

INSPIRING EXCELLENCE!

We're proud of our gritty Ionia Trap Team for placing 5th in our conference and representing us at the State Finals. IHS graduate Madie Probyn placed 3rd in the female division, and IHS student Nolan Perry placed 2nd in the male division; both earned All-State Honors as well! Any Ionia Middle School (IMS) or Ionia High School (IHS) students interested in joining or learning more about our Trap Team are encouraged to contact Coach White at jwhite4780@yahoo.com. *Continued on page 4*



IHS student Nolan Perry and IHS alum Madison Probyn earned Trap All-State Honors, June 2025

BULLDOG BEGINNINGS PRESCHOOL!



Our Bulldog Beginnings Preschool provides a free, fun, high-quality education for 4-year-old students. There are still spots open, so sign up today. Please call 616-527-4900 for more information.



The EXCEL is the official publication of the Ionia Public Schools (IPS). Copies are available in the IPS Central Office and on our website at www.ioniaschools.org.



Pages 1 & 4 - Superintendent's Updates

Pages 2 & 3 - IPS Bond Information

Page 6 - Ionia High School

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VOTE
by November 4th

On November 4, 2025, Ionia Public Schools voters will consider a bond proposal for district-wide improvements to our aging buildings.

If approved, the bond would provide \$84,500,000 for facility needs with a **zero-mill increase to the current tax rate.**

A proposal for updated school facilities:

Safety & Security

Ensuring there are secure entrance vestibules district-wide, upgrading doors, locks, and building access, and improving fire alarm systems

Modern Infrastructure

Equipping aging elementary buildings with learning environments for today's teaching and learning in layout, furniture, and equipment

Air Quality Improvements

Implementing air conditioning district-wide to improve student focus, avoid school cancellations, and recruit and retain high-quality staff

Right-Sized Facilities

Retiring the 103 year-old Emerson building, which cannot be renovated for best practices in safety and security, and providing students and staff with safer, more modern spaces by building a new wing at Boyce

Theater, Band & Choir

Responding to community prioritization of a new 900-seat Performing Arts Center for student and community use, replacing the aging Watt Auditorium

Improvements without increasing the millage rate

If approved, the bond would have a zero-mill increase over the current millage rate, expected to maintain the existing rate of 7.72 mills.

Why a bond proposal now?

IPS has facilities that are over 100 years old.

Through multiple surveys, public meetings, and engagement with focus groups, our community has prioritized updated spaces that **BETTER SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS, STAFF, AND COMMUNITY.**

For years, we have worked diligently to steward our aging buildings, addressing our most pressing issues through a community-approved sinking fund. However, **AS OUR FACILITIES CONTINUE TO AGE, THE LIST OF NEEDS GROWS.**



Safety & Security

Modern Infrastructure

Air Quality Improvements

Right-Sized Facilities

Theater & Community

What is the financial impact?

If approved, there would be an expected **zero-mill increase to the current millage rate.**

CURRENT MILLS **PROPOSED MILLS**
7.72 → **7.72**

ZERO MILL INCREASE

IPS currently levies a 7.72 bond millage rate. If not approved, we could not fund the building improvement projects necessary to operate our district at our desired standards.

The proposal would allow a millage rate extension, with zero mill increase, to address facility needs.

Voting Information

**Polls are open Tuesday, November 4,
from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.**

Absentee voter ballots
are available as early as September 25.

For more information on voting
visit www.michigan.gov/vote

VOTE
by November 4th

More Information

Visit www.ioniaschools.org/bond-2025
for FAQs, project info, and more about the bond.

Attend a community forum:

- **September 2 at 6 p.m.**
- **September 22 at 7 p.m.**
- **October 14 at 7 p.m.**

**Held in IHS Room 304*

Please contact IPS Superintendent Gurk at
bgurk@ioniaschools.org with any questions.

