



EMPOWERING

Empowering a
community of
learners who will
change the world!

FALL 2025

THE OFFICIAL WORTHINGTON CITY SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER



A STRONG

START TO FALL

DEAR RESIDENTS,

As we begin a new school year, the energy across our schools is unmistakable. From the first bell to after-school activities, our students are engaged, our staff is inspired, and our community continues to show strong support for public education.

Even as we face challenges in the state budget and uncertainty around federal funding, we remain focused on stability and long-term planning. We're working to extend our levy cycle from four years to six, a significant milestone made possible by years of thoughtful staffing decisions and sound financial management.

At the same time, we're reducing costs for families and increasing access for all learners:

- Free, universal all-day kindergarten is now available districtwide, providing every child with a strong start.
- Instructional fees have been eliminated, removing financial barriers for school.
- School supply costs are being reduced through strategic coordination and school-based support.

We're also investing in what comes next.

This includes expanded career-based learning opportunities, stronger early literacy instruction, and a comprehensive redesign of special education services—all aimed at developing durable skills, enhancing support, and preparing students for success in a rapidly changing world.

We continue to make progress on our long-term facilities plan, including the rebuilds of Thomas Worthington and Worthington Kilbourne high schools. These modern, collaborative spaces will serve generations of students and reflect our community's shared vision for the future.

This fall, I invite you to get involved—join us at a game, attend a performance, or volunteer at a district event. These moments build the strong relationships that define Worthington City Schools.

Let's keep moving forward, together!

DR. TRENT BOWERS • Superintendent

ALL-DAY KINDERGARTEN IN WORTHINGTON IN FALL 2025

Worthington Schools is excited to announce that beginning with the 2025-26 school year, all families have access to **universal, no-cost, all-day kindergarten**.

This important step ensures every child in our district can benefit from a full day of learning—without tuition costs. The change supports early literacy, social development, and aligns Worthington with nearly every other district in Central Ohio already offering full-day programs.

We’re proud to make this investment in our youngest learners—and in the future of our community.



HIGH SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

It’s been a summer of sawdust, scaffolding, and serious progress at our high schools – and the transformation is unfolding before our eyes.

Worthington Natatorium

By early September, we’ll be diving into our brand-new pool, just in time for water polo season. While we make a splash inside, crews will be busy from August through December removing the old natatorium and creating new parking, sidewalks, and a welcoming entrance.

