



July 2026

Hello, Willow Creek Community!

We hope this message finds you enjoying a wonderful summer, filled with relaxation, special moments with family, and plenty of fun. As we begin to plan for the 2026-2027 school year, I want to warmly welcome each of you back. We are looking forward to another year of meaningful learning, growth, and shared success.

Our school community is truly what makes Willow Creek so special. The way you partner with us by setting high expectations, communicating openly, supporting our staff, and nurturing your children helps create an environment where everyone can thrive. We are grateful for the strong connections that continue to shape our school.

I know this is a longer message, but I wanted to be sure you have all the details needed to help your child start the year confidently and successfully!

This year our theme is **Choose Joy!** School should be a place of learning, fun and engagement. A place where students and staff want to come each day. Thank you for the part you play in that.

Awards: Thanks to your unwavering support and the dedication of our incredible staff and students as we received the John Irwin Schools of Excellence Award last year. We focused our whole school efforts on writing last year, and with greater staff alignment, we believe we will continue to see tremendous student growth.

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 few years ago, we installed a secure vestibule with a second set of doors and new procedures for entering our building. We need your help to enforce these procedures. 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. We believe we can continue to provide a warm, welcoming neighborhood school and still be vigilant to provide a safe learning environment for our students and staff. **Although inconvenient, please remember that safety supersedes convenience and that safety is our priority.**

We also expect you as a community member to aid us by practicing safety in the parking lot. This includes a shared responsibility to adhere 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. **(Do NOT stop by the parking lot entrance to let your student out as it backs up East Long and Willow Way).**
- **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. Please also have your children ready to pop out of the car with their belongings! We can assist them in safely exiting on the passenger side so you do not exit your car. Exiting on the street side is stepping directly into oncoming traffic. **SAFETY!**

School Supplies: Our wonderful teachers have put together an Amazon list for each grade level. *No one is obligated to use the Amazon lists provided, they are simply being offered as a convenience.* Please have your child bring all of their school supplies to their new classroom either during their teacher connection meeting prior to the start of school, or on the first day of school.

Kindergarten: [Kindergarten Supply List](#)

First Grade: [1st Grade Supply List](#)

Second Grade: [2nd Grade Supply List](#)

Third Grade: [3rd Grade Supply List](#)

Fourth Grade: [4th Grade Supply List](#)

Fifth Grade: [5th Grade Supply List](#)

Back to School Night August 13 @ 5:00 and 5:30: As we prepare to welcome students back for a new school year, we are excited to share that our classrooms have been refreshed with brand new carpet! Thank you to our community for supporting the bond issue that made this possible! Because teachers are going to have to move back into their classrooms, they will need additional time at the start of the year to fully prepare welcoming learning environments for students. As a result, we will be shifting away from our traditional Family Connection Meetings this year. We deeply value hearing from our families, and you will still have meaningful opportunities to share about your child and what is important to your family. Instead, we invite you to join us for **Back-to-School Night on August 13**. We will offer two identical sessions at **5:00 PM and 5:30 PM** to better accommodate families with multiple children in our building. Students are encouraged to attend with you, bring their school supplies, and begin connecting with their teacher and classmates. During these sessions, you and your child will hear directly from teachers about classroom routines, expectations, and how we can work together to ensure a successful school year. **Non-classroom teachers will be in their rooms for you to pop in and visit.** It's also a wonderful opportunity for students to reconnect with familiar faces and meet new friends. Back-to-School Night will overlap with our **Family Picnic from 5:30-6:30 PM**, making it a fun-filled evening for our entire community!

Important Dates:

Staggered Start to the School Year:

August 17, 2025 Grades 3, 4, and 5 Only

August 18, 2025 Grades 1, 2 Only

August 19, 2025 All students (Pre-Kindergarten — Grade 5)

Back-to-School Family Picnic/August 13, 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 a special treat for your children and celebrate the start of the school year. This event overlaps with our Back-to-School Night celebration, where you can meet your child's teacher, drop off school supplies, and connect with our school community at the picnic.

Community Movie Night: PTO will host a Community Movie night on September 25 at 7:00. The hall will open at 6:30, weather permitting. More information to come. We are excited to provide another opportunity for our community to connect. Thank you!

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

- **Sam Parris** will join our 4th grade team. She brings a wealth of experience, having taught grades 3-5 since beginning her career in Mapleton Public Schools in 2019. Since joining Cherry Creek, she taught 5th grade for one year and has spent the past two years in 3rd grade, continuing to grow her passion for creating authentic, hands-on learning experiences. She is deeply committed to making both content and language accessible for all students.
- **Brian Fleck** brings 14 years of experience in the Denver area, with the past 10 years focused on elementary math as both a specialist and a 4th grade teacher. He believes math is about teaching the whole child—blending social-emotional growth with strong conceptual understanding. Outside of school, he enjoys swimming, hiking, pickleball, chess, and travel. Brian will be serving mainly 2nd-5th grades in a math interventionist role.
- **Molly Moore** shares that she is honored to be our GT teacher next year. She's been teaching in the Gifted and Talented program for just over 20 years, and has a deep commitment and calling to serve special populations. Willow Creek Elementary has a particularly special place in her heart, as her son attended Willow Creek all six years! She shares he received a wonderful empathetically designed education, of which he is most proud.

Important Info About School Hours!

Arrival:

- **Soft Start 7:50-8:00:** We will be slightly adjusting our soft start arrival time. Beginning next year, soft start will run from **7:50-8:00 a.m.** This small five-minute adjustment will provide teachers with additional time to prepare for the day and ensure a smooth start for all students. We kindly ask that students are not dropped off before 7:50 a.m. Between 7:50-8:00 students enter through their grade level doors. If arriving after 8:00, your child will be marked tardy and must enter through the front doors. Timeliness does matter in creating good habits in our students. With a slightly smaller student population, we anticipate a more efficient and calm entry process for everyone.

Dismissal:

- School dismissal is at 2:45 p.m. 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 p.m.** Buses will run accordingly. Also, our Before and After Club (WCKC) 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 needs, we are asking each family to consider making a \$150 pledge for the school year per child. Pledge information will be included in the digital registration packet families will receive in early August. Unlike traditional fundraisers, we do not ask students to sell items door-to-door — our students' safety is always a top priority. 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 while also supporting our teachers' classroom needs. If you're able to give more, we welcome it with gratitude. If \$150 is a

stretch, any amount is appreciated. By pledging you also are entered in the lottery for the opportunity to have VIP parking at school for a month!

Your pledges have helped provide para support for a better ratio on the playground and instructional support in classrooms, purchase picnic tables for our students and staff, new cafeteria tables, a gaga pit for our older students, and so much more! Your donations matter. They help our teachers and students, especially with paying for para salaries!

Thank you for being the best supportive community. 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 and continue to find our joy for ourselves, one another and our children.

Warmly,
Principal Mary Whitney