Paid for by Ionia Public Schools, 250 E Tuttle Rd, Ionia, MI 48846-8605

UPDATES FROM SUPERINTENDENT GURK

To continue implementing our IPS Strategic Plan and strengthen students' social-emotional resilience, IPS staff participated in a summer book study and read *The Anxious Generation* by Dr. Jonathan Haidt. As an educator and a parent, this book was very beneficial. Dr. Haidt explains how overprotectiveness in the real world (i.e., prohibiting kids from unstructured outdoor play), combined with underprotection in the virtual world (i.e., giving smartphones to children), has resulted in staggering rates of anxiety, depression, and self-harm. *The Anxious Generation* has valuable suggestions and solutions for parents, educators, technology companies, and lawmakers. Resources to support parents and students can be found at www.waituntil8th.org and www.protectyoungeyes.com.



Superintendent Gurk

This summer, our dedicated maintenance teams and Mr. Avery completed numerous essential projects. These included installing new playground equipment at Emerson and Boyce Elementary, updating the D.R. Welch bathrooms, refinishing the IHS gym floor, and installing a new water line at IHS. They also performed primary maintenance on the bus fleet and all of our schools' HVAC systems, replaced the IMS cafeteria window sill, sealed Jefferson Elementary's south wall, repaired sanitary sewers at Boyce Elementary restrooms, and refreshed hallways, classrooms, and workspaces with new paint and carpet district-wide. We also conducted successful fire extinguisher and AHERA inspections.

We are proud of gritty IHS student Will Wilson, who recently earned his Eagle Scout rank. In addition to demonstrating leadership qualities, he led a community service project at Bertha Brock Park wherein he installed a retaining wall and handrail along the steps behind the Palmer Lodge.

We are looking forward to continuing our discussions with the community regarding our November 4th no-mill-increase bond. Please consider attending one of these community meetings in the IHS room 304:

- September 2 at 6 p.m.
- September 22 at 7 p.m.
- October 14 at 7 p.m.

Have a great school year!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Gurk".

Benjamin Gurk
Superintendent



IHS student Will Wilson,
Troop 85, earned his Eagle
Scout rank this summer

IONIA ATHLETICS

Our Ionia Bulldogs athletes have been putting in serious work this summer! From early mornings in the brand-new weight room to competitive team camps and leading by example at youth camps, these Bulldogs are showing what it means to be committed. Their dedication, leadership, and drive are building a strong foundation for the upcoming season—and the future of Ionia athletics.



**Important
Dates**

Purple Week
9/18 - 9/26

**Hall of Fame
Banquet 9/27**

Homecoming Week
10/12 - 10/18

Super Booster Membership

Join us in showing your Bulldog pride while ensuring continued success for our teams, school, and community by becoming a Super Booster for the 2025-26 School year!



**2025-26
Sports Registration
6th - 12th Grade**



Family Passes

Family Passes are on sale at the high school in the athletic office. Passes can be used at all home IHS and IMS athletic events and are good for the entire year. Scan the QR code for more information on Family Passes.



Visit ioniaathletics.org for results of all contests, schedules, and more.

IONIA HIGH SCHOOL

We are excited to welcome our new Ionia High School staff members!



Ms. Emilie Gertz
Secretary



Ms. Frances Updike
Science



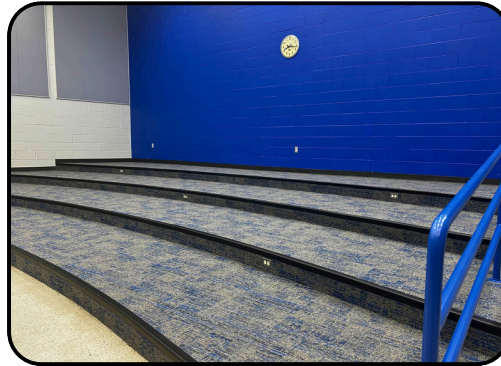
Mr. Peter Babcock
Math



Ms. Corrina Wenger
Math



Mrs. Jennifer Rodas
Assistant Principal



Our maintenance and custodial teams have been busy making the school look its best for the start of the 2025-26 school year with drywall repair, painting, new furniture assembly, new carpet and deep cleaning!

