

We Are Jasper

RAISING HEALTHY KIDS

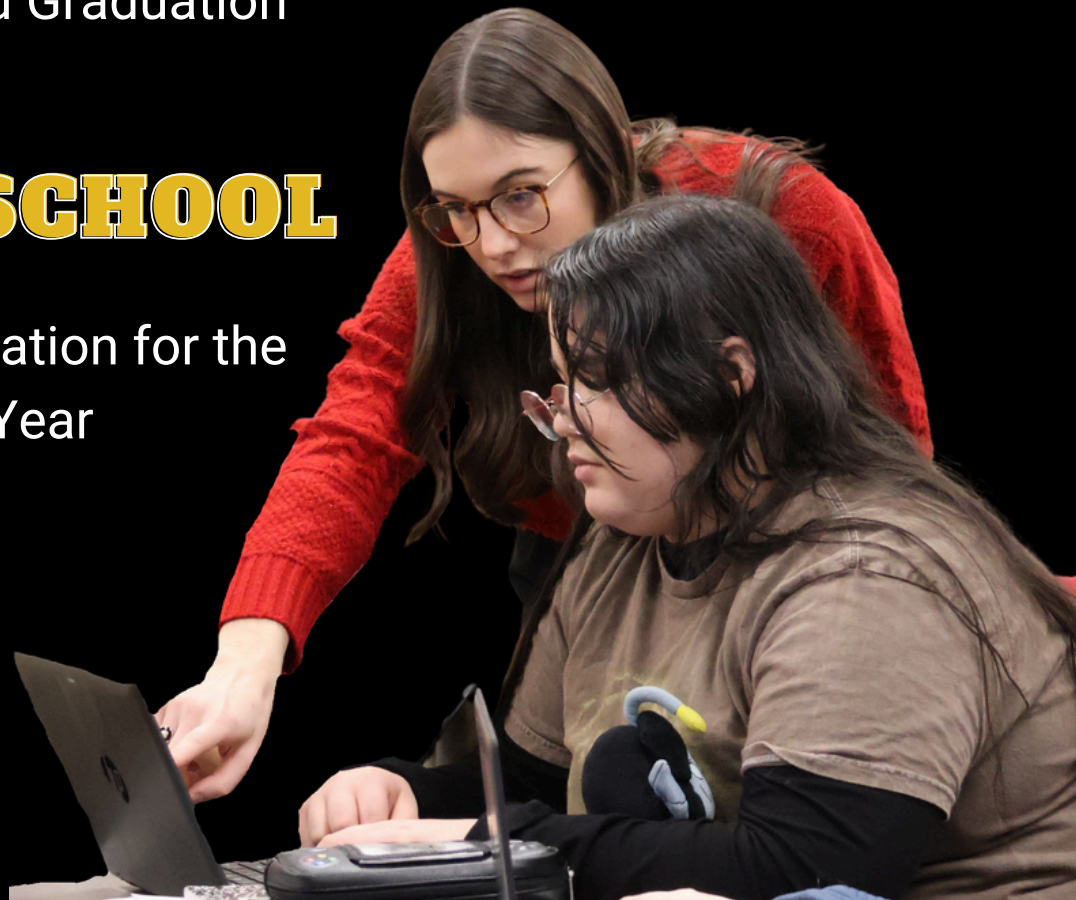
In a Digital World

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

College, Career, and Graduation
Planning in Indiana

BACK TO SCHOOL

Registration Information for the
2026-2027 School Year



Volume 7
July 2026

RAISING HEALTHY KIDS IN A DIGITAL WORLD

BY: DR. TRACY LOREY, GJCS SUPERINTENDENT

It's a familiar scene—toddlers handed an iPad to calm a meltdown, kids choosing video games over playing outside, teens scrolling endlessly through social media, and families sitting together but each on their own device. Screens are now a regular part of daily life—at school, at home, and with friends. While technology offers many benefits, research continues to show that how much and how children use screens can impact their development, mental health, and overall well-being.

For babies, toddlers, and early learners, too much screen time can interfere with critical early development. Young children learn best through hands-on play, movement, and interaction with caregivers. When screens replace those experiences, it can affect language development, attention, and social-emotional skills like self-regulation. Fast-paced or highly stimulating content can also make it harder for children to focus, settle down, and maintain healthy sleep routines. While limited, high-quality content used with an adult can be appropriate, the most important learning at this age comes from talking, playing, reading, and exploring.

