

WILLOUGHBY-EASTLAKE CITY SCHOOLS COMMUNITY UPDATE

Message from the Superintendent

As we begin the 2025-2026 school year, I am filled with a deep sense of optimism and hope for the future. Willoughby-Eastlake is a district built on a proud tradition of excellence, and that foundation continues to guide our progress. As a school system leading the way in Lake County, we are committed to building a future-ready education that prepares every student to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Over the past two years, through thoughtful collaboration with our community, we have developed a shared vision that now serves as the foundation for our work. Together, we have defined what it means for a Willoughby-Eastlake student to be future ready. We are a school system on the move.

We are excited to share that we are continuing to make information even more accessible for our families and community. In this issue, you will learn about our newly redesigned district website, the launch of MyPowerHub, a convenient new app for families through PowerSchool, and the transition of our *Community Update* newsletter to a bi-monthly format. We are also proud to announce the rebranding of our elementary and middle schools, uniting them as Rebels and Rangers to align with our high schools and strengthen districtwide pride and connection.

As we look ahead, our focus shifts to aligning every part of our system to this goal. Our strategic priorities for the year center on making sure that the systems, structures, and resources we have put in place directly support future readiness for all students. This means expanding opportunities for deeper learning, growing career pathways, and ensuring every student has access to hands-on experiences that connect learning to real life. Whether a student's path leads to college, career, military, or entrepreneurship, our mission is to equip them with the skills and confidence to succeed.

Thank you for your continued trust, partnership, and support. Our shared commitment to this work is what makes Willoughby-Eastlake a district that is truly designing the future of learning. I look forward to all we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

My choice for a world-class, student-centered education is Willoughby-Eastlake.

Patrick Ward

Patrick Ward, PhD. | Superintendent
[#MyChoiceWilloughbyEastlake](#)



New for 2025-2026

As we begin a new school year, we are pleased to introduce a variety of new tools designed to make communication easier, more accessible and more impactful than ever before. From updates about students and staff to upcoming events and district operations, these tools will help us tell the story of our district while highlighting the strength of our educational programming.

REDESIGNED WEBSITE

Modern Look. Easier Navigation. Better Communication.

“

At Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools, we believe that clear, consistent communication is essential to keeping our families and community members informed, engaged, and connected to the work happening in our schools.

Mrs. Stacy Menser
President
Board of Education

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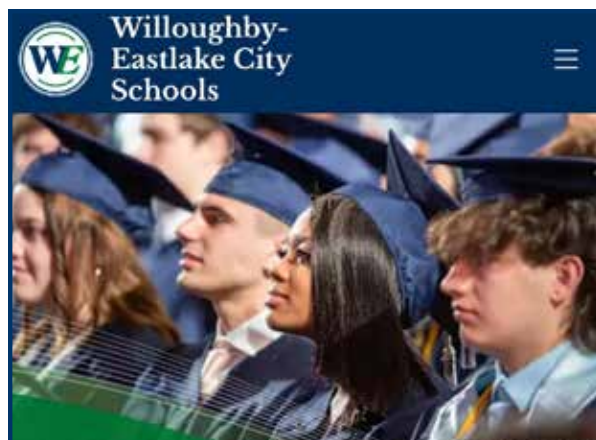


We are excited to announce the launch of our new and improved website on August 1, 2025. Visit the site at www.weschools.org or use the QR code. Designed with our families, staff, and community in mind, the updated site is:

- Easier to navigate with intuitive menus and streamlined content.
- More visually engaging, with a fresh, modern look.
- Mobile-friendly and fully responsive for seamless access on any device - desktop, tablet, or phone.

Whether you are searching for upcoming events, the latest school news, or quick links to important resources, the website will be your one-stop destination for everything W-E. Please visit the Family Hub for all of your enrollment and back to school needs with access to many resources all in one place.

We can't wait for you to experience the new site, another step forward in keeping our community connected and informed!