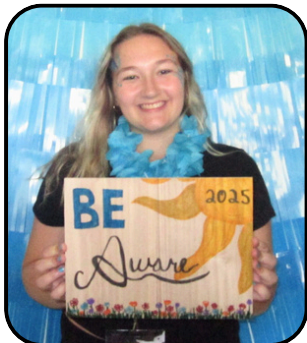
**IHS FAMILY SCHOOL GUILD
VIRTUAL MEETINGS
6 PM**

**September 11
October 9
November 11**

**December 11
January 8
February 12**

**March 11
April 9
May 14**

From leadership camps to mock state sessions and professional development, our students and staff have been hard at work all summer, preparing for what's sure to be a fantastic school year!



Senior Kennedy Batista
Albion College's
MASC/MAHS Summer
Camp



IHS Leadership Team
PLC at Work Institute in Detroit



Senior
Kassidy Vanderkolk
American Legion
Auxiliary Girls State



Mr. Blackburn
Youth Mental Health
First Aid USA

IONIA MIDDLE SCHOOL

We hope you had a great summer! We're looking forward to a great school year. Please welcome our new staff at Ionia Middle School (IMS). we are excited to welcome new and returning staff that joined us last year!



Becky Eyestone
6th grade Teacher



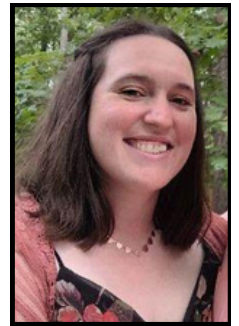
Kyle Grummet
Computer Teacher



Jessica Sims
Reading Interventionist



Sara Petrenko
Math Teacher



Briana Hartman
6th grade Teacher



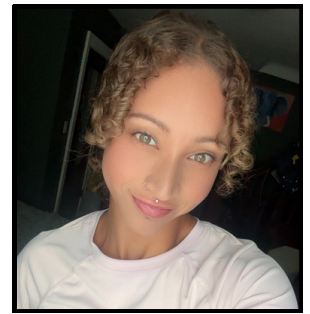
Max Wester
Social Studies Teacher



Jacob Gutowski
Special Instruction



David Petersen
6th grade Teacher



Chantae Reuschel
STEM Teacher

We are so grateful for our facilities team who have been hard at work improving new flooring throughout the building this summer. Their pride in their work is admirable!



We're proud of the gritty IMS student-athlete Carmen Hoppough, who earned the *Most Outstanding Player* Award at the Drew Neitzel basketball camp this summer!

BOYCE WILDCATS

Get ready for an amazing school year at Boyce Elementary! We're committed to making every day an adventure, sparking a love for learning through our strong academic programs and fun activities. Together, let's create lasting memories. We can't wait to see you!

We are excited to welcome to our new Boyce educators!



Jennifer Blosssey
(5th grade teacher)
has been a teacher for a number of years as well as a degreed librarian. She is working on her second Master's Degree to become a Reading Specialist.



Sarah Slovinski
(5th grade teacher)
obtained her degree from GVSU, teacher certification from EMU, and is in her second year of teaching.



Tony Ellison
(4th grade teacher)
earned his undergrad degree in Digital Media from Kendall College. He is currently finishing his Master's Degree in Elementary Education from WMU.



Megan Tufer
(4th grade teacher)
graduated from MSU with a degree in Elementary Education and has spent the last three years teaching in Kentwood, MI.



Thanks to our community's support, we fulfilled a Sinking Fund Promise this summer by updating our playground! Thank you also to Mr. Avery and our maintenance team for their hard work!

Thank you to Central Michigan Building Services for donating a new shed to our outdoor education program!



EMERSON EAGLES

Every day at Emerson Elementary feels like an extraordinary adventure, thanks to the incredible people and activities that make our school so special. Together, we S.O.A.R.!