For teens, heavy screen and social media use can have a strong impact on mental health. Constant comparison, pressure for validation, and online drama can increase anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression. Late-night device use often disrupts sleep, which affects mood, focus, and overall health. Some teens may find it difficult to disconnect, leading to less face-to-face interaction and increased isolation. In more serious cases, online environments can expose teens to cyberbullying, inappropriate content, or risky behavior. While technology is an important part of teen life, helping them build healthy habits, set boundaries, and stay connected to real-world relationships is key.

RAISING HEALTHY KIDS IN A DIGITAL WORLD CONT.

The impact of excessive screen use is also showing up in schools. Young learners may struggle with attention, listening, and following directions, especially if they are used to fast-paced digital content. Early reading and language development can be affected when screen time replaces conversation and hands-on learning. In the classroom, this may look like difficulty staying engaged, managing behavior, or interacting with peers. While technology can support learning, younger students benefit most from active, face-to-face experiences.

Every child will use screens, but how and when they use them matters. The goal isn't to eliminate technology—it's to introduce it thoughtfully and maintain a healthy balance. The following guidelines can help:

General Guidelines

- Infants (0–18 months): Avoid screens except for video chatting
- Toddlers (18–24 months): Limited, high-quality content with an adult
- Ages 2–5: About 1 hour per day, ideally co-viewed
- Ages 6–10: Use for learning and creativity with clear limits
- Ages 11+: Focus on balance, responsibility, and open communication

At all ages:

- Keep screens out of bedrooms at night
- Avoid screens during meals and before bed
- Make sure screens don't replace sleep, activity, or relationships

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

Finding the right balance with technology is an ongoing process—and it works best as a partnership between school and home. By setting clear expectations, modeling healthy habits, and staying connected, we can help children use technology in ways that support their learning and well-being. Screens are here to stay, but together we can ensure they enhance—not replace—the relationships and experiences that matter most.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE: COLLEGE, CAREER, AND GRADUATION PLANNING IN INDIANA

BY: ERIN JOCHUM, GJCS CAREER COUNSELOR

Indiana's new high school diploma framework is designed to help students prepare for life after graduation while providing greater flexibility and choice. Through updated diploma requirements and Graduation Pathway Readiness Seals, students can explore a variety of opportunities that connect learning to their future goals. The focus is not on locking students into a specific career or postsecondary pathway but on helping them discover their interests, strengths, and possibilities for the future.

A key component of the new diploma is career and college exploration. Students are encouraged to learn about a wide range of careers, industries, colleges, technical programs, apprenticeships, and military opportunities throughout their high school experience. Exploration helps students make informed decisions while understanding that interests and goals often change as they gain new experiences and knowledge throughout their educational journey.

Graduation planning plays an important role in this process. Working alongside counselors, teachers, and families, students create a personalized plan that aligns with their current interests while keeping options open as they explore their current interests. Thoughtful course selection and participation in extracurricular activities allow students to build resiliency, work ethic, communication, and collaboration skills while they explore opportunities and remain flexible as they consider different paths after high school.

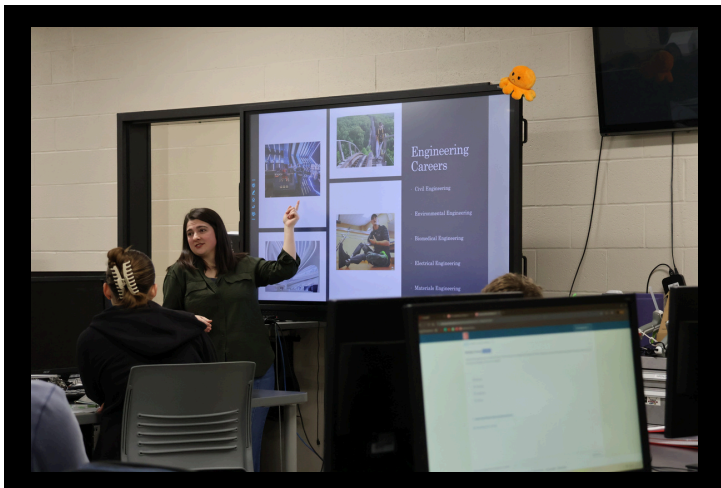
Work-Based Learning experiences provide students with valuable opportunities to connect classroom learning to the real world. Through internships, job shadowing, apprenticeships, and cooperative work experiences, students gain firsthand exposure to various careers and workplace environments. These experiences help students better understand what they enjoy, what skills they want to develop, and what future opportunities may be available to them.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE CONT.

