



MOUNT PLEASANT

Central School District

FROM THE HEART

SUMMER 2026

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2026!



OUR LITTLEST WILDCATS ARE OFFICIALLY UPK GRADUATES!

This class carries forward a tradition that began just last year, when Mount Pleasant partnered with the YMCA of Central Westchester to launch Pre-K for our youngest learners. In just one year, this program has built a strong foundation in literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional growth, and watching it grow has been a joy. Their commencement kicked off four ceremonies that Mount Pleasant celebrated this June. WHS Class of 2039 is already on its way. #wildcatpride

FROM DR. PETER GIARRIZZO, SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Wildcats,

I am delighted to present this edition of From the Heart, celebrating our students and Mount Pleasant year-end traditions. Please join me in applauding all of our students for their outstanding achievements this year across academics, arts, and athletics.

Gathering to honor the experiences that led to our commencement and moving up ceremonies remains one of the great joys of this role. From our youngest Wildcubs to our WHS Class of 2026, every ceremony this year carried its own spirit, but a common thread ran through them all: gratitude for how far our students have come, and excitement for where they are headed next.

At Hawthorne, our second graders were welcomed as “professional wonder hunters,” reminded to look up, lean in, and carry their curiosity with them to Columbus. At Columbus, our fifth graders were encouraged to hold onto that same sense of wonder as they prepare for Westlake Middle School, understanding that big accomplishments are really just collections of small moments. At WMS, our eighth graders carried the theme of energy into high school, having learned that hard work builds future success. And for our WHS Class of 2026, who said goodbye to Westlake and their secondary school experience, every speaker returned to the quiet, ordinary moments that shape a life. I am certain we have equipped them with a solid foundation to pursue their dreams, knowing that “once a Wildcat, always a Wildcat.”

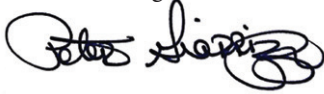
It has been a busy summer across the District. We look forward to introducing many talented new teachers and staff members to the Mount Pleasant family, and I know our community will welcome them just as warmly as always. At the same time, our facilities teams have been hard at work, with significant construction underway across our buildings, most notably at Westlake High School and Hawthorne Elementary, as we continue investing in spaces that will serve our students well for years to come.

This work, seen and unseen, is all in service of the same goal: a district that is educating students today for endless possibilities tomorrow and where every family feels welcome. For additional details on construction projects and updates, please check our social media.

I wish you a peaceful remainder of summer and eagerly await welcoming our students back in September.

Go Wildcats!

With warm regards,



ONCE A WILDCAT, ALWAYS A WILDCAT.



The June 10 Board of Education meeting brought a season of gratitude to a close, honoring seven retirees whose careers span more than 160 years of combined service to Mount Pleasant. The Columbus Troubadours opened the evening with a performance, and Dr. Giarrizzo marked the occasion with his signature retirement haikus for each honoree, a tradition that got a fitting twist when Mr. Hall turned the tables and composed an impromptu haiku of his own in return.

Congratulations to this year's retirees: **Tom Hall, Mandy Goldstone, Rosanna Siagris, Kevin O'Connor, Patty Sullivan, Michael Pezzuti, and Susan Pezzuti.** The district also recognized long-serving PTA volunteers Lauren Stanco and Lori Ferrara for years of dedication to Wildcat families.

KEY DATES FOR SEPTEMBER 2026

Details will be sent from each school

- 8/18 First Day of Football
- 8/24 First Day of Other Fall Sports
- 8/25 Freshman Orientation
WMS Bagels & Locks
- 8/27 UPK Meet & Greet
- 8/28 UPK Meet & Greet
- 9/2 HES Meet & Greet
See Calendar for Times
3rd Grade Welcome Social
- 9/3 Schools Open
- 9/8 WooHoo Welcome
UPK Back to School Night
- 9/9 HES Back to School Night
- 9/10 CES Back to School Night
- 9/14 WHS College Application
Workshop (Senior Parents)
- 9/17 WMS Back to School Night
- 9/19 Kindergarten Ice Cream Social
- 9/24 WHS Back to School Night

ACCESS THE FULL CALENDAR HERE



GET TO KNOW VALEDICTORIAN CHRISTINA RODRIGUES

Mount Pleasant History: I have been in the Mount Pleasant schools since Kindergarten.