MyPowerHub

Introducing MyPowerHub, a centralized platform that serves as the parent portal to PowerSchool and simplifies how families receive and manage school information. Available as both an app and a responsive website, MyPowerHub works across all devices and replaces multiple systems with one secure, easy-to-use experience.



With MyPowerHub, you will be able to:

- Check your student's grades.
- Report student absences through SafeArrival
- Complete and update annual forms.
- Submit and track attendance.
- Communicate with teachers directly.
- Pay school fees online.
- Receive important updates and announcements from your school.

Empowering Personalized Learning Through Artificial Intelligence

Shared Vision Priority #1: Customized Learning, Innovative Programming and Academic Excellence

Katy Nagaj, Director of Teaching and Learning

Andrea Tredent, Director of Technology

No one can argue that technological advances have not only enhanced teaching and learning opportunities in the classroom, but they have also opened up gateways to career options for students that had not even been considered years ago. Technology has improved productivity and enabled access to a wealth of information at our fingertips. It is rapidly changing the nature of how we function in our personal lives, at work and in school. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) becomes more integrated in our world, the school district is embracing its potential, and thoughtfully and responsibly exploring how it can enhance instruction and empower students for their digital future.

What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the ability of a machine or a computer to perform tasks that typically require human thinking, including problem solving, learning and making decisions.

AI Task Force Leads Research and Practice

The school district has created an AI Task Force that meets three times a year to discuss and shape the policies, procedures, practices, and partnerships around AI in the classroom. This year, we will focus on determining best practices for its use at differing levels. Professional development will be provided to staff on data privacy, digital safety, and how to use AI to personalize teaching and learning to foster student agency, and create AI academic activities. An AI Action Research Team will enable teachers to pilot and review various AI tools for future use in the district.

"The AI task force meetings have been invaluable in gathering input from every facet of our district. Administrators, board of education members, parents, teachers, and students were all represented. Some of the most interesting insights came from the students on how they envision using AI to improve their educational experiences."

Andrea Tredent, Director of Technology



How Can AI Enhance Teaching and Learning?

Through a strategic focus on innovation, data-informed decision-making, and future-ready instruction, the district is exploring and leveraging AI tools to enhance engagement, streamline planning, and ensure every learner is supported in achieving success.

- AI supported platforms can personalize lesson planning and instructional delivery for teachers by analyzing student performance trends, identifying learning gaps, and generating lessons aligned to student needs.
- Adaptive platforms enable students to practice math and reading skills, for example, and receive immediate feedback on progress and more personalized learning tasks designed to meet their learning levels, interests and pace.
- High school students in flex learning classes are able to work at their own pace and explore content aligned with their skills and interests through a combination of classroom instruction with a teacher and accessing online learning tools.
- The district's Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Workforce Development expansion integrates industry-aligned AI tools and simulations that give students hands-on experience with technologies used in fields like construction, healthcare, engineering, the automotive industry and information technology. These experiences are grounded in real-world application, preparing students not only for graduation but for the demands of an evolving workforce.

By supporting staff in using AI to plan robust, customized instruction and empowering students to explore learning utilizing these innovative tools, the district continues to build an educational environment where every learner will be future-ready and equipped to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Administrative Announcements

With the start of the new year, we are happy to welcome new administrators, as well as recognize those who have changed positions in the district.



Mr. Victor Puskas
Principal
Eastlake North High School

Mr. Puskas joins us after two years as the high school principal at Kirtland High School. Prior to that, he was an assistant principal, a high school teacher and a wrestling and baseball coach.

He earned his bachelor's in biology from The Ohio State University and Master of Education from John Carroll University. He received his principal's license through Cleveland State University and is currently pursuing his superintendent's license.

Upon receiving the news that he would be leading Eastlake North High School, Mr. Puskas said, "Willoughby-Eastlake Schools is leading the charge of innovation, personalization, and rethinking education so that it works for students. I look forward to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to maximize the potential of every student who walks the halls of Eastlake North. Go Rangers!"



