



July 2025

Hello, Willow Creek Community!

I hope this message finds you in the midst of a joyful and relaxing summer, filled with fun, family, and well-deserved rest. As we look ahead to the 2025–26 school year, I want to extend a warm welcome back to each of you. We are excited to begin another year of learning, growth, and excellence together. Our community is truly our greatest asset. The way you hold high expectations, communicate openly, support our staff, and nurture your children’s development is what makes our school so special. Your partnership is the foundation of our success. I know this is a lengthy email, but wanted to make sure you have all the information you need to help us set your child up for success this year!

Awards: Thanks to your unwavering support and the dedication of our incredible staff and students, we are proud to share that we have been honored with both the Governor’s Distinguished Improvement Award and the John Irwin Schools of Excellence Award. These recognitions are a testament to the collective effort and commitment of our entire school family.

This year, our theme is "RISE." We rise to the occasion, we rise to the challenge, and we rise together. Our focus will be on making small, meaningful improvements each day—because excellence isn’t built in a day, it’s built every day. We will continue to grow our students academically, socially, emotionally, and physically, always striving to be better than we were yesterday.

Safety and Security Procedures: Please know that safety and security are something we take very seriously. Our entire staff is well-versed on the Cherry Creek School District’s safety protocols and procedures. We discuss, prepare, and practice these procedures throughout the school year. A couple years ago, we installed a secure vestibule with a second set of doors. We need your help as we believe we can continue to provide a warm, welcoming neighborhood school and be vigilant to provide a safe

learning environment for our students and staff. Thank you for being kind and considerate to staff as they ask you to refrain from entering a side door and to check in and provide an ID at the front door. Although inconvenient, please remember that safety supersedes convenience and that safety is our priority. We also expect you as a community member to come alongside with us as we practice safety. This includes a shared responsibility in our parking lot adhering to a few safety guidelines.

- Drive slowly and attentively, being mindful of children and pedestrians.
- Do not park in handicapped spots unless you have a handicapped sticker.
- Do not park in designated bus spots.
- Be patient and courteous with other drivers, being a role model to all students.
- Pull all the way up to unload children in the school lane for safety and efficiency.
- Have your child exit the car nearest the curb. **Please do NOT exit your vehicle. We need to keep the line moving** and we are able to help your child should they need help.

School Supplies: We are doing school supplies **differently** this year and will not be using EPI. Please look at the school supply list on this flyer. Click [here](#).

Family Connection Meetings: During the week of August 4th, you will receive an email from your child's new teacher introducing themselves and asking you to sign up for **Family Connection Meetings**. Most Family Connection meetings will take place later in the work week of August 4-8 or in the beginning of the first week of school when that grade level does not have students. We know some of you will be on last-minute vacations, and for you, we will accommodate by meeting before or after school during the first few weeks of school. The meeting is **not** a conference in the traditional sense, as we are not sharing data. The meeting is truly a time to connect and learn about your child from you, your child's expert! This meeting is in lieu of a traditional Back to School Night and will give you and your child more time with your child's teacher. Some of the questions you may want to think about are:

- What do you want us to know about your child?
- What are your child's assets/strengths, both in and out of school?
- What is important for us to know about your family?
- Tell us your hopes for your child for this year and beyond.
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Staggered Start to the School Year:

- August 11, 2025 Grades 3, 4, and 5 **Only**
- August 12, 2025 Grades 1, 2 **Only**
- August 13, 2025 All students (Pre-Kindergarten -- Grade 5)

Back-to-School Family Picnic: August 7, 5:30-6:30 pm Please join us for a back-to-school family gathering! Feel free to bring a snack/picnic and come play on the playground near our K, 1, 2 doors. We look forward to seeing you for this social event to kick off the start of school. We will have otter pops to cool off your children and celebrate the start of the school year.

New Families Grades 1-5: If you are NEW to Willow Creek, please join us for the Back-to-School Family Gathering as mentioned above. At 5:45 on August 7 (during family gathering), there will be a brief tour of our school for NEW families only (does not include Kindergarteners that already had orientation). Meet other parents and kids, visit the PTO tent, and find out more about upcoming events and activities. This is not a time to connect with your teacher (that's Family Connection Meetings); it is a time to connect with each other, me, and see our school. **At 5:45, if you are a new family, please meet us at the front of the school.**

Community Movie Night: PTO will host a Community Movie night on September 26 at 7:00. The hill will open at 6:30, weather permitting. More information to come. We are excited to provide another opportunity for our community to connect.

New Staff to Willow Creek: We are very excited to welcome our new staff!

Gina Vensel: Gina is joining our kindergarten team. Hear from her: *My name is Gina Vensel and I'm thrilled to introduce myself as the new kindergarten teacher here at Willow Creek! With ten years of teaching experience, including four years in first grade previously at Willow Creek, this truly feels like a homecoming. Over the past year, I've had the privilege of connecting with students, families, and staff across every grade level as the building substitute. On a personal note, I'm also a proud Willow Creek parent—with a son in first grade and a daughter in fifth. I couldn't be more excited to return to the classroom and begin this new adventure with the best community. I look forward to meeting new faces and seeing familiar ones in August!*

Instructional Para: Amanda Broadbent has been a stay-at-home mom for almost seven years and is thrilled to join the school community alongside her two daughters, who will be in second grade and PreK. She loves spending time outside and curling up with a good book.

Open Positions: If you know someone that would be interested in working as an instructional para, please reach out to me at mwhitney2@cherrycreekschools.org

Arrival and Dismissal:

- Please plan on having your child come in their grade-level door between our Soft Start Times: 7:45-8:00. If arriving after 8:00, your child will be marked tardy and need to enter through the front doors. Timeliness does matter in creating good habits in our students.
- School dismissal is at 2:45 except on Wednesdays. Please make every effort to be on time to pick up your child.
- CCSD provides a weekly Early Release Day for Elementary Schools. This allows our teachers to meet weekly in their Professional Learning Communities to continue to promote student achievement. **Every Wednesday students will dismiss at 1:45.** Buses will run accordingly. Also, our Before and After Club (WCKK) will open at 1:45 every Wednesday afternoon. Please contact our director, Allison Evans (aevans10@cherrycreekschools.org), if you need more information.

Pledges for PTO: At Willow Creek, we are committed to providing the best possible educational experience for our students. **To help fund paraprofessional salaries, classroom resources, and school events, we are asking each family to consider making a \$150 pledge for the school year per child.** Unlike traditional fundraisers, we do not ask students to sell items door-to-door. Instead, we rely on the generosity of our school community to support our efforts directly. Your contribution helps us focus on what matters most—learning, creativity, and fun! Every dollar makes a difference, and your support means we can continue to offer the high-quality experiences our students deserve. If you're able to give more, we welcome it with gratitude. If \$150 is a stretch, any amount is appreciated. Your pledges have helped provide para support for a better ratio on the playground and instructional support in classrooms, purchase picnic tables , folding tables for night events, and get a gaga pit for our older students! Your donations matter. They help our teachers and students, especially with paying for para salaries!

Thank you for coming alongside us in this journey. Your support means the world to us, and we are grateful to have you as partners in this important work.
Let's make it a great year; together, we rise.

Warmly,
Principal Whitney

"Excellence isn't built in a day—it's built every day." — Anonymous