Favorite Classes: AP Biology, Science Research, and Anatomy and Physiology. I love understanding how the human body works on a molecular level and how that shows up on a larger scale.

Extracurriculars: Senior Editor of the Yearbook Committee, officer of both the National English Honor Society and Service Club, peer mentor through PALS, and a writing tutor at the school's Writing Center. Outside of school, I've been a competitive dancer for 15 years, volunteer with the Pleasantville Ambulance Corp with over 250 hours of service, and work part-time at a cafe in Pleasantville.

Succeeding at Westlake: My persistence. I'd rather spend hours on a task until I'm satisfied than give up, and that ability to push through setbacks has mattered in every part of life.

Most Influential Mount Pleasant Educator: Mrs. Speisman, who taught me AP Biology and Anatomy & Physiology and became a mentor, offering advice on college and life beyond the classroom. Mr. McIntyre, my Science Research teacher, helped me develop the critical-thinking and writing skills to confidently present my project to scientific experts.

Funny/Meaningful Westlake Story: Senior year homecoming, decorating my car with friends, dressing up for the pep rally, and cheering at our last homecoming game together. It hit me that our time at Westlake was really coming to an end.

After High School: I'll be attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, majoring in biology on the pre-med track.



GET TO KNOW SALUTATORIAN ISABELLE CHACKO

Mount Pleasant History: I've been in the Mount Pleasant School District since Kindergarten (Mrs. Rush!).

Favorite Classes: Science Research with Mr. McIntyre and AP Macro with Mr. Harras. Science Research taught me to read complex literature, design experiments, and present findings, as well as patience, curiosity, and perseverance. AP Macro surprised me by making economics feel relevant to everyday life instead of just memorization.

Extracurriculars: Science National Honor Society Co-President, Student Council Executive Board VP, Rho Kappa VP, and International Culture Club Treasurer, along with Science Olympiad, Math Club, English Honor Society, and Wind Ensemble. Girls Varsity Tennis for four years, captain this year. I play flute in the Westchester County Youth Symphony, have practiced Indian classical dance for 14 years, volunteer at the Pleasantville Library, am an altar server at my church, and have conducted research at Regeneron Pharmaceuticals for two years.

Succeeding at Westlake: The supportive home and school communities. My family has always encouraged me, and my schools pushed me to take rigorous classes and try new things, from theater to tennis to leadership roles; my teachers supported me along the way.

Most Influential Mount Pleasant Educator: Mrs. Lodespoto. I had her for Spanish for two years, then stayed connected through Student Council and my senior internship. Her kindness and encouragement have made a lasting impression on me.

Funny/Meaningful Westlake Story: AP Biology with Mrs. Speisman and our "Bio fam," complete with paper plate awards, whiteboard decorations, and monthly class parties. After the AP exam, we celebrated at Bobo's Café, then I came home to meet my new puppy, Pepper.

After High School: I'll be attending the Sophie Davis B.S./M.D. program, earning both degrees in 7 years with guaranteed medical school acceptance.

SENIOR WALK





HAWTHORNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL's second graders made it official: they are headed to Columbus Elementary School in the fall, and they celebrated the milestone in style, twice. Due to inclement weather, two Moving Up ceremonies were held indoors at Columbus, but the change of venue did nothing to dim the energy in the room.

Principal Anthony Carolini welcomed the crowd and reflected on how far the students had come, not just physically, but socially and academically. He recalled favorite memories spanning all three years, from kindergarten field trips to an unforgettable 1st grade field day to a 2nd grade year packed with legendary moments, including ice cream parties, duck visits during STEM class, and the Legoland trip. He had challenged them in September to be the best in the building, and by his account, they exceeded every expectation. "Once a Hawthorne Star, always a Hawthorne Star," he told them, asking them to be brave, stay curious, make mistakes, and keep the golden rule.

