

National Merit Scholarship

Finalists



Andrew Borden
Walled Lake Central

Noah Nicholson
Walled Lake Northern

Vidya Vuyyuru
Walled Lake Western

Spring 2025

Learning

In Walled Lake Consolidated Schools



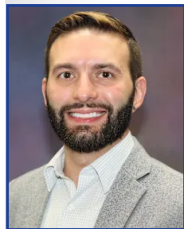
Vol. 37, No. 3

District welcomes two new administrators

We are delighted to welcome two new administrators to Walled Lake Consolidated Schools and know they will serve our community well.



Patricia Karban, principal at Dublin Elementary. She comes to Walled Lake from South Bend Community Schools in Indiana, where she's served as an elementary principal for the past ten and a half years. Karban has worked in education for nearly two decades starting her career as a middle school science teacher.



Dr. Gary Puhl, Ed.D., supervisor of Special Services. He comes to Walled Lake from the Wayne Educational Regional Service Agency, where he served as the director of Special Education for two years.

Puhl has worked as a special education administrator for more than a decade as he previously worked in Detroit Public Schools Community District.

2025 Teachers of the Year announced



Bob Vogt, Glengary Elementary; **Chelsea Schikora**, Sarah G. Banks Middle School; and **Andy Teberian**, WL Central High School, were honored as the District Teachers of the Year at the January 9 Board of Education meeting along with all of Walled Lake Consolidated Schools' building Teachers of the Year.



Congratulations to all of the 2025 Teacher of the Year recipients.

Elementary School

Cristi Harrington, Commerce
Sarah Whitson, Dublin
Lisa Evans, Early Childhood Center
Bob Vogt, Glengary
Carrie Murray, Hickory Woods
Mark Jahn, Keith*
Kelly Heinke, Loon Lake
Kayla Brynn, Mary Helen Guest
Betsy Phillips, Meadowbrook
Leslie Bielis-Volkers, Oakley Park
Brenda Raymond, Pleasant Lake
Erin Faley, Walled Lake
Lindsay Lopez, Wixom

Middle School

Rachel Sims, Clifford H. Smart
Jeff Snody, James R. Geisler
Chelsea Schikora, Sarah G. Banks
Mark Little, Walnut Creek

High School

Andy Teberian, WL Central
Ashley Ward, WL Northern
Kevin Francis, WL Western

* Awarded posthumously

Pictured top left to right: Bob Vogt, Glengary Elementary; and Chelsea Schikora, Sarah G. Banks Middle School. Pictured bottom left to right: Rachel Sims, Clifford H. Smart Middle School; and Brenda Raymond, Pleasant Lake Elementary.

District continues Facility Study, James R. Geisler Middle School to be repurposed



With the community's strong support of the 2024 Bond, the WLCSD Facility Utilization Review Committee reconvened last fall to determine which middle school would be repurposed. After a thorough review of key data points, the committee overwhelmingly recommended James R. Geisler Middle School for repurposing. Following this recommendation, District administration conducted extensive planning to assess feasibility, including elementary school alignment, transportation adjustments, and projected student enrollment.

During the Board of Education meeting on Dec. 5, 2024, the Board voted to move forward with this plan as part of the District's Facility Utilization efforts. At the conclusion of the 2024-25 school year, Geisler Middle School will begin its transformation to serve the community in a new capacity.

The District is committed to ensuring a smooth transition for all students and families impacted by the shift to three middle schools. The focus remains on providing a high-quality educational experience and supporting students every step of the way.

Hunter, Toovalian, Hirakawa and Chapman receive Golden Apples



Hunter

Tammy Hunter and Karen Toovalian, Student Services secretaries, received Golden Apple Awards at the Board of Education meeting on February 6.



Toovalian

They were nominated by **Patti Harthun**, Student Services supervisor, for being consistently positive and helpful in enrolling students and researching ways to help the McKinny-Vento students in our district. They are always available to train staff on new procedures and share best practices.



Thank you for the donation of flowers for the Golden Apple winners each month.

