YOUR SCHOOLS

AURORA LEARNERS
Future-Ready

SUMMER 2026 | AURORA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

As we close another remarkable school year in the Aurora City School District, I am filled with gratitude and pride for all that our students, staff, and community have accomplished together.

First and foremost, congratulations to the Aurora High School Class of 2026. We are incredibly proud of our graduates and all they have achieved during their time in Aurora. As they begin new journeys beyond Greenmen Way, they carry with them the values, relationships, and experiences that have shaped them into future-ready learners and leaders. While their paths may lead in many different directions, one thing remains true: Once a Greenman, Always a Greenman.

This school year was marked by excellence across every corner of our district. Our students continued to excel in academics, athletics, the arts, and extracurricular activities. From national competitions in Quiz Bowl and Robotics, to championship performances on the track, field, and diamond, to outstanding concerts, art shows, and theatrical productions, our students consistently demonstrated talent, dedication, and perseverance. Just as importantly, they showed compassion, leadership, and a commitment to serving others through a variety of community initiatives and service-learning opportunities.

As we celebrate these accomplishments, we also continue planning for the future through "The Essential Plan". This focused facilities initiative addresses aging infrastructure, capacity needs, and critical maintenance projects throughout the district. Over the past several months, we have engaged residents, city leaders, staff, and families through community meetings and ongoing communication efforts. In this edition of Your Schools, you will find additional information about "The Essential Plan", the needs it addresses, and the thoughtful approach being taken to ensure the Aurora Schools remain strong for generations to come.



Thank you for your continued support of the Aurora City Schools. We wish all of our families a safe, relaxing, and enjoyable summer. As always, Go Greenmen!

Dr. Paul Milcetich
Superintendent of Schools







CONGRATULATIONS AURORA HIGH SCHOOL

Class of 2026!

The Aurora City School District (ACSD) celebrated the Aurora High School (AHS) Class of 2026 with a Commencement ceremony on Thursday, May 21, 2026 at the Veterans Memorial Stadium at AHS.

The ACSD would like to congratulate each graduate and wish them the best of luck in all of their future endeavors!

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AURORA CITY SCHOOLS

THE ESSENTIAL PLAN

To prepare for future Aurora City School District (ACSD) facility needs, the district has been examining district master plan options to ensure students have access to the best possible educational environment while continuing to be fiscally responsible stewards of Aurora community funds.

After having explored a variety of options over the last several years, along with a review of the 2024 ballot results and community feedback, the district developed "The Essential Plan".

The plan, which is a fiscally responsible roadmap focused on early education, transportation and building care and maintenance, was introduced to address the highest priority facility needs.

The plan ensures students have access to an optimal learning environment while maintaining fiscally responsible stewardship of community funds.

"The Essential Plan" addresses various needs throughout the district and is a focused approach to solving the issues of aging facilities, infrastructure needs and capacity at the elementary level, as well as pressing maintenance needs, such as roofing, HVAC, and paving.

This plan is rooted in reducing costs and creating a less expansive approach to solve these infrastructure challenges based on community engagement reviews following the facility plan put on the ballot in 2024.

"The Essential Plan" addresses solving three primary challenges necessary to provide and sustain a high-quality education experience for Aurora students:

1 ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: Outdated Learning Spaces

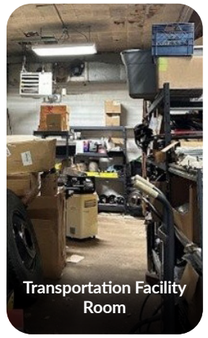


Dr. Milcetich speaking to community members at Craddock Elementary.

A portion of Craddock Elementary is over 100 years old. While well-maintained, the building requires annual extensive and costly repairs merely to remain operational. Its 1940s-era classrooms are undersized and do not meet current spatial requirements for early elementary programs.

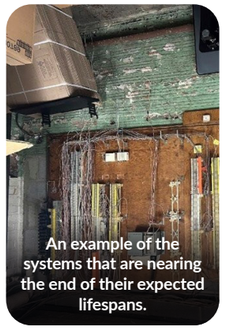
2 TRANSPORTATION: Aging Infrastructure

The current transportation facility uses aging infrastructure that can no longer adequately service the needs of Aurora's bus fleet. The cramped structure lacks space for essential modern repair equipment such as bus lifts, which are necessary for efficient and preventative maintenance. This constraint limits the district's ability to service the bus fleet efficiently and consistently. This adds time and complication to the regular maintenance schedule that is required to maintain a safe and consistent bus fleet.



Transportation Facility Room

3 BUILDING PRESERVATION: Warm, Safe, and Dry Concerns



An example of the systems that are nearing the end of their expected lifespans.