Community and business partnerships are essential to the success of Work-Based Learning programs. Local employers help students explore careers, develop professional skills, and learn from industry mentors. These experiences not only prepare students for future success but also help them make more informed decisions about education, training, and employment opportunities after graduation.

Families are also critical partners in the exploration process. Conversations at home about interests, strengths, and future possibilities can help students reflect on their experiences and consider new opportunities. Parents and guardians are encouraged to stay informed about diploma requirements, graduation pathways, and available experiences that support career and college readiness.

While preparing for the future is important, it's equally important to remember that our students are still kids. High school should be a time of exploration, growth, friendships, and memorable experiences. The goal of Indiana's new diploma is not to rush students into making lifelong decisions, but rather to help them discover possibilities while enjoying their high school years. Whether they are participating in athletics, performing arts, clubs, service projects, or school events, these experiences help students develop valuable skills, build relationships, and create lasting memories. By balancing future planning with meaningful involvement in school life, students can graduate not only prepared for what comes next, but also enriched by the experiences that make high school such a special chapter in their lives.



REGISTRATION INFORMATION



for the 2026-2027 school year

Get ready! Registration for the upcoming 2026-2027 school year opens July 20, 2026! Keep your eyes peeled for registration links, which will be distributed through multiple channels: directly to families via email, on our social media platforms, and displayed on our website. These essential links will go live starting July 20, 2026. With additional questions, contact your student's school. For comprehensive back-to-school details, explore our dedicated [webpage](#).

INFORMACIÓN, PARA LA INSCRIPCIÓN



del año escolar 2026-2027

¡Prepárense! La inscripción para el año escolar 2026-2027 empezará el INSERT DATE. Estén atentos a los enlaces de inscripción, que se enviarán a las familias por correo electrónico, se publicarán en nuestras redes sociales y estarán disponibles en nuestro sitio web. Si tiene preguntas adicionales, comuníquese con la escuela de su hijo/a. Para obtener información completa sobre el regreso a clases, visite nuestra [página web](#).

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

This year marked our first Teacher of the Year award, honoring two outstanding educators who embody our district's vision of engaging students in educational excellence for lifelong success.

Our elementary teacher of the year is Mrs. Andrea Denu. Her nominator wrote: "She works hard every day to help each student learn and grow. She doesn't just teach lessons, she makes learning fun, helps everyone feel important, and always wants the best for her students. She sets high goals and cheers for students to reach them. She is always finding new ways to learn. Not only does she care about students, but she also works with families and other teachers to make our school a great place for everyone. Others have said, "she is the most dedicated teacher I have had", she is "always so prepared" and "always goes above and beyond to help her students."



Our secondary teacher of the year is Mrs. Megan Johnson. Her nominator wrote: "Megan is not only an amazing teacher, but also directs the ENL program. In Spanish 3, she uses immersion at nearly 75% and students are always surprised by how much they know without feeling like they're working. She oversees 110 ENL students, manages their ILPs and WIDA testing, and coordinates three aides, a role that would be a full time guidance position elsewhere. She works tirelessly to support our most vulnerable students and is a pillar of professionalism and an outstanding example for younger staff."



We're proud to recognize these two exceptional educators and look forward to continuing this tradition for years to come.

A PASSION FOR LANGUAGE AND CONNECTION: MEGAN JOHNSON

A graduate of Forest Park High School and Indiana University, Megan Johnson has dedicated her entire 18-year career to the students of Jasper High School. While she currently serves as the World Language Department Chair, her impact extends far beyond administrative duties. Megan's classroom is a hub of cultural exploration where she teaches Spanish III, AP Spanish, and English as a New Language (ENL). Outside of school, Megan is deeply rooted in the Jasper community. She and her high school sweetheart, Jeremy, have three children, Bryn, Charlie, and Maggie. Whether she is helping on the sidelines of youth soccer and tee-ball or participating as an active member of Holy Family Catholic Church, Megan's commitment to her family and community mirrors the dedication she brings to her students every day.

Megan's path to the classroom was paved by her own high school Spanish teachers, particularly Sra. Hauser, who made language acquisition feel both accessible and exciting. A school trip to Mexico during her sophomore year solidified her love for the culture, but it was a senior year experience teaching English to a new resident in her community that sparked her passion for ENL. These early moments of connection taught her that language is more than just vocabulary; it is a tool for empowerment. Today, she pays that inspiration forward by co-sponsoring the Spanish Club and Young Latinos Unidos, ensuring her students have opportunities to engage with the world around them.