We are excited to welcome Emerson's outstanding new team members!



Mr. Gill, *Principal*



Mrs. Corona, *Teacher*



Ms. Dipzinski, *Teacher*



Ms. Waterman, *Parapro*



Mr. Rewa, *Parapro*



Mrs. Bennett, *Parapro*

Thanks to the support of our amazing community, we were able to fulfill an original Sinking Fund promise and update our Emerson playground over the summer! Thank you also to Mr. Avery and our maintenance team for their continued hard work and dedication!



Safety **O**wnership **A**chievement **R**espect



JEFFERSON JAGUARS

The countdown is on! We're blasting off into an incredible new school year at Jefferson Elementary, and our entire crew is geared up and ready for liftoff! This year, we're reaching for the stars with our brand-new school-wide theme, and we're thrilled to introduce you to the newest shining members of the Jefferson family, our incredible new star staff!



Amber Cross
2nd Grade Teacher



Amanda Dykstra
2nd Grade Teacher



Estella Simon
Title 1 Parapro



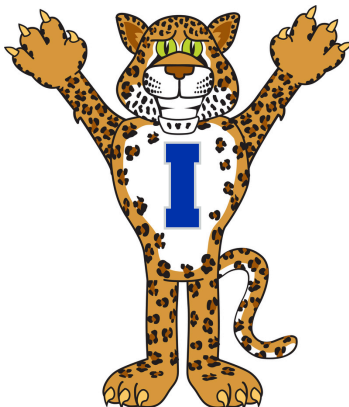
Khloe Harris
ASD ECSE Program Teacher

Jefferson welcomes the Ionia County ISD ASD ECSE program and its support staff:

Melissa Piggot (HCA mentor)

Lauren Hengesbach (ASD Consultant)

HCAs: Kendra Hicks, Jillana Fischer, Erica Behrenwald, LaRiesa Nummer, and Angela Daly.



Several of our classrooms have received new carpeting and a fresh coat of paint!

RATHER RAMS

Our Rather team is working hard to get ready for another amazing school year! We are very excited to welcome the following wonderful educators to our Rather Rams Team!



Katie Meyers
4th Grade Teacher



Melissa McCain
4th Grade Teacher



Karen Hotchkiss
2nd Grade Teacher



Avery Haney
5th Grade Teacher



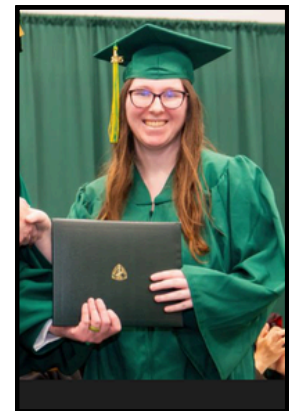
Kayla Strunk
1st Grade Teacher



Robbin Stout
Title I Paraprofessional



Angela Hull
Library Paraprofessional



Melanie Perez
Paraprofessional



Several of our classrooms and work spaces received fresh paint and new carpeting over the summer!

TWIN RIVERS PANTHERS

Twin Rivers is preparing for our new school year, and we can not wait to welcome our students and families back. We have hired some amazing new teachers and staff and we welcome them to our team. Our classrooms and hallways got new carpet and it looks beautiful!



Rachel Westveer
1st Grade Teacher



Ava Bouwman
3rd Grade Teacher



Madeline Coe
3rd Grade Teacher



Our classrooms and hallway got new carpet this summer. It looks so bright and fresh!



Welcome to our new support staff at TR!