Tomoko Hirakawa English Language Development (ELD) paraprofessional at the Early Childhood Center (ECC), and **Cassandra Chapman**, Headstart preschool assistant at the ECC and WL Paraeducators Association (WLPA) president, received Golden Apple Awards at the March 6 Board of Education meeting.



Hirakawa

Tomoko advocates for all students and families. She goes above and beyond to communicate with families and share information with them about their children and the programs available to them in WLCSD.



Chapman

Cassandra was nominated by **Victoria Blake**, preschool teacher at the ECC, because she strives to form relationships with families as part of the whole child approach. Cassandra is an advocate for early childhood and her peers.

District receives 21st Meritorious Budget Award



The Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) recently recognized Walled Lake Consolidated Schools' Business Services Department for excellence in budget presentation with the Meritorious Budget Award (MBA) for the 2024-25 budget year. This is the 21st consecutive year the District has been recognized with this honor.

"Receiving this recognition from ASBO for the 21st consecutive year is a testament to our District's unwavering commitment to financial transparency and responsible stewardship of our community's resources," said **Dr. Michael Lonze**, superintendent of schools.

"Assistant Superintendent of Business Services **Julie Omer** and her team continue to demonstrate excellence in financial management, and we commend their dedication to ensuring our District remains fiscally strong. Their exemplary work reflects a steadfast commitment to our students, staff and community, and we deeply appreciate their efforts in service of our District's financial goals."

Graichen selected as Best in Class Teacher



Sara Graichen, kindergarten teacher at Hickory Woods, was selected as a "Best in Class Teacher" by the Detroit Red Wings.

She was invited to a VIP dinner and ceremony, as well as received tickets for the January 15 Red Wings game against the San Jose Sharks. She also got to meet former Red Wings player Justin Abdelkader. "The biggest surprise was receiving a trophy in my name and a \$500 Meijer gift card," said Sara. "I am grateful to have received this award, and I am proud to be a teacher in Walled Lake Schools."



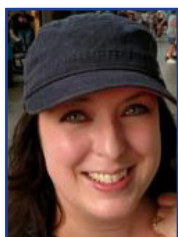
Pictured left to right: Sara pictured with former Red Wings player Justin Abdelkader, and the group of teachers selected as Best in Class Teacher by the Detroit Red Wings honored in January.

District mourns the loss of two beloved staff members



Walled Lake Schools is saddened by the death of **Mark Jahn** and **Jennie Ashley**.

Mark Jahn, Keith Elementary second-grade teacher, passed away on October 10, 2024. Mark was a proud member of our Walled Lake Schools family for over 25 years and was posthumously awarded Keith's Teacher of the Year Award for 2024-25. He made a lasting impact on the entire Keith Elementary community and his presence will be profoundly missed.



Jennie Ashley, an elementary school teacher since 2011 who was most recently at Dublin Elementary, passed away on February 14, 2025. She battled Pancreatic Cancer for three years and was a champion to those recently diagnosed. She was a valued member of our Walled Lake Schools family, touching the lives of countless students and colleagues with her kindness, dedication and steadfast commitment to our school community.

Walled Lake Middle School Dance shines at National Championships



The Walled Lake Middle School dance team claimed a pair of Top 5 finishes during its second trip to the Universal Dance Association (UDA) National Championships at ESPN's Wide World of Sports in Florida earlier this year.

In just its fourth year as a program, the ladies took third place in Junior High Pom with a score of 83.5375 and claimed fourth place with their jazz routine tallying a score of 82.075.

A year ago, the Walled Lake Middle School dance team finished sixth in Junior High Jazz in its first time competing at the UDA National Championships.

Nine students recognized as Regional Scholastic Art and Writing Award winners



Nine students from across Walled Lake Consolidated Schools took home Scholastic Art and Writing Awards in the regional competition with over 5,000 entries submitted from the state of Michigan.

Seven WL Central students received Gold Key Awards and will be moving on to the national competition for a chance to have their artwork shown at Carnegie Hall in New York City. Additionally, four Vikings and two WL Western students earned Silver Key Awards.