In the classroom, Megan describes her teaching style as a deliberate blend of structure and support. While she may appear more authoritative during the first few weeks to establish high expectations, she quickly transitions into a guide as students become comfortable. Her goal is to ensure students are active participants, engaging all four pillars of language: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. By introducing a variety of topics and multi-sensory activities, she keeps students engaged and helps them realize that their hard work leads to tangible progress. She often reminds herself to focus on one task at a time, a lesson she has learned over the years to ensure every project and student receives her full attention.

Megan credits much of her success to the supportive environment at GJCS. From her early days working with her mentor, Mrs. Dee Ann Bell, to her current collaborations with the World Language and ENL teams, she has always felt at home. She is particularly grateful for an administration that values professional growth, allowing her to evolve from a first-year teacher into a department leader. For Megan, the Teacher of the Year recognition was a humbling surprise that reignited her "why," reminding her that the ordinary moments of a school day, the laughter, the field trips, and the music video once made with staff, collectively make a profound difference.

Looking ahead to the new school year, Megan is eager to welcome a new group of multilingual learners and expand the "passport project" in her Spanish III classes. As she prepares students for the AP Spanish exam, she remains focused on the individual growth of every learner. Her advice to those just starting their journey in education is to stay grounded: "Remember your 'why,' collaborate with colleagues, and learn from student outcomes. No student or school year is the same, and your success will be measured by the teachable moments you deliver and experience."

CELEBRATING THE NEXT STEP: SENIOR DECISION DAY

On May 1st, HUB 19 hosted Senior Decision Day at the Thyen-Clark Cultural Center, recognizing 30 Jasper seniors, alongside fellow students from across Dubois County. The event highlighted graduates who have chosen to enter the workforce, enlist in the military, or begin trade school immediately upon graduation, a path different than a traditional four-year college degree.

Eight of the Jasper seniors were recognized for their commitment to the armed forces. These brave students are stepping up to serve across multiple branches, including the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and the US National Guard. Their dedication ensures a proud continuation of local service.

For those pursuing trades and immediate employment, the future looks equally bright. Local industry leaders, health and community services, and unions have brought on board top talent to fill crucial roles in the region.

A significant number of students have committed to local industries, healthcare providers, and trade unions. Many are entering skilled trades through apprenticeships with the Carpenter/Millwright Union, IBEW, and Local 136 Union Pipefitters/Steamfitters. Others are continuing their specialized training through programs at the NALTC Lineman School, The Salon Professional Academy, Grooming School of Indiana, and the regional CAP Program, located at VUJC, specializing in Industrial Maintenance.

The local business community secured a wealth of talent as well. Seniors accepted positions within essential community and environmental services, including roles at Jimmy John's, Little Wildcats childcare, and LandMarc Environmental Services. Additionally, graduates are launching careers with major regional employers and care providers like Jasper Engines, Jasper Lumber, Weyer Electric, and Home Instead.

Senior Decision Day emphasizes that there are multiple routes to a successful career. By entering the workforce, learning a skilled trade, or serving in the military, these graduates are filling vital roles in our community and the broader economy.

Congratulations to the class of 2026 on their achievements and their next steps!



8TH GRADE WASHINGTON D.C. TRIP

Each year, our 8th-grade students have the opportunity to embark on a transformative journey to the heart of our nation's capital. This annual tradition provides a profound, hands-on encounter with the history, sacrifice, and civic values that define the United States. Guided by expert historians, students spent several days exploring the monuments and institutions that shape our national identity.

The trip began with a somber and educational visit to Arlington National Cemetery. Students stood in respectful silence at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, witnessing the meticulous Changing of the Guard. The precision of the sentinels served as a powerful lesson in the dedication required to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

The exploration continued at the Washington Monument, where students learned about the architectural marvel that was once the tallest structure in the world. Nearby, at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, the group engaged in a deep discussion regarding the symbolism of the "Stone of Hope." They learned that Dr. King's figure is intentionally left partially uncarved from the granite, symbolizing his unfinished work and a life cut short in the pursuit of justice.

The legislative process came to life during a comprehensive tour of the United States Capitol. After viewing an introductory film on the history of American democracy, students walked through the Rotunda and Statuary Hall, gaining a new appreciation for the individuals who have shaped our laws.

One of the most moving stops was the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial. Students observed the unique design of the memorial benches, noting how their orientation indicates whether the victim was a passenger on the plane or a worker within the building. This visit provided a quiet moment for reflection on modern history and resilience.

