest initiatives from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the Governor’s Office. This includes strengthening literacy instruction through research-backed approaches and expanding financial literacy education to ensure all students gain essential life skills that will serve them well into adulthood. Read more in our cover story in this edition of *The Quote*!

On behalf of our entire school community, I want to thank the staff and stakeholders who have dedicated themselves to the multi-year process of researching and designing an improved elementary Report Card (article on back page of this edition). Their hard work and commitment ensure that families receive the most timely, accurate and meaningful insights into their child’s growth and progress.

As we continue to evolve and improve, John Dewey’s words resonate deeply: “If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow.” Your ongoing support is the cornerstone of our mission to create welcoming, nurturing, and inspiring schools. Together, we can ensure that both students and educators thrive and are prepared for the future. Thank you!

With gratitude and enthusiasm,


Aaron R. Johnson, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools



Read “The Quote” on your mobile device

District personnel updates

West Irondequoit has added three new administrators and a new registrar during the 2024-25 school year.



Sara Cadirao – Registrar, District Office

Mrs. Cadirao began working for the district in early December and has been an Irondequoit resident since 2004. She and her husband, Dan, have two children: Aaron, a 2024 IHS graduate who attends Monroe Community College, and Alana, an Irondequoit High School sophomore. A Fairport native, Mrs. Cadirao formerly worked at L3Harris Corporation.



Jennifer DeWitz – Principal, Briarwood/Colebrook

Mrs. DeWitz began her tenure in October. She replaced Dr. Brenna Farrell, who became our Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources. An educator for more than 27 years in the Rochester CSD, Mrs. DeWitz served as Assistant Principal for 10 years. She also was an elementary teacher for eight years. A Rush-Henrietta HS graduate, she and her husband reside in Gates. They have two children in their 20s.



Phil Ortolani – Director of Equity & Wellness

Mr. Ortolani was appointed our new Director of Equity and Wellness in October. He supervises and supports our Student Services Department. For the past three years, Mr. Ortolani has been the Supervisor of Support Services for Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES. Prior to that, he worked in the Greece and Gates Chili school districts. A Greece native, Mr. Ortolani resides in Rochester with his spouse and two children.



Brendan O'Toole – Director of Health, P.E. & Athletics

Mr. O'Toole replaced Ms. Kim Schon in October and has more than 24 years of experience as a teacher and coach. Over the past two years, he was the Rochester City School District's Coordinator of Health, Physical Education and Athletics for both Wilson Magnet HS and Rochester Early College HS. He previously taught Health and P.E. Mr. O'Toole and his partner, Eileen, live in Rochester and have two children. 🗨️

Quote Notes

R.I.S.E. CAPITAL PROJECT

The R.I.S.E. Capital project is well under way and projects across our district are on schedule! Work has begun on the transformation of the Library Media Center at Iroquois Middle School. More work will happen later this year to do the same at Rogers MS. Despite the winter weather, construction crews also have made progress on the second-story walkway between IHS and Dake. Renovations at 330 Pattonwood Drive, the new home of our Department of Environmental Services, started last fall. Follow the schedule and progress at westirondequot.org (click on the R.I.S.E. page).

FOOD SERVICE – BE PROACTIVE

Thanks to our district applying to be part of an expanded U.S. Department of Agriculture program called the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), all students receive free meals this year. We still advise all parents/guardians to fill out a free-and-reduced meal application. If approved, the benefit will carry over for the first month and a half of the 2025-2026 school year. Applications can be found at westirondequot.org under “Food Services” (also in the main office of all schools and at District Office).

SUBMIT TRANSPORTATION FORMS ONLINE

April 1 is the deadline for all Private, Parochial & Charter School families for the 2025-26 school year. Even if you don't plan to use our transportation, you must fill out the form. A digital version is available at westirondequot.org; click “Departments” and “Transportation.” We emailed our families about this in February. You can submit ALL transportation forms online at our site, including opting out of the bus at any time.