Dr. G addressed the students with a message about wonder, calling them "professional wonder hunters,"

the kind of people who don't just see rain but find stories in clouds, who notice ladybugs under leaves. He asked them to make three promises as they move forward: look up, lean in, and bend low. He thanked teachers and families for helping students find their joy, and reminded graduates of the road ahead: Columbus through 2029, Westlake Middle School in 2032, and Westlake High School in 2036.

Assistant Principal Erica Denman, who serves in that role at both Hawthorne and Columbus, closed out the ceremonies with an official welcome to the newest Columbus students, congratulating the graduates and asking each class to stand, the official moment they moved up from second to third grade. Throughout the ceremonies, students performed "The Star-Spangled Banner" together, along with songs including "On My Way," "One Drop," "One Year Older," and the Hawthorne Elementary School song.

The celebrations continued long after, with families and friends gathering in the gym hallway and outside the school, where graduation decorations set the perfect backdrop for a few last photos together. Congratulations Hawthorne Class of 2026!

Be brave,
stay curious,
make mistakes,
and keep the
golden rule.





COLUMBUS FIFTH GRADERS

made it official: they are headed to Westlake Middle School, marking the moment in a Moving Up Ceremony held outdoors on a beautiful June day, full of joy, cheers, and celebration.

Students processed in to “Pomp and Circumstance” before the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Peyton Broderick and Elle DiPaolo. Principal Kevin Hanlon welcomed Columbus families and set the tone with warmth and candor, sharing that this was his first year leading Columbus and that he felt lucky to have this class as his first group of fifth graders. He had reviewed student reflection surveys before the ceremony and found that the memories that rose to the top weren’t the big productions, but field days, the Kona Ice truck, recess, and everyday moments with friends. “Work hard, be kind, listen to your teachers, and enjoy it,” he told them, “because it goes fast.”

Dr. G reminded students to hold onto wonder and stay open-minded as they encounter new subjects, new people, and new challenges. Big accomplishments, he told them, are really just collections of small hours, and every giant leap starts with a single step. He asked them to keep their eyes open, their minds curious, and their hearts kind, congratulating them on making it through elementary school. Their road ahead: Westlake Middle School in 2029 and Westlake High School in 2033.

Assistant Principal Erica Denman connected her own journey to theirs, noting she began at Columbus as AP the same year this class started, learning the building together, the teachers’ names, the hallways, the best water fillers. She offered honest reassurance that she doesn’t love making mistakes, but learns from every one of them. Mrs. Denman told students her hope is that they do things they love, take risks, and aren’t afraid to stumble along the way. “You will always have a home at Columbus,” she told them.

5th grade teachers called each student by name as they crossed the stage to receive their certificates, sending them off with a fist bump from Principal Hanlon and a handshake from Dr. G. The class song, “A Million Dreams,” rang out a cappella, students’ voices carrying across the outdoor ceremony. WMS Principal Anthony Mungioli officially accepted the new 6th grade class, and students processed out to “Hall of Fame” by The Script. Congratulations Columbus Class of 2026!

Work hard,
be kind,
listen to
your
teachers,
and enjoy it.



DREAM BIG AND FLY HIGH WMS CLASS OF 2026!

Westlake Middle School's eighth graders said goodbye to the hallways they've called home and hello to high school on a stunning June morning, celebrating the milestone in a Moving Up Ceremony filled with music and pride.

Students processed in to "Crown Imperial March" by William Walton. Gia Bianchine led the Pledge of Allegiance, and The Meistersingers performed the National Anthem, later returning with "Let the River Run" by Carly Simon. The Westlake Winds performed "Best of the Beatles."

Student speaker Kieran Fitzpatrick opened with a nod to Charlie Brown, reflecting on the questions that hang over every new chapter: what challenges they'll face, who their friends will be. He recalled standout memories, including Mr. Mungioli getting slimed, the trip to Washington, D.C., and performances

of "The Outsiders," and closed with an invitation to step into the next chapter together: "If we take risks and stay involved, we will not be disappointed."