Mrs. Courtney Lausin
Principal
Grant Elementary School

With 25 years of experience in the district, Mrs. Lausin is returning to Grant Elementary as the principal, where she taught for many years. She recently served as the assistant principal at Longfellow Elementary.

She earned her bachelor's degree at Cleveland State University, followed by two master's degrees in teaching and educational leadership at John Carroll University.

"I am thrilled to lead the building and work in partnership with parents, teachers, students and the community so that every child feels supported, inspired and ready to shine," Mrs. Lausin shared.

She grew up in the Willoughby-Eastlake community which is still home for her and her husband, Dave. They have three grown children, Josie, Jack and Ben.

Mrs. Gina Brown

Principal and Special Education Coordinator, Willoughby-Eastlake Preschool

Mrs. Gina Brown has served as the principal of Grant Elementary School for four years. As a dedicated member of the Willoughby-Eastlake Schools community for many years, she also served as an intervention specialist and assistant principal. She brings to the preschool and the Pupil Services Department a depth of experience, a strong commitment to student success, and a true passion for early childhood education. Mrs. Brown will also oversee the SAIL program and some other districtwide programs.

Having earned a bachelor's and a master's degree from Mount Union, Mrs. Brown is currently pursuing her Doctor of Educational Leadership at Youngstown State University.

Mrs. Brown lives in Willowick with her husband, Andrew, and their daughter, Mirabella.

Mrs. Carla Keidel

Assistant Principal, Grant Elementary School

Mrs. Keidel has lived and worked in the district for 20 years and is invested in its success. She worked as an intervention specialist for 16 years and just completed her fourth year as a special education supervisor. She earned her bachelor's degree from Bowling Green State University, a master's from Notre Dame College, and her principal's licensure from Concordia University.

She believes "strong relationships build strong schools. When we lead with care, connect with our community, and keep a love for learning at the center, great things happen."

Mrs. Keidel and her husband are raising three children, Nicholas, Anthony and Alana. A dog named Charlie is also an important member of their family.



Administrative Announcements



Mr. Eric Frei

**Career Technical Education
Coordinator
Northern Career Institute -
Eastlake**

Eric Frei is entering his 26th year in public education, spending the past nine as principal of North High School.

Mr. Frei earned his undergraduate degree from Bowling Green State University, and a Master's Degree in Career Technical Education from Kent State University. He earned his principal's and superintendent's licenses from Ursuline College.

"I'm proud of the work that we did at North during my time as principal, and I am excited for this new challenge. Career Technical Education has always been a passion of mine, and I'm thrilled for this opportunity to expand our offerings for our school community."

Mr. Frei resides in Willowick with his wife, Shannon, and kids Lucy, Miles, and Emilyn, and their beloved dog, Miss Piggy.



Mr. Phil Kern

**Assistant Principal
Willoughby Middle School**

Mr. Kern is joining us from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District where he has been an assistant principal. During his eleven years in education, he has been a reading intervention teacher,

instructional coach, curriculum specialist and an assistant principal.

He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Bowling Green State University, and earned his administration certification from Indiana Wesleyan University.

He shared, "I am honored to join Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools as an assistant principal at Willoughby Middle School. I am excited for the opportunity to serve in a district dedicated to excellence, innovation, and student success. I look forward to building strong relationships, supporting educators, and helping every student grow and thrive."

A Northeast Ohio native, Mr. Kern and his wife have two children, Stephanie and Andrew, and family dog, Cashew.



Mrs. Amanda Szabo

Assistant Principal, Willowick Middle School

Mrs. Szabo is a familiar face at Willowick Middle School, having served as the school psychologist there for six years. She's been with the district for nine years and previously worked at Barberton High School. She earned a Master's in Education in School Psychology and an Educational Specialist degree in School Psychology.

Mrs. Szabo said, "I am very excited to transition into my new role and build upon my past six years of experience at Willowick Middle School. I look forward to continuing to foster and

promote a positive school climate and culture, and to support students' education within my own community." She and her husband, Michael, call Willowick home where they are raising their two daughters, Presley and Nora.