Key mechanical and structural systems across Miller Elementary School, Leighton Elementary School, Harmon Middle School, and Aurora High School are nearing the end of their expected lifespans. These types of repairs exceed the regular annual maintenance that the systems already receive. Deferring necessary HVAC, accessibility, and exterior upgrades increases the likelihood of system failures that could affect operations and cause disruptions to the educational experience.

Achieving Our Objectives

"The Essential Plan" is the district's strategic solution for student success ensuring that buildings remain safe, functional and equipped to provide a high-quality education. By condensing this plan to these key components, the district has significantly reduced the overall scope and cost compared to the previous plan.

Listed below are the detailed plans on how to achieve these objectives.

New Grades 1–3 School (Craddock Site)

The plan includes the construction of a new school building for grades 1–3 on the current Craddock Elementary School site, which would replace the existing building. The new facility would include classrooms sized to current educational standards, updated instructional spaces, and infrastructure designed to support a range of academic and arts programming. Under this configuration, third grade would move from Leighton Elementary School to the new building allowing Leighton School to better accommodate enrollment needs within its existing space.

New Transportation Facility (Craddock Site)

A new transportation facility is planned for the former Craddock School site to replace the district's existing bus operations space. The facility would consolidate transportation functions and include maintenance bays, a wash bay, a bus lift, and dedicated areas for drivers and staff. The updated layout is designed to support routine maintenance and daily transportation operations.

Essential Infrastructure Improvements

The plan also addresses priority infrastructure needs across existing buildings, focusing on extending the useful life of key systems. Improvements include HVAC replacements and ADA accessibility upgrades at all schools. Additional exterior work identified in the plan includes new roofs for Aurora High School and Harmon School, parking lot repairs, Greenmen Way paving and exterior door replacements to support building access, circulation, and operational efficiency.

The ACSD is seeking to create learning and working spaces to support student success, foster innovation, and reflect the values of the Aurora community while continuing to be financially prudent with stakeholder dollars.

With the realization of "The Essential Plan" goals, the district's educators can focus on what they do best—preparing Aurora learners to be future-ready.

The district is committed to continually reviewing "The Essential Plan" while welcoming and encouraging ongoing community feedback.

AURORA CITY SCHOOLS
THE ESSENTIAL PLAN

"The Essential Plan" Community Meetings

Throughout the month of April 2026, the Aurora City School District (ACSD) opened the doors of Craddock Elementary School for a series of three community open houses, inviting residents to learn more about "The Essential Plan" and see the impacted infrastructure firsthand.

These community meetings were intended to begin the process of familiarizing the Aurora Community with the district's "The Essential Plan" facilities strategy and what that includes for the district and the community. The events were also designed to provide opportunities for attendee feedback on the plans.


Dr. Paul Milcetich (center) and Guests.


Bryan Schiraldi (left) and Guests.

The ACSD's goal with "The Essential Plan" is to address the aging and deteriorating Craddock Elementary School building which was constructed in 1911 along with the dilapidated district Transportation Center that is adjacent to Craddock School. Other goals of the plan include addressing infrastructure needs and capacity at the elementary level, as well as pressing maintenance needs, such as roofing, HVAC, and paving. Currently, the ACSD has two modular classrooms at Miller and Leighton Schools.

The meetings were held throughout the month of April on the 16th, 21st, and 29th. During each meeting, guests rotated through three stations with the first station, presented by Superintendent Dr. Paul Milcetich, designed to explain "The Essential Plan", its objectives, conceptual site plans, new Craddock Elementary School images and preliminary cost projections.

Station number two, facilitated by Treasurer Bryan Schiraldi, featured school finance funding information, itemized essential capital improvement costs, and the cost of doing nothing.

The final station, conducted by Assistant Superintendent Mike Hayes, emphasized the connection between physical environment and educational outcomes. He emphasized that while mechanical upgrades—such as HVAC and ADA compliance—are necessary for safety and efficiency, new facilities could enable new opportunities for students and how they interact with their surroundings. Hayes explained, "Modern learning requires more than just a room and a desk. We are looking at flexible learning spaces that allow for large-scale collaboration and focused small-group instruction. This can be done in a variety of exciting ways for young learners."

Visual renderings included visions of future classrooms, media centers, student dining, English Language spaces, gymnasiums, and a feedback survey. The plan envisions moving toward larger classrooms and creating athletic spaces and media centers that are versatile enough to be used for school or community events while supporting 21st century curriculum and ensuring Aurora learners remain "future-ready."



"Modern learning requires more than just a room and a desk. We are looking at flexible learning spaces that allow for large-scale collaboration and focused small-group instruction. This can be done in a variety of exciting ways for young learners."
- MIKE HAYES

Following review of the stations, attendees were invited to tour Craddock Elementary School and the existing Transportation Center. During the school building tour, visitors observed classroom sizes, infrastructure challenges with roofing, and outdated electrical systems which are a necessity for modern academic instruction. "These are not cosmetic upgrades," Superintendent Milcetich told attendees. "These systems are necessary to ensure the school remains safe and functional." At the Transportation Center, visitors were guided through the offices and bus garage that is currently lacking in required space for bus/vehicle maintenance and repair requirements.