The Regional Scholastic Art and Writing Award Ceremony was held on February 10 at the Detroit Institute of the Arts. The winner's pieces were also on display at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit February 10-25.

Pictured top left to right: **Sviatoslav Fedneyshyn** "Warrior" (silver), **Tuur Devits** "The World is on Fire" (gold). Bottom left to right: **Cherelle Stewart-Gonzal** "Ethiopian Souldful Strands" (gold), **Onno Solomon** "Open Window" (gold). The other gold key winners include: **Bennett Memelli**, **Erena Sharm**, **Enrique Tirado** and **Mia Virga**. See the full story on the District website: bit.ly/40BVxaY

Younes and Nellett join 1,000 point club at Northern and Central



WL Northern senior **Amal Younes** etched her name in the Knights' record books on January 31, as she buried her 1,000th career point.

"I feel very blessed to be put into a position where I could achieve this milestone and it feels good to know that all the hard work I've put in has paid off," said Younes.

Not only did Younes reach the milestone, but she is also the first player in school history to reach that mark, girls or boys.

WL Central senior **Jake Nellett** also etched his name in the program record books on February 21 as he eclipsed the 1,000 point milestone, scoring 23 points in a win over Milford.



WL Western cheer shines at states



The WL Western Competitive Cheer team claimed its first District Championship since 2021.

The Warriors then punched their ticket to the MHSAA Division 2 State Championship after a strong showing at regionals.

Western placed fourth overall at the state finals with a total score of 779.68.

WL Northern bowling wins regionals



The WL Northern boys' bowling team added some new hardware to its trophy case taking home the MHSAA Division 1 Regional Championship after tallying 3,371 pins, which was over 100 more than second-place Lakeland.

The Knights battled tough at the state team finals placing 12th overall with a score of 3,289.

Twelve students represented Walled Lake Schools at the Michigan Music Conference



Six high school and five middle band and orchestra students shined at the Michigan Music Conference in Grand Rapids. WL Western alto saxophone player **Noah Springer** was selected as one of the top young composers in Michigan and performed his full orchestra composition, *Lost*.

Eleven students were also chosen for the 2024-25 All-State program. Only the top performers for each instrument were selected out of over 2,700 middle school and high school students that auditioned. Those students then had the opportunity to rehearse with esteemed conductors for two days before performing at the Michigan Music Conference on January 25.

Sarah G. Banks Middle School's **Brady Cruzen** (clarinet), **Nicholas Heuvers** (tuba), and **Arden Ishmakej** (clarinet) were joined by Clifford H. Smart Middle School French horn player **Evan Reed** in the Middle School All-State Band. Bulldogs' violinist **Chaewon Kim** was the lone middle schooler to perform in with the All-State Orchestra.

WL Northern's **Caleb Bauer** (violin) and **Claire Spoutz** (double bass) performed as part of the High School All-State Orchestra. Knights' percussionist **Matthew Staron** was joined by WL Western's **Vadim Afanasyev** (clarinet) and **Alejandro Samaniego Ramos** (baritone saxophone) in the High School All-State Band. Warriors' trumpet player **Carter Tucker-Grough** also performed as part of the High School All-State Jazz Ensemble.

Additionally, WL Central's **Han Chau** (violin), WL Northern's **Scott Konopka** (bass clarinet) and **Gustave Vellozzo** (baritone saxophone), and Sarah G. Banks Middle School's **Josh Wilson** (bass clarinet) received honorable mention recognition for their outstanding auditions.

Northern's Bel Canto Ensemble performed at the Michigan Music Conference



The WL Northern Bel Canto Ensemble was one of just three high school groups from the state that performed at the 2025 Michigan Music Conference on January 25 in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

"I am so thankful to the Michigan School Vocal Music Association for the opportunity to perform in this conference," said WL Northern choir director **Ashley Ward**. "It is such an honor to be one of the groups selected, and we look forward to representing Walled Lake in front of music teachers from the entire state."