IHS MUSICAL IS MARCH 20-23

This year's IHS spring musical is “Once Upon a Mattress.” This uproarious update of The Princess and the Pea classic sets an unapologetic free spirit loose in a repressed kingdom, reveling in Winnifred's ability to charm and transform with willpower, honesty and a little bit of help from her friends. IHS students are excited to share their performance with the community. Show times are below. Buy tickets in advance at cur8.com!

- Thursday, March 20-22 at 7 p.m.
- Sunday, March 23, 2 p.m.

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Students are eligible for our full-day kindergarten program in September 2025 if they will be 5 years of age on or before Dec. 1, 2025. **The deadline to register a child for the 2025-26 school year is April 1st.** Letters with information were mailed home and emailed to families with eligible children in February. Our parent/guardian orientations happened in late February and early March. Registration information can be found on our website at westirondequot.org. Click on “Parents/Students” then “Registration” then the “Kindergarten” button. Children attending private, parochial, charter schools or homeschool still must be registered. Questions? Call the Registrar's Office at (585) 336-6743.

IHS Students – Financial Literacy *Continued from cover*

“To see other people understand that what you’re teaching is as important as you’ve always thought it was, it’s kind of a career goal – and cool to watch happen,” says Lent, who joined the IHS staff 23 years ago. “We believe in what we’re teaching.”

IHS offers 10 business classes: CFM, College Accounting, College Business, Entrepreneurship, Entertainment Business, E-Commerce, Personal Law, Personal Investing, Sports Marketing and Virtual Business Management.

DiCesare has taught at IHS for 29 years and built what was a dormant Irondequoit DECA Club into a state power that annually sends multiple students to nationals. More important: It helps students find their path or passion.

“We tell ‘em all the time, ‘It’s OK to go through this and come out saying that you don’t like business. That’s what part of high school is about,’ DiCesare says. “But, how do you know if you don’t like something unless you try it?”

Bucciarelli’s work as the IHS Career Connections Coordinator, a role she added a few years ago, ties in nicely, too. Dozens of work study students not only earn and learn while at IHS, many also find their next step in life, whether it’s college, the military or joining the workforce. The teaching trio are also DECA Club advisors.

“I want to go into engineering and, because of DECA, the business side of it,” says IHS senior Luca Scott, adding that Career & Financial Management (CFM) “taught me everything I know. The things I learned, like filing my own taxes and college loans, I will use them the rest of my life.”

Learning “life-ready” skills aligns with the district’s work in determining its “Portrait of a Graduate,” which has included work by administrators, teachers and parents/guardians since November 2023.

Senior Tessa Coeny says CFM gives lessons in “common sense,” such as Finn’s budgeting issue – do you have more money coming in than you do going out? DiCesare makes that lesson prominent, introducing it to students as something they must do every month for the rest of their lives. “If you want to be successful, the earlier you get that knowledge, the better,” Coeny says.



Seniors Luca Scott and Finn Schlaefer both say the Career & Financial Management course is invaluable for teaching “life ready” skills

She is one of the 39 students – among 150 in DECA this year – who competed in DECA’s state championships in March. Coeny and fellow seniors Alley Armitage and Evelyn Dean are on the same team in the International Business category. To help students get ready, DiCesare orchestrated a live simulation in February at IHS. He invited 14 adults, including teachers, administrators and local business people, to serve as “judges.” Students gave their timed presentations and benefited from the feedback.

Judge Alex Amorese is a 2007 IHS graduate and now in commercial real estate. He is continually

impressed by the creativity of today’s students and appreciates what DiCesare and Lent taught him. “Wouldn’t be where I am without them,” he says.

And that’s the payoff, the teachers say, seeing students go on to lead happy lives. “The kids that don’t get a medal (at DECA competitions),” DiCesare says, “they still won because they learned.”

Did You Know?

Last November, the IHS Business Department’s excellence teaching financial literacy was recognized nationally by W!SE, a NYC-based nonprofit. Irondequoit was one of 29 schools to earn a new “Platinum Star School Award.” For the previous 12 years, IHS earned W!SE’s “Blue Star” honor.