Jessica Adams – Health Care Aide

Candace Babcock – Title I Para

Amanda Oakley – One on One Para

Andrew Hickok – One on One Para



WELCH WARRIORS

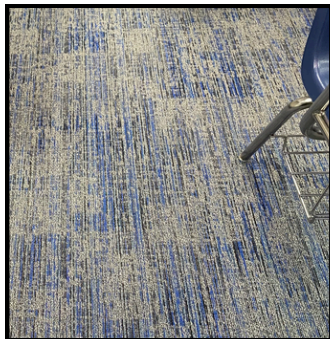
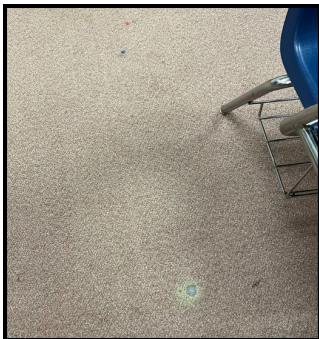
Douglas R. Welch High School is excited to welcome students back for a great year! We are fortunate to welcome Mr. Peter Babcock to our team. Mr. Babcock will be teaching one section of math this fall. We are also excited to share that we have new carpet throughout our building, as well as freshly renovated restrooms.



Renovated student conference space!



Mr. Babcock
Math Teacher



"Before" and "After" photos of our updated classroom carpet and restrooms!



IMPORTANT DATES

October 1 - Student Count Day
October 15 & 16 - Parent Teacher Conferences
December 19 - End of Semester 1
May 15, 2026 - D.R. Welch Graduation



Follow us on Facebook!

IPS CALENDAR

August 2025							August 2025	
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	13	New Teacher Orientation
					1	2	14	6th-8th Grade Orientation
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	18	Staff PD All Day
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	19	Staff Welcome Back 1/2 day AM
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	20	First Day for Students 1/2 Day All
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	No School
31								

September 2025							September 2025	
S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	Labor Day No School
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	19	Staff PD All Day/No school students
14	15	16	17	18	19	20		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27		
28	29	30						

October 2025							October 2025	
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	1	Student Count Day
							13	PTC K-5 5:00-7:30 PM
			1	2	3	4	14	PTC 6-8 5:00-7:00 PM
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	15	PTC 9-12 5:00 - 7:00 PM
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	16	Students AM
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	PTC K-12 1-4PM, 5-7PM
26	27	28	29	30	31		17	No School
							31	1/2 Day Students/Staff PD Day

November 2025							November 2025	
S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
						1		
2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	26-28	Thanksgiving Break
16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29		
30								

December 2025							December 2025	
S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	18	Students AM Staff Records PM
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	19	Students AM Staff Records PM
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	19	End of First Semester
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	22-31	Winter Break
28	29	30	31					

IPS CALENDAR

January 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

January 2026

- 1-2 Winter Break
- 5 First Day for Students 1/2 Day All
- 19 Staff PD All Day/No school students

February 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

February 2026

- 11 Student Count Day
- 13 Staff PD All Day/No school students
- 16 Mid-Winter Break - No School

March 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

March 2026

- 9 PTC K-5 5:00-7:30 PM
- 10 PTC 6-8 5:00-7:00 PM
- 11 PTC 9-12 5:00-7:00 PM
- 12 Students AM PTC K-8 1-4, 5-7PM
- 12 PTC 9-12 1:00-3:30, 5-7 PM
- 13 No School
- 27 1/2 Students/ PM PLC

April 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

April 2026

- 3 No School - Good Friday
- 6-10 Spring Break
- 22 Freshman Welcome 6:30-7:30 PM
- 22 Freshman Welcome Staff 6-7:30 PM

May 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

May 2026

- 22 Staff PD All Day/No school students
- 25 Memorial Day
- 29 Students AM Staff Full Day

June 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

June 2026

- 1 Students AM Staff Full Day
- 2 Last Day Students Half Day All



250 E. Tuttle Rd
Ionia, MI 48846

24 Hour Attendance Lines

Boyce Elementary 616 - 527 - 8011

Emerson Elementary 616 - 527 - 8045

Jefferson Elementary 616 - 527 - 8048

Rather Elementary 616 - 527 - 8033

Twin Rivers Elementary 616 - 522 - 0007

Ionia Middle School 616 - 527 - 8044

Ionia High School 616 - 527 - 2780

D.R. Welch High School 616 - 527 - 3530

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www.ioniaschools.org