The Knights were selected by a blind panel from their application, which included recorded performances spanning three years with a variety of style, language and accompaniment. This is the second group from WL Northern selected to perform at the Michigan Music Conference since 2020.

Community Calendar

March 31: PTSA Reflections, WL Northern, 6:30 p.m.
April 3: Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., Educational Services Center
April 4-6: "Clue" play, WL Western
April 11-13: "She Loves Me" musical, WL Central
April 18: No school for students or staff
April 21: PTSA Council Meeting, Meadowbrook Elementary, 7 p.m.
April 29: 1/2 day for students. Staff professional development
May 1: Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., Educational Services Center
May 12: PTSA Installation and Awards, James R. Geisler Middle School, 6:30 p.m.
May 20: 1/2 day for students. Staff professional development
May 26: Memorial Day - no school for students/staff
June 1: 2025 Commencements (see back page)
June 5: Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., Educational Services Center
June 11: Last day of school - 1/2 day for students, full day for staff

Firoozgan, Thompson and Wilson accept Alec Bender Friend of Diversity Awards



Kiyana Firoozgan, junior, WL Central; Ava Thompson, fifth grader, Pleasant Lake Elementary; Kevin Wilson, ELD teacher, WL Northern

WL Central junior **Kiyana Firoozgan**, Pleasant Lake 5th-grader **Ava Thompson**, and WL Northern English Language Development (ELD) teacher, **Kevin Wilson**, received Alec Bender Friend of Diversity Awards at the 26th annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration. The award honors individuals annually who are true friends of multicultural diversity in our school district and community.

Kiyana consistently goes above and beyond to ensure that every student feels included and valued. One of the most remarkable examples of her kindness is how she has supported our students with disabilities and special needs. From the very first day, Kiyana invited a student in a wheelchair to sit with her. She has treated this student with kindness, respect, and a genuine effort to make them feel welcomed.

Ava spends each day assisting students in one of the kindergarten classes, with much of her time dedicated to a child who requires extra assistance and understanding. What makes Ava truly special is the intentional way she helps others understand how to treat people with kindness. Her actions go beyond being a helper; she is a leader in empathy. Through her behavior, she shows other students what it means to be inclusive, understanding and patient.

Kevin has made it his mission to ensure that every student, regardless of their language background, feels seen, heard and supported. He understands that language is not just a tool for communication but a bridge to opportunity, a path to self-expression, and a key to unlocking the potential within each child. His work goes beyond language acquisition; it is about building confidence, fostering resilience, and inspiring a love of learning in students who may face unique challenges.

This year's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration theme was "Unity". The program featured three student speakers: **Hasini Julai** and **Jeliayah Fulton** from WL Central, and **Mareme Diop** from WL Western.

Thank you to event chairpersons, **Nayal Maktari**, Clifford H. Smart (CHS) MS principal, and **Dan Holland**, CHS assistant principal, along with the entire MLK Event Planning Committee for organizing an outstanding celebration. Additional thanks to the Walled Lake Western chamber singers, the Commerce Elementary Cougar Choir and the Pleasant Lake Elementary Singing Sharks for their musical performances.



Mareme Diop, senior, WL Western; Jeliayah Fulton, junior, WL Central; Hasini Julai, junior, WL Central

Western students nominated for prestigious Sutton Foster award



WL Western's **Alyssa Vindershain** and **Michaela Willingham** have been nominated for the 2025 Sutton Foster Awards for their performances in the Warriors' rendition of *The Addams Family*.

Vindershain, who played Alice Beineke, and Willingham, who played Morticia Addams, were both recognized for Outstanding Performer in a Leading Role.

"Michaela and Alyssa both work so diligently to bring the best to every performance they have been a part of," said WL Western musical director **Collin Kuss**. "Seeing them grow over the years and receive this honor has been truly special."

"Their love of music and theatre, as well as their perseverance, shows in everything they do," added Kuss. "They deserve this honor wholly and completely, and I hope they are proud of carrying on the torch of theatrical excellence at Western."