This trip remains a highlight of the middle school experience, bridging the gap between textbook lessons and real-world understanding. We are proud of our students for the curiosity and respect they showed throughout this unforgettable educational adventure.



LEADERSHIP IN ACTION AT JASPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

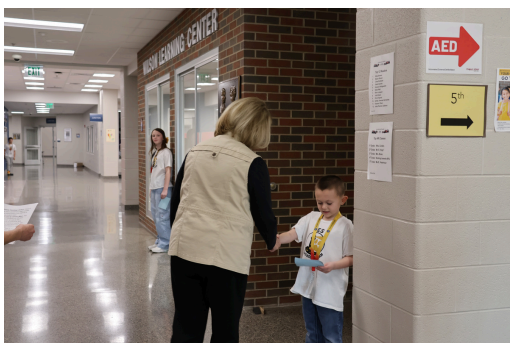
At Jasper Elementary School, leadership grows from the classroom to the community. The Student Lighthouse Team, made up of 12 thoughtful students representing grades 1–5, led the way as Jasper Elementary prepared for Leader in Me recertification. Selected through an application, teacher recommendations, and an interview process, these students exemplify the eight Leader in Me habits and serve as role models for their peers.

The Student Lighthouse Team met weekly from mid-January through the week of recertification on February 27th. During those meetings they identified areas of JES that best showcased how leadership is lived every day. Working closely with the staff Lighthouse Team, students helped choose highlights and develop scripts to guide the evaluator's tour. Team members practiced their assigned parts at home and rehearsed often during meetings, focusing on clear speaking, eye contact, and projecting their voices. They also rehearsed welcoming the evaluator, showing the conference room, and pointing out restroom and refreshment locations, small touches that helped the visit run smoothly.

Jasper's tour featured many student-named spaces and celebrations: inspirational quotes above hallway wings, the VIP Positive Referral board, the Leadership wall, the WIG (Wildly Important Goal) bulletin board, the jobs bulletin board, the Leader of the Month student wall, vibrant murals, and the gym where WIG celebrations and programs take place. Each stop reflected how leadership habits are woven into daily school life.

The team also prepared for the panel interview that followed the tour. Students practiced answering questions about their application and selection, what representing Jasper means to them, how they live the eight habits at school and at home, and which habit matters most personally and why. Their thoughtful responses and confident delivery showed deep understanding and genuine ownership of leadership.

The Student Lighthouse Team did an outstanding job. Their preparation, pride, and poise not only supported Jasper's Leader in Me recertification but also strengthened a culture of student-led leadership that benefits the whole school community.



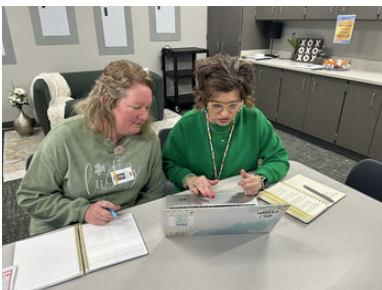
COLLABORATION IN OUR PREK-5 SCHOOL COMMUNITY

At Ireland Elementary, we collaborate. Working together is the foundation of our school community. From our youngest Pre-K children discovering the joy of sharing to our fifth graders participating in cooperative projects, teamwork is the part of our daily routine. By fostering a culture of working together, we help our students build relationships, social-emotional skills, and discover that our greatest achievements happen when we join forces.

Our students experience the power of teamwork throughout the school year. In our STEM labs, young innovators put their heads together to design, test, and refine creative solutions to real-world challenges. On our academic teams, Math Bowl and Spell Bowl, students practice, take on challenges, and cheer each other on as they prepare for competitions. Everyday classroom projects turn standard lessons into cooperative adventures. Small group work or even pairing up with a classmate provides an opportunity to practice communicating clearly and share responsibilities. Our buddy program, pairing upper elementary students with primary students, builds relationships across grade levels within our school community. Students of all ages collaborate.

Just as our students collaborate with each other, Ireland Elementary staff members also work together. Our teachers regularly meet for instructional coaching sessions to share effective strategies and classroom experiences. Teachers meet weekly for team meetings and common planning time. They are also collaborating with Matt Pryor, AI Integration Specialist, to gain knowledge on AI tools to co-create engaging lessons and utilize new technology. Ireland Elementary has 60 plus academic and extracurricular committees that staff serve on. The work of these committees is often behind the scenes to make our school a great place for students and staff. Together with continuous professional development, our faculty ensures they are constantly growing and learning alongside one another.

