

WILLOUGHBY - EASTLAKE CITY SCHOOLS COMMUNITY UPDATE

Message from the Superintendent

Thank you for choosing Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools. I am grateful for the tremendous start to the 2025–2026 school year. Our classrooms, hallways, fields, and stages are alive with energy and enthusiasm. Nothing beats the opening of a new school year. The fall is a special time filled with traditions, hope and possibilities for all of our students. Take time, slow down and enjoy the journey.

As a district, we have a proud history of excellence, and we remain deeply committed to preparing every student for success. This year, our focus is on *aligning for impact*. We remain committed to making sure that the work happening in every classroom, every program, and every department is connected to what matters most: student learning and growth.

We continue to embrace a mindset of *continuous improvement*. This means celebrating the progress we've made while always looking ahead to new opportunities for growth. I am pleased to share that we are seeing gains in literacy and in key measures on the State Report Card, progress that reflects the dedication of our staff, the determination of our students, and the trust of our families.

At the center of it all is our *Portrait of a Graduate*. These are the competencies, such as critical thinking, creativity, empathy, resilience, collaboration, and communication, that define success in school, in careers, and in life. Our commitment is to ensure that every student graduates not only with knowledge, but also with the durable skills to thrive in an ever-changing world.

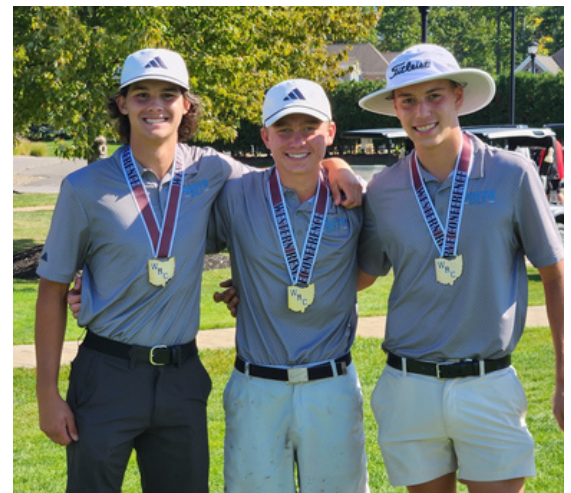
Together, we will continue to build on our tradition of excellence and keep moving forward with purpose. Thank you for being part of our journey and for trusting us with what matters most—your children.

If a member of our team can be of assistance, please reach out.

As always, GO RANGERS, GO REBELS!

Patrick Ward

Patrick Ward, PhD. | Superintendent
#MyChoiceWilloughbyEastlake



Snapshots from Around Willoughby-Eastlake

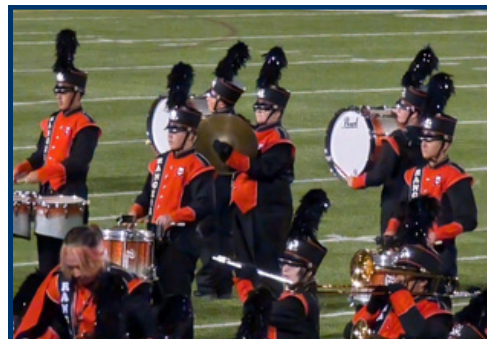
While our printed *Community Update* newsletter will arrive in your mailbox every other month, all issues will be shared via email and on our website. Each issue will highlight events and news to keep you connected and informed about what's happening in the school district. Expanding our newsletter to a monthly publication cycle helps us communicate more frequently and share timely updates. The October issue will be a printed issue. Enjoy these September highlights!

Community Coffee Talks Are Back!

Are you interested in quick chats with Dr. Ward on the state of the schools, our shared vision and how we are preparing our students to be future-ready? Join us for a Coffee Talk!



We kick off this series at the **Downtown Willoughby Chili Cook-Off on October 18th**. The full event runs from 1 - 5 p.m. Watch the parade at 2 p.m. to see our Eastlake North Marching Rangers and South athletes, plus more students from around the district! The Coffee Talk begins at 3 p.m. at the Gazebo. Community pride will be overflowing!



Message from the Treasurer/CFO

We are pleased to share some exciting updates on how we are investing in our schools and community.

New School Buses Purchased with Permanent Improvement Funds

The district recently used Permanent Improvement (PI) funds to purchase our school buses outright. By avoiding financing, we eliminated interest costs, which allows us to keep more dollars working directly for students. This decision frees up general fund resources to be redirected back into the classroom where they belong.