Vindershain and Willingham will join Michigan's other nominees for two weekends at the Wharton Center for Performing Arts in East Lansing, where they will continue to develop their theatre skills in workshops led by industry professionals. At the conclusion of the workshops, they will take part in the Sutton Foster Awards Showcase at the Wharton Center in June. During that performance, judges will select Michigan's two Outstanding Performer in a Leading Role winners. Those two winners will earn a \$1,000 cash prize and fly to New York City to compete for the National High School Musical Theatre Awards on June 23 at Broadway's Minskoff Theatre.

Graduate Spotlight: Courtney Taylor and Chelsea Gheesling, WL Central Class of 2002

Central graduates co-own local corporate gifting and fulfillment company, Bundled

Courtney Taylor and **Chelsea Gheesling** both graduated from WL Central in 2002 and now co-own Bundled, a corporate gifting and fulfillment company in Commerce Township.

During their time at Central, they participated in Positive Peer Intervention (PPI) and were student assistants to the special education classroom. Additionally, Taylor played basketball and Gheesling was on the poms team.

After high school, Taylor received a bachelor's in Special Education from Western Michigan University and a master's in Leadership and Curriculum and Instruction from Madonna University.

“Remember to treat everyone with kindness and respect - those small acts can leave a lasting impact.”

Courtney Taylor and Chelsea Gheesling

Gheesling earned a bachelor's in Marketing and Public Relations from Madonna University and a bachelor's in Communication and Spanish from the Monterrey Institute of Technology.

Since graduating from Walled Lake Schools, Taylor's career and personal life have been guided by a passion for education, entrepreneurship and inclusivity. She spent 15 wonderful years

as a special education teacher with Livonia Public Schools, where she had the privilege of supporting students with diverse abilities and helping them achieve their potential. Those years were incredibly fulfilling and laid the foundation for her dedication to creating opportunities for all individuals to succeed.

In 2015, Taylor took a leap into entrepreneurship and co-founded Bundled with her business partner, Gheesling. What began as a small business has grown into a thriving corporate gifting company. Today, they run Bundled full-time, and one of the aspects she is most proud of is their



*Courtney Taylor and Chelsea Gheesling
2002 graduates of WL Central*



*Four of Courtney and Chelsea's five children in
the warehouse of their corporate gifting and
fulfillment company warehouse*

commitment to fostering an inclusive work environment. They've made it a priority to ensure individuals with disabilities have opportunities to thrive as valued members of their team.

On the personal side, Taylor and her husband are raising two amazing kids, ages 10 and 6, who now attend Walled Lake Schools. A full-circle moment that fills her with pride.

“Balancing motherhood and my career has taught me the value of community and resilience, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to make a meaningful impact both at home and in my work,” said Taylor. “I feel lucky to have had Chelsea by my side since we were 13!”

WL Western athletes commit to colleges



Phoebe DeRoche plans to attend Ferris State University to play soccer. She is the daughter of Stacey and Craig DeRoche.



Ava Domzalski plans to attend Kalamazoo College to play softball. She is the daughter of Danielle Domzalski, Malorie Domzalski and Andrew Domzalski.



Zachary Emmer plans to attend Kalamazoo College to play baseball. He is the son of Scott and Debbie Emmer.



Colin Golec plans to attend Tiffin University to play lacrosse. He is the son of Derek and Erin Golec.



Andrew Jones plans to attend Northwood University to play lacrosse. He is the son of Jonathan and Jennifer Jones.



Lucas Price plans to attend Yale University to play football. He is the son of Mark and Monica Price.



Liam Vaughan plans to attend Western Michigan University to play football. He is the son of Daniel and Tracy Vaughan.



Drew Wojciechowski plans to attend Eastern Michigan University to run track and field. He is the son of Kevin and Nicolena Wojciechowski.

Graduate Spotlight: Courtney Taylor and Chelsea Gheesling, WL Central Class of 2002

Central graduates prioritize ensuring individuals with disabilities can thrive on their team

After graduating from Walled Lake Schools, Gheesling began her professional journey as a Public Relations Account Executive at DP & Company, where she honed her skills in communications and client engagement. From there, she transitioned to Everest Collegiate High School as Marketing Director. This position allowed her to combine her passion for education with her expertise in branding and marketing.