This shared commitment with our wonderful families, PTO, staff, and students to collaborate is what makes Ireland Elementary School. When students see their teachers working as a team, and when teachers empower students to work together, we build a strong foundation for success.



JASPER HIGH SCHOOL

Second Semester Highlights



Above: Mr. Otto's German class got a visit from the wine queen. She shared with the class about living in Germany and more.

Below: Unity in Faith sold hot chocolate and cookies before school to raise money.



Above: Mrs. Ingram's class received their Stop the Bleed Certification.



Above: Students entering the workforce and enlisting participated in Senior Decision Day.

Below: Mrs. Merhinger's class hosted their annual Spring Market and the Little Wildcats visited.



Above: Many JHS Seniors were recognized and awarded scholarships on Honors Day.



Above: The Little Wildcats and the FACS classes made pizzas together.

JASPER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Second Semester Highlights



Above: JMS 8th grade students visited the GJCS table at the annual Dubois County Career Cruise.

Below: The JMS Performing Arts Club put on a fantastic performance of Seussical Jr.



Below: 55 Jasper Middle School Students participated in the annual Crane Science Fair and Engineering Challenge.



Below: The two photos below are of students in Mr. Moser and Mrs. Leinenbach's classes. They built structures based on different government types.



Left: 7th grade students listened to Mr. Lewis as they got ready for fun day on the last day of school.

Right: The JMS Fishing Club had many great events this year.



JASPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Second Semester Highlights



Above: JES students enjoyed a beautiful day on the track for the Wildcat Walk.

Below: Wildcat Snack Shack students prepared charcuterie boards and delivered them to JMS, JHS and the Central Office. Then, they ordered and paid for their lunch at McDonalds.



Left: JES 5th grade students designed paper airplanes and then had a class contest to see which airplane would fly the furthest.



Left: Many students were recognized during the JES Awards Day Program on the last day of school.



Right: The JES Lighthouse team got together for a group huddle before giving a school tour as part of the Lighthouse Recertification Process.



Above: 5th grade students participated in an egg drop. Students created a vessel to protect the egg and then it was thrown off the building. Only one egg cracked out of all of the designs.

IRELAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Second Semester Highlights



Above: After completing the fairy tale unit, Kindergarten students went to the Fairy Tale Ball.

Below: Students completed a SPUDtacular activity involving potatoes.



Above: A student waits to hear her word during the Spelling Bee.

Below: 4th grade put on the Famous Hoosier Wax Museum.



Above: 2nd grade went to the JHS FFA Petting Zoo.



Above: Susan Wibbeler from Freedom Bank visited 3rd graders to read "Isabel's Car Wash" and talk about saving money. Students asked great questions about banking and got to take home a piggy bank.

Below: Zen Milholski, offensive lineman for the Indiana Hoosiers, visited Ireland Elementary to speak to the 2nd grade students.



School & Building Directory



Jasper Elementary School

(812) 556-3600

jes.gjcs.k12.in.us

3799 N Portersville Rd.
Jasper, IN 47546

School Day: 8am-3pm



Ireland Elementary School

(812) 482-7751

ies.gjcs.k12.in.us

2386 N. 500 W.
Jasper, IN 47546

School Day: 7:50am-2:50pm



Jasper Middle School

(812) 482-6454

jms.gjcs.k12.in.us

3600 Portersville Rd.
Jasper, IN 47546

School Day: 8am-3pm



Jasper High School

(812) 482-6050

jhs.gjcs.k12.in.us

1600 St. Charles St.
Jasper, IN 47546

School Day: 8am-3pm



Greater Jasper Consolidated School Corporation Central Office

(812) 482-1801

gjcs.k12.in.us

1520 St. Charles St, Jasper, IN 47546

Office Hours: 8am-4pm



Greater Jasper

CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS

1520 Saint Charles Street, Jasper, IN 47546

IMPORTANT FIRST SEMESTER DATES

-  August 10 - Teacher Day
-  August 11 - First Day of School
-  September 7 - Labor Day, No School
-  September 16 - Professional Development Day, No School
-  September 30 - Parent Teacher Conferences
-  October 7 - Parent Teacher Conferences
-  October 9 - End 1st Quarter
-  October 19-23 - Fall Break, No School
-  November 10 - Professional Development Day, No School
-  November 25-27 - Thanksgiving Break No School
-  December 22 - End 1st Semester

We Are Jasper Magazine is published by the Greater Jasper Consolidated School Corporation and posted to our website.

Find us on social media and online at
www.gjcs.k12.in.us