Renovations at Royalview Elementary School

We are also proud to announce a major partnership with Ameresco to complete much-needed renovations at Royalview Elementary School in Willowick, our largest elementary school in the district. This \$1.5 million project will include:

- Installation of all new light fixtures
- An electrical system upgrade
- Full air conditioning for the building

These improvements will provide a brighter, safer, and more comfortable learning environment for students and staff, ensuring Royalview continues to serve the community for years to come.

Looking Ahead

Our goal remains the same, to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars while providing the best possible educational experience for our students. By strategically investing in transportation and facilities, we are strengthening our schools and ensuring resources are directed where they make the greatest impact, supporting teaching and learning.

Nick Ciarniello

Nick Ciarniello | Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer

Snapshots from Around Willoughby-Eastlake

Student Leadership and Voices

If school is meant to be for students, then their voices are essential in reimagining our district to support future-ready students. A key component of this effort is the Superintendent-Student Advisory Council, which brings together a diverse group of sixth through twelfth graders quarterly to engage directly with the superintendent on a variety of topics. This year, these students are more committed than ever to paving the way for future Rebels and Rangers. Principals also facilitate various student councils and advisory groups. These groups allow students to be immersed in practical applications of our Portrait of a Graduate competencies.

Click the play button for a quick video!



AP Scholars Click [LINK](#) to see awardees!

We are proud to honor all of our students who excel in academics. At the September Board meeting, we were pleased to recognize the students who were named AP Scholars and those who received special award recognition. Congratulations to the students who continue to aim high and set themselves up for success!

AP Scholars

The College Board Advanced Placement (AP) courses provide students with rigorous courses which increase their academic skills, and can also earn them college credits. There are three categories of AP Scholars.

AP Scholar: Score of 3 or higher on three or more AP Tests

AP Scholar with Honor: Average score of at least a 3.25 on all AP exams and scores of 3 or higher on four or more exams

AP Scholar with Distinction: Score of at least a 3.50 on all AP exams and scores of 3 or higher on five or more exams.

We also had students honored with the **First Generation Award**, **African American Recognition Award** and **School Recognition Award**.



Snapshots from Around Willoughby-Eastlake

World Trade Center Steel Education Program

Willoughby Middle School is the only middle school in Ohio that has been provided with a piece of the World Trade Center Tower 1 Steel artifact to display. The middle school, under the direction of teacher Mr. Chris Culek, is continuing the tradition of honoring Patriot Day, 9/11, by participating in the National Freedom Flag Raising program. The Freedom Flag is our nation's only codified 9/11 flag of remembrance, and it has been flown or displayed in nearly 2,000 schools, fire stations and civic buildings in all 50 states. Last year, a group of the school's students presented the flag at a Board meeting under the leadership of now retired teacher, Mrs. Michelle Bush. The flag, along with the piece of steel, is a reminder of the sacrifice of our first responders and citizens in defense of our nation's freedom. This is a special honor and an important lesson from our nation's history for our students.



Career Connections and Capstones

Willoughby-Eastlake is transitioning from a consortium-based approach to a comprehensive career technical education (CTE) program beginning in the 2026-2027 school year. What does that mean? It means that an expanded CTE program will be available for our juniors and seniors on our campuses. This move allows the district to expand CTE access, retain local control and directly serve students in grades 11-12 with high-quality career-aligned programs.

Rather than wait for next year, we have already started introducing our students to options to help them explore and determine their career interests. This helps them with decision making to be ready for formal CTE courses as juniors and seniors, and be prepared for college, a career or the military upon high school graduation. Middle school offers Career Connections courses, and students in high school may choose Career Capstones.

Career Connections (Grade 7): Agriculture and Environmental Systems, Construction Technologies, Engineering and Science Technologies, Information Technology, Law and Public Safety, Manufacturing, Transportation Systems



Career Capstones (Grades 9-10): Click on the "play" button above to access a video featuring **Willoughby South High School Senior, Braylon**. He plans to pursue computer science studies in college. With a keen interest in programming and gaming, he also sees the future of Artificial Intelligence (AI) changing the nature of the computer science industry. Braylon plans to continue his research and be ready and flexible for what the future holds.

Career Connections (Grades 8): Arts and Communication, Business Administration, Education and Training, Finance, Health Science, Hospitality and Tourism, Human Services, Marketing

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!



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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