“Cherish this time and the amazing community around you. Walled Lake is a special place and the lessons and relationships you build here will stay with you for a lifetime.”

Courtney Taylor and Chelsea Gheesling

In addition to her career in PR and marketing, Gheesling founded a nonprofit organization called Good Girl Comeback (GGCB). This initiative focuses on empowering young women to build confidence, make positive choices, and create meaningful futures.

“It’s been incredibly rewarding to see the impact this organization has had on countless lives,” said Gheesling. “My work at GGCB made it essential that we made Bundled a place that women can thrive.”

Currently, she co-owns and operates Bundled with Taylor. At Bundled, they specialize in creating personalized and thoughtful gifting experiences to help businesses strengthen relationships with employees and clients. It’s been a fulfilling journey to grow this company from the ground up and work with amazing organizations across the country.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, the journey of raising three children has been her most rewarding adventure. Juggling motherhood with a demanding career has instilled in her resilience, adaptability, and a deep appreciation for living in the moment. Throughout her career, she’s cherished the opportunities to give back, grow professionally, and collaborate with inspiring teams.

Gheesling and Taylor shared many of the best parts of their time at Walled Lake Central together. One highlight was participating in PPI (Positive Peer Intervention), led by **Nancy Attisha**, which quickly became a favorite experience. They also took a class where they served as student assistants in Special Education classrooms under the guidance of **Janie Main**, a role that left a lasting impact.

Gheesling and Taylor remain incredibly close with a tight-knit group of friends from their Walled Lake days and feel deeply grateful to have grown up in such an amazing community.

Their advice to current students is to embrace every opportunity to learn and grow, both inside and outside the classroom. The connections you make, the challenges you face, and the experiences you have during these years will shape you in ways you can’t yet imagine. Don’t be afraid to step outside your comfort zone. Remember to treat everyone with kindness and respect—those small acts can leave a lasting impact. Finally, cherish this time and the amazing community around you. Walled Lake is a special place, and the lessons and relationships you build here will stay with you for a lifetime.



Courtney Taylor, friend Ryan Trailer and
Chelsea Gheesling
2002 graduates of WL Central

*If you know a former student who should be highlighted in the Graduate Spotlights’ section, please email
PamelaCole@wlcsd.org.*



Corporate Gifting example: OneMagnify new hire kit





Learning

In Walled Lake Consolidated Schools

A publication of

Walled Lake Consolidated Schools

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Walled Lake Outdoor Education Center

The Walled Lake Schools' Outdoor Education Center (WLOEC) provides high-quality facilities, staffing and food for staff retreats, corporate outings, religious gatherings, overnight scout camps, sports teams, and graduation parties throughout the year. They specialize in K-8 environmental education programs and leadership training for participants of all ages.

The Walled Lake Adventure Challenge Program focuses on helping groups become more cohesive. Their staff uses team challenges, high ropes activities, a climbing tower and a zip line to develop effective leadership. Their team is confident that they can meet your needs, whether staying for an overnight experience or using the facilities for a day field trip, business retreat or graduation party. Their location, facility size and parking accommodations make the WLOEC a perfect fit for both hosts and guests.

Learn more:
www.wlcsd.org/oec

Karrie Martin
(248) 956-5120



2025 Commencements

JUNE 1, 2025

NOON WL WESTERN
3:30 P.M. WL NORTHERN
7 P.M. WL CENTRAL

George Gervin GameAbove Center
Formerly Known As: EMU Convocation Center
799 N. HEWITT RD., YPSILANTI, MICH.

WALLED LAKE CENTRAL

She Loves Me

APRIL 11-13, 2025

Walled Lake Preschool Enroll now!

Full and half day options available as well as
free programming - *Head Start* and *GSRP*

Locations for 2025-26: Dublin, Wixom,
Early Childhood Center



(248)956-5080

wlcsd.org/programs/preschool

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