Ms. Ashley Girt

Assistant Principal, Longfellow Elementary School

Ms. Ashley Girt joins the Longfellow staff with nearly twenty years of experience in education. She has served as an assistant principal, educational consultant, literacy coach and elementary teacher. She earned her bachelor's in early childhood education from Kent State University, a master's in curriculum and instruction through Grand Canyon University, and a principal's licensure at Salem University.

Ms. Girt shared, "I am so grateful for the opportunity to join this amazing team. I am very excited to get started and be a part of the great work that is already happening!"

When Ms. Girt isn't working, she enjoys time with her three children, family, and friends, as well as reading, dancing, and listening to music and podcasts.

Shared Vision - Our Promises to the Community

When the district engaged the community to develop the Portrait of a Graduate competencies, we wanted to ensure that students were future-ready as communicators, critical thinkers, collaborators, and creators, and were resilient and empathetic. We also saw the value in making four key promises to the community. These promises reflect our commitment that an exceptional school experience should be designed for students. **Every Person Matters. Every Moment Counts.**

#1 - Create Engaging Experiences

Joy - Moments become stories that students are excited to share



#2 - Prioritize Relationships

Connections - Creating a sense of belonging makes W-E Schools special



#3 - Inspire and Nurture Extraordinary Growth

Passion - Supporting students as they explore and follow their interests



#4 - Invest in The Future

Success - Authentic learning experiences support success now and after graduation



Important Contacts

Board of Education

440-946-5000

Willoughby-Eastlake Preschool

440-283-2220

Edison Elementary

440-942-2099

Grant Elementary

440-942-5944

Jefferson Elementary

440-942-7244

Longfellow Elementary

440-975-3720

Royalview Elementary

440-944-3130

School of Innovation

440-942-1525

Eastlake Middle School

440-942-5696

Willoughby Middle School

440-975-3600

Willowick Middle School

440-943-2950

Eastlake North High School

440-975-3666

Willoughby South High School

440-975-3648

Northern Career Institute-Eastlake

440-283-4300

Northern Career Institute-Willoughby

440-283-4300

Important Dates



Rangers and Rebels are Everywhere!

Community pride runs deep in Willoughby-Eastlake, and it shows! Generations of families have attended our schools, with many alumni now raising their own children in the same close-knit neighborhoods. The energy and enthusiasm surrounding the Eastlake North Rangers and Willoughby South Rebels continues to grow, and now we're excited to take that spirit to the next level!

We're proud to announce a districtwide rebranding that unifies our schools under the Rangers and Rebels banners. Moving forward, all elementary and middle schools that feed into Eastlake North High School will be known as Rangers, and those that feed into Willoughby South High School will be known as Rebels. Over the coming year, we will roll out refreshed logos and new spiritwear so students, staff, and families can proudly show their colors.

NORTH
Rangers

SOUTH
Rebels

This exciting change not only honors the strong traditions of our two high schools but also celebrates the journey of every student. From their very first day of school, our youngest learners will know they are already part of something bigger - being a proud Ranger or a spirited Rebel.

Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools
35353 Curtis Blvd
Eastlake, OH 44095

School Board Members

Stacy Menser, President

Jaime Shatsman, Vice President

Krista Bair, Member

Gabrielle Miller, Member

Denise Verdi, Member

Follow the district on social media!



willoughbyeastlakecityschools



Willoughby-Eastlake Schools



@WESchools

Willoughby-Eastlake Alumni Event October 9th - Save the Date!

Grab your Ranger and Rebel spiritwear and join us for the annual North-South football game! There will be a special Willoughby-Eastlake Alumni Tent set up with free giveaways and prize drawings! Stop by to say hello to friends you know and make some new connections. We look forward to seeing you there!

WHEN: Thursday, October 9, 2025 at 7 p.m.

WHERE: Willoughby South High School
4900 Shankland Road, Willoughby, OH 44094

GAME TICKETS:

www.weschools.org

Eastlake North High School -
Athletics

Willoughby South High School -
Athletics