Several residents asked what led to the need for these infrastructure projects. Milcetich explained that the last time the district had sufficient capital funding through a voter-approved bond issue for a new school building was around 1970. As a result of that funding, Harmon Middle School opened in 1974. Leighton School was later built around 2000 using district General Funds along with a portion of the annual Permanent Improvement Funds over roughly 25 years, as the district was unable to pass bond levy attempts during that period.

While this approach allowed the ACSD to deal with a population boom and the need to build a new elementary school, it created a situation where proactive maintenance was not possible due to a lack of available funds, which were dedicated to ongoing Leighton loan payments.

The ACSD administration stressed that the "The Essential Plan" is a pared-down request from the district plan that was placed on the previous November 2024 ballot. This plan is based on feedback from Aurora community members. The goal was to identify the improvements necessary to maintain academic excellence and longevity with existing infrastructure.

For those who were unable to attend the community meetings, a photo gallery and presentation boards are available on the district's website at aurora-schools.org. They can be found in "The Essential Plan" tab in the upper right corner of the website and then under the News & Updates link.

LEARN MORE About "The Essential Plan"

To view a 15-part video series released by the district that explains numerous aspects of "The Essential Plan", scan the QR code.

You can also visit the district homepage at aurora-schools.org, click "The Essential Plan" tab to go to "The Essential Plan" homepage, and click on "The Essential Plan Video Series".

Community Focus Spectrum Channel 1021 aired a video feature of a community meeting that is currently posted on the homepage of the ACSD website. Please contact Dr. Paul Milcetich with any questions.

Community Support

During the 2025-26 school year, the community made a big impact on the Aurora Schools through fundraisers, special events and donations. The ACSD would like to thank those who participated in these events and supported the district in various ways.

Aurora Orchestra Association Spring Strings 2026

The successful Spring Strings event raised funds that go toward Aurora Orchestra Association initiatives such as competitions, student awards, private lesson scholarships, guest artists, performance trips and approximately $10,000 in senior scholarships each year.

Aurora Schools Foundation Annual Fundraiser – Sip, Savor, & Support

Through the generosity of attendees, donors, and community partners, the ASF Annual Fundraiser event raised more than $28,000 to support teacher innovation grants, student scholarships, and special initiatives that enhance learning beyond traditional funding sources.

Akron Hospital Build-A-Bear

For the 19th consecutive year, the Akron General's Children's Hospital (AGCH) Have a HEART - Do Your PART Radio-A-Thon annual ACSD fundraiser was organized by teachers Stacey Slackford-Barnes and Mike Rubin. Over the past 19 years, ACSD staff and AHS students have donated more than 2,150 Build-A-Bears and approximately $14,500 in cash to children at Akron Children's Hospital. This year students and staff raised $1,950 in cash and 300 bears and friends were boxed into homes by students and volunteers that were then sent off to children at AGCH. Slackford-Barnes said, "THANK YOU will never be enough. This was our biggest year ever!"

Meijer Supercenter Makes ACSD Donation

Management of the new Meijer Supercenter store in Bainbridge made a generous donation of $10,000 to the ASF.

STATE OF THE SCHOOLS:
Excellence Today, Planning for Tomorrow



Superintendent Dr. Paul Milcetich delivered the district's annual State of the Schools address during the Aurora State of the City Luncheon on February 26, 2026, highlighting both the district's continued success and its vision for the future.

A central theme of the presentation was The Green Standard, Aurora's commitment to preparing future-ready learners through academic excellence, meaningful relationships, and whole-child development. Dr. Milcetich emphasized that student success extends beyond test scores to include leadership, resilience, collaboration, creativity, and service to others.

That commitment continues to produce outstanding results. Aurora City Schools earned a Five-Star Rating on the Ohio State Report Card for the fourth consecutive year. Aurora High School was once again recognized by U.S. News & World Report as one of the top high schools in Ohio and the nation, ranking in the top 1.7% of Ohio high schools and the top 2% nationwide. Additionally, Aurora High School was named a College Board AP Honor Roll Platinum School for the first time, recognizing the school's success in expanding access to Advanced Placement coursework and supporting student achievement.

Looking ahead, Dr. Milcetich also discussed "The Essential Plan", the district's long-term facilities strategy designed to address aging infrastructure, enrollment needs, and critical maintenance projects. The plan's framework includes the potential construction of a new elementary school for grades one through three, an addition to Miller Elementary School, and the reconfiguration of existing buildings to create additional learning space and eliminate the need for classroom trailers.