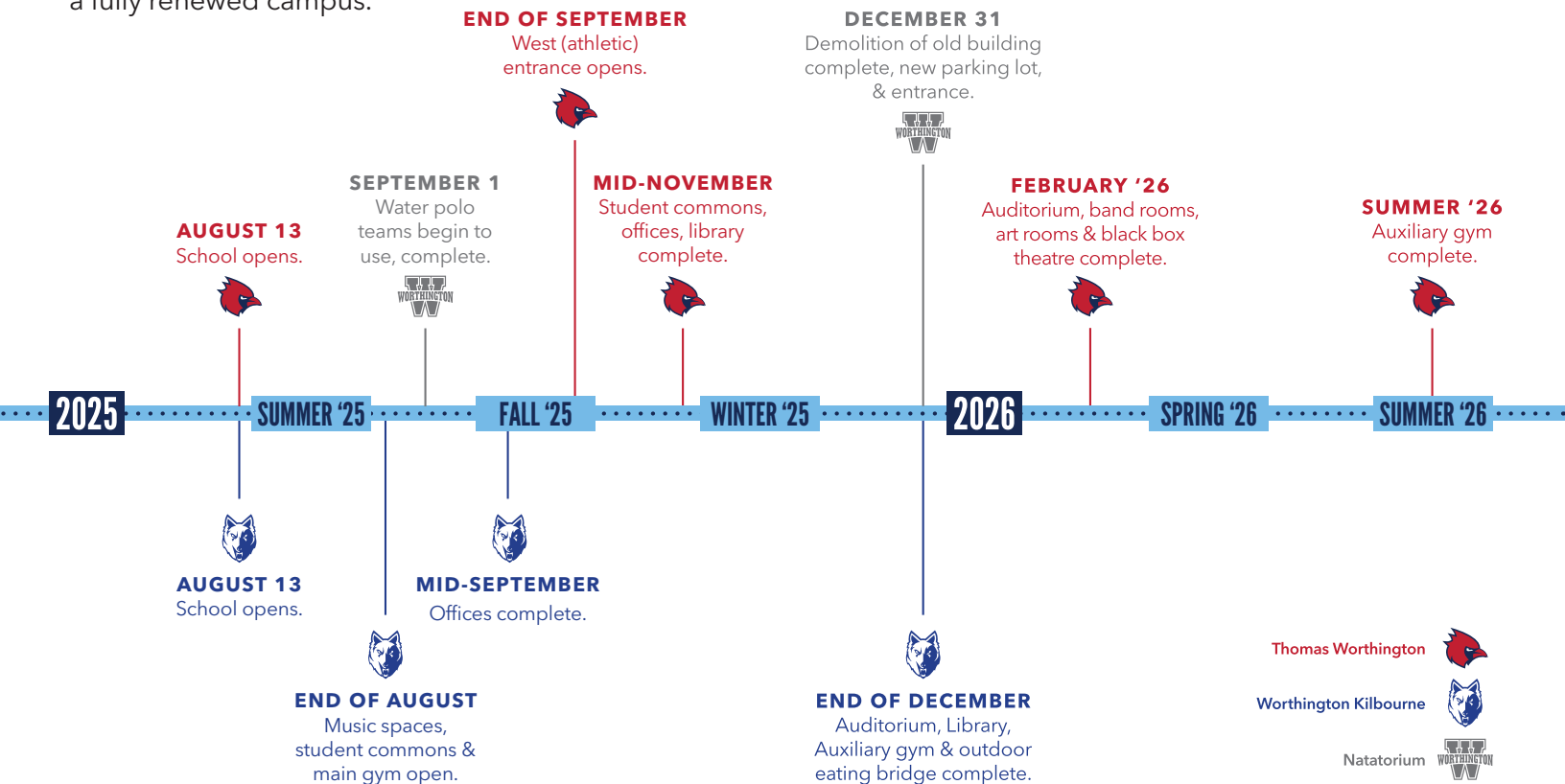
Thomas Worthington High School

The west (athletic) entrance will be off-limits until late September. Come November, students will enjoy a brand-new commons, library, and administrative offices. By February, the auditorium, band, art, and black box theatre will take center stage. The project will wrap up next summer, with each milestone bringing us closer to a fully renewed campus.

Worthington Kilbourne High School

Classrooms are ready, and music spaces, student commons and the main gym will be open by the end of August. Mid-September kicks off work on the auditorium, library, auxiliary gym, and outdoor eating bridge – all set to finish by December. By January 1st, WKHS will be 98% complete, with only locker rooms and athletic field renovations to follow.

Every project brings new spaces to learn, compete, and create. The finish line is in sight – and it’s going to be worth the wait.



IMPACT OF THE LATEST STATE BUDGET AND CONTINUED PROPERTY TAX DEBATE



TJ CUSICK

CFO/Treasurer • tjcusick@wscloud.org

Ohio's recently enacted state budget did not provide inflationary increases for school districts, which will reduce our state funding over the next two years. However, additional funding for enrollment growth and performance were added, and due to the thoughtful consideration of Gov. Mike Dewine and his use of line-item vetoes, we avoided the abrupt and significant loss of funding that was proposed and approved by the House and Senate....for now. Discussion around property taxes continues, and the legislature can override the Governor's vetoes or pass other legislation. A separate group is attempting to place an initiative on the ballot to ban property taxes outright. As the debate continues this fall, it's important to have a foundational knowledge of property taxes and their interrelationship with other types of taxes, and to let your voice be heard in this important discussion.

Property taxes in Ohio are the backbone of funding for local government services, not only schools but libraries, police, fire, EMT and senior services. In Worthington Schools, property taxes make up over 75% of our annual operating budget.

Replacing that overnight without a plan would be impossible. This is the system that was set up in Ohio many years ago, and changing that requires thoughtful planning.

The main types of taxes: income, property, sales, and business taxes, coexist together and changing one has an impact on the others. Over the past 20 years, Ohio's income tax rate has been significantly reduced, and several taxes on businesses have been reduced or completely eliminated. By many measures, those changes have successfully grown Ohio's economy. At the same time, the state's share of school funding has decreased, contributing to an increase in property taxes to make up the shortfall. This cause-and-effect relationship has to be explored carefully before changes are made.

In Worthington, we are committed to engaging with our legislators and stakeholders to work toward a solution, but that solution can't be at the expense of losing 75% of our operating revenue overnight and creating massive instability and detrimental student outcomes. We want to continue to provide the services our community has come to expect sustainably, and we applaud Governor Dewine for his thoughtful vetoes and creation of a working group to further study property tax changes, and look forward to engaging in that process further.

NEW STAFF ORIENTATION SETS THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS

In July, Worthington Schools welcomed new teachers and staff with a two-day orientation led by Assistant Superintendents Angie Adrean and Jeff Maddox. The sessions introduced district priorities, key initiatives, and the culture of collaboration that defines Worthington.

The orientation included building tours, curriculum overviews, and practical tools to help staff start strong. New employees also explored the district's Portrait of a Learner, which emphasizes communication, adaptability, resilience, collaboration, and critical thinking.

"Our goal is to ensure every new staff member feels prepared and connected from day one," Maddox said.

New hires heard directly from current staff and students, gaining insight into what makes Worthington a place where people feel supported and students thrive.

With the 2025-2026 school year underway, these new team members are already helping to shape a strong start for Worthington learners.





WORTHINGTON CITY SCHOOLS

200 E. Wilson Bridge Rd.
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Meghan Elmore, a 2017 Thomas Worthington graduate and new Mental Health Specialist at Perry Middle School, hopes to be the trusted adult that students can lean on.

TRUSTED ADULTS



In Worthington Schools, we work to ensure that each student has at least one trusted adult that they can lean on. Meghan Elmore is a new Mental Health specialist at Perry Middle School. Meghan graduated from Thomas Worthington in 2017 and attended elementary school at Colonial Hills. Her trusted adult quickly became Gretchen Wessel, the Colonial Hills music teacher, and Meghan now hopes to be the trusted adult for students at Perry.



As a student at Colonial Hills, Meghan's trusted adult was music teacher **Gretchen Wessel**—an example of the lasting impact trusted adults have in Worthington Schools.