Music at West Irondequoit: The Beat Goes On

On Saturday, Dec. 7th, Rogers Middle School music teacher, Mrs. Anna Conti, presented on the school’s Drum Ensemble at the 88th annual NYS School Music Association’s Winter Conference at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. The ensemble was born 23 years ago. Teachers statewide heard about it and wanted to know more. Mrs. Conti and student musicians played for teachers, showcasing the free-flowing, improvisational flair of the ensemble.

“All drumming curriculum is about teaching highly specific rhythms: Know it, learn it, love it, play it,” Mrs. Conti explained. “Some students arrive interested to learn but aren’t sure if they have the skills. So we have a program where everyone can create on their own and be

successful. This really came from the students. (Years ago) they said, ‘Can we just try to make it up on our own?’ And we went with it. It was really exciting to share this. The music sounds more authentic and ... awesome. I am really proud of it.”

Students answered questions from other teachers at the conference, too. “They were very impressed with their maturity and professionalism of our students,” Mrs. Conti said. “They were thoughtful in their responses, respectful of each other.” For 17 straight years, our district has earned the distinction as one of the “Best Communities for Music Education in America,” an honor from the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation.



Superintendent
Dr. Aaron Johnson

Board of Education
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Mrs. Victoria Bournival, Vice President
Mrs. Melissa Bohrer
Mrs. Kathryn Copeland
Mr. Kevin Schoepfel
Ms. Tamara Wall
Mr. John Vay

Mrs. Jenna Lustig, District Clerk

Aliyah Bozkurt, Student Representative
Rourke Hickey, Student Representative
Bree Hunley, Student Representative

Newsletter Editor
Mr. Jeff DiVeronica

Annual District Vote & Election

Tuesday, May 20, 2025
6 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Vote location:
St. Paul Blvd. Fire Dept.
433 Cooper Rd.

PTSA Candidates' Night:
Tuesday, May 13

This event is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 13th in the small cafeteria at Irondequoit High School. It will be recorded and available on the district YouTube channel. There are two Board of Education positions up for election this year. Candidates' nominating petitions are due to the district clerk by 5 p.m. April 21.

Budget Hearing:
Thursday, May 8, 7 p.m.

The Board of Education will hold a Budget Hearing to share details of the proposed budget. Additional presentations may be scheduled. Go to westirondequoit.org or call 585-336-3067 for updates. We expect there will be time to ask questions at the Budget Hearing.

Absentee Ballots

Absentee ballots are available for those who qualify. Contact District Clerk Jenna Lustig at 585-336-2983 or jenna_lustig@westiron.monroe.edu. Or visit westirondequoit.org.

Promoting Equitable Grading Practices

Our district is committed to ensuring that each student has the opportunity to succeed. To that end, we have been focusing efforts to closely examine grading practices. Our work has centered on creating grading norms among grade-level and content area teacher teams that promote equitable practices. This shift promotes transparency and provides the most accurate representation of student progress toward standards, allowing teachers, students, and families to clearly understand areas of strength and opportunities for growth.

At each grade-level band, different adjustments will be made over the next two years to better align our work to this approach.

Grades K-4:

- Starting in the 2025-26 school year, shift to 3 trimester Report Cards (right now there are 4) to better align to district benchmark assessments and curriculum
- Report Card indicators will be revised to better correspond with NYS Standards
- Provide clear guidelines to teachers for comments related to student academic growth and learning behaviors

Grades 5-6:

- Starting in the 2025-26 school year, shift to 3 trimester Report Cards (right now there are 4) to better align to district benchmark assessments and curriculum
- Adjust the gradebook structure to better align with NYS standards and district curriculum
- Provide clear guidelines for consistent grading practices that accurately measure and represent students' academic growth and learning behaviors.

Grades 7-12:

- Build capacity among teachers to implement consistent grading practices across courses and content areas to ensure grades clearly communicate student academic progress
- Align grading practices to the expectations outlined in our district's Portrait of a Graduate.

By implementing these practices, we aim to support diverse learning styles, reduce stress, and ultimately foster a more positive and productive educational experience for every student. Thank you for your continued support as we work together to enhance our students' academic journey. 📖