Beyond classroom space, "The Essential Plan" also addresses districtwide needs such as roof replacements, HVAC upgrades, paving projects, transportation facilities, and other infrastructure improvements that will help ensure Aurora schools remain safe, efficient, and functional for years to come.

Dr. Milcetich emphasized that "The Essential Plan" is being developed through ongoing collaboration with staff, community members, city leaders, and planning partners. He also noted that Aurora schools are primarily funded through local tax dollars, with only a small percentage of project costs expected to be covered through state facilities funding.

"The success of our schools and the success of our city are inseparable. By staying true to The Green Standard, investing thoughtfully in our facilities, and continuing to work together, Aurora will remain a place where students and the community can thrive." - Dr. Milcetich



Aurora High School Academic Signing Day 2026

Congratulations to the 14 AHS seniors who were recognized as a part of the AHS Academic Signing Day 2026 on May 11, 2026. Each deserving senior was recognized for either receiving a merit-based scholarship from the university they will attend that meets or exceeds 50% of the total direct cost of attending the university and/or matriculating to a university with a highly selective acceptance rate. Best of luck to all in their college careers!

Grace Berendt: Oberlin College and Conservatory
Ellen Burdett: Bowling Green State University
Preston Duncan: The Ohio State University
Sara Elliott: Ohio Wesleyan University
Benjamin Kang: Northwestern University
Natalie Magdics: Kent State University
Alyssa Mitchell: Bowling Green State University
Rayyah Rashid: New York University
Kamryn Taylor: Stanford University
Addison Witting: University of Mount Union
Abigail Rogonjic: University of Mount Union
Madeline Cecere: Niagara University
Riley Verespej: Grand Valley State University
Amelia Kilway: Hobart and William Smith Colleges



Aurora High School Outstanding Greenmen 2026

The AHS Outstanding Greenmen 2026 recipients and their Honored Educators were celebrated at a banquet on Thursday, April 2, 2026 at Barrington Golf Club. The AHS staff chose the twelve deserving seniors that were recognized based on their strong Academics, Service/Work, School Participation, Leadership and Character. In turn, the winning students then chose an educator to honor as having had a strong influence on their educational career.

Congratulations to the Student Recipients and their Honored Educators!

Xavier Board, Honored Educator: Brendan Gallagher
Isabella Cicero, Honored Educator: Mike Rubin
Nick Felice, Honored Educator: Chris Radtke
Sophie Frissore, Honored Educator: Conni Hilston
Amelia Goodman, Honored Educator: Toni Taylor
Andrew Mueller, Honored Educator: Monika Biro
Addyson Rumskey, Honored Educator: Jay Price
Emerson Spiesz, Honored Educator: Tim Baczkowski
Kamryn Taylor, Honored Educator: Lauren Brancazio
Elakia Vadivelan, Honored Educator: Josh Rakow
Riley Verespej, Honored Educator: Shannon Gagel
Rocco Zembala, Honored Educator: Jake Knapp

Aurora City School District Honors Staff Excellence Award Winners

The district extends heartfelt congratulations to the 2025-2026 Staff Excellence Awards Winners! These staff members were nominated by their peers and are very well deserving of the honor. Both award recipients were recognized by the Aurora Board of Education at the May 2026 Board of Education meeting.

Steve Horvath

Excellence in Teaching Award Winner

Aurora High School Science teacher Steve Horvath was recognized for not only his commitment to Aurora High School, but for his help this past school year in mentoring two new science teachers who he provided with extra time and support.

Brian Hagen

Excellence in Classified Service Award Winner

Brian Hagen, who is a Custodian/Maintenance employee at Leighton Elementary School, was recognized for the way he looks after everyone at Leighton School, especially for his connection with special-education students as they wait for the bus every day.

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Anjani Panigrahi Wins CWRU Cancer Symposium

ACSD 10th grade student, Anjani Panigrahi, earned first place out of 24 teams at the Case Western Reserve University Cancer Disparities Symposium. This prestigious recognition follows her presentation of original research focusing on the socioeconomic and systemic barriers that impact cancer survivorship. Her project delved into the complex obstacles patients face after initial cancer treatment. By focusing on cancer survivorship barriers, Panigrahi joins a group of young researchers dedicated to social justice in healthcare.

This awesome accomplishment underscores the high level of scientific inquiry being fostered in Aurora, as students engage with real-world medical challenges facing the Cleveland area and beyond while emphasizing the importance of student-led research in solving regional health disparities.

Congratulations are also extended to Elakia and Karthik Vadivelan for earning 2nd place at the CWRU Cancer Disparities Symposium. Their research on social media and endometrial cancer awareness is helping to move women's health forward.



Anjani Panigrahi (right)