Student speaker Crystal Zhang reflected on walking into WMS three years ago with backpacks twice their size, trying to avoid the big, scary eighth graders. She credited teachers and families for pushing them to be their best and reminded classmates that the voyage ahead is not linear. "Realign your focus to achieve the future you desire."

Principal Anthony Mungioli welcomed the crowd with gratitude for faculty, staff, and families, then closed the ceremony with a direct address. He told graduates that energy was their class theme, evolving into critical thinking, leadership, and genuine empathy for those around them. "Excuses don't build futures. Hard work does," he told them.

Dr. G offered a metaphor for the road ahead: the next four years are a lot like flying a kite. WMS gave them the frame and structure, their families gave them the string, but kites belong in the air. "Dream big and fly high, Class of 2026 and WHS Class of 2030."

Superintendent Giarrizzo and Principal Mungioli awarded certificates to the graduates, and Mr. Mungioli officially presented the Class of 2026 to WHS Principal Daniel Brady. Students walked out to "Beach Boys on Stage," closing the book on their middle school years.





Congratulations WMS Class of 2026 & Welcome to Westlake High School!



CONGRATULATION



Megan Alexander
Suad Ziad Ali
Salvatore Andrew Avellino
Alayna Noel Avezzano*‡
Ethan X. Bach
Gisele Balidemaj
Joseph Michael Beranger
Klea Blaka*
Keira Grace Borello*‡
Brandon Joseph Cada Florez
Marco Santo Campagna
Julia Campanella*
Cate Cangialosi
Macey Caruso
Emma Antonia Casal*
Maya Sofia Casal*
Luan Celaj*
Olivia Celaj
Isabella Faith Celentano*
Isabelle Mary Chacko*
Christopher Chae*‡
Jason Daniel Chiera*
NinaMaria Elisa Ciccone
Maeve E. Coyne*
Mia C. Coyne*
Dean Dable*
Emma Ann D'Andrea
Louis Michael Del Pizzo
GianMarco Christian DelDuca *‡
Michael L. DeMartino
Finian Michael Dempsey*
Jianna Seraphina D'Epiro
Madison Kate Devlin
Daniela Rose DiMarino*
Nicholas DiNapoli*
Bridget L. Doherty*
Jaiden D. Dominguez
Hailey Egan
Jaya Victoria Ferraro*
Lucas Richard Finkel
Brady Liam Fitzgerald*‡
Tycho Alexander Force*
Lindsay Carol Fox*
Isabella Caroline Gamerota*
Jacob Flint Gendler
Elke Maria Georgioudakis
Luke Gilbert
Antonio Aidan Goenaga
Deacon A. Gomez
Connor Bennett Gray
Christopher Robert Gute
Jessica Hammeral*‡
Lauren Hammeral*‡
Charles Michael Hannon
Nareh Hovsepyan*
Elise Nicole Hurdis*
Marcus A. Jackette
Angela Kalavaci
Aidan Kelly*
Nicholas Michael Kiernan
Jason P. Kraus*‡
Gianna Nicole La Scala*
Adriel Laari*
Olivia Lampo
Robert Landi
Thomas Laracuenta
Ivo Loehr
Talia Rose Lotto*
Collin Ross Lyden
Jillian Rose Lyden*
Ava Margaret Lynch*
Sean Lynch
Giuliana Maria Malaj*‡

Westlake High School's Class of 2026 graduated in a ceremony marked by joy, resilience, and more than a little rain. The celebration took place on the turf, and while the weather tested everyone's patience earlier in the day, Superintendent Dr. Giarrizzo offered the perfect frame: there are no flowers without rain.

Student Council Executive Board President Lindsay Fox served as emcee, introducing her best friend since age three, Senior Class President Brooke Pfeiffer, who opened the ceremony by framing high school as a basketball game. Freshmen learning the fundamentals, sophomores learning to pass, juniors facing the full-court press, and seniors finally leading as players until the final buzzer. She closed with a challenge to trust yourself, live without regrets, and make it count.

Board of Education President Sara Beaty brought a letter to the graduates, built

from advice collected from teachers across the district. Among the highlights: stop and smell the roses; your GPA will not help you find your car keys; karma is real; put your cell phone down once in a while; shake hands and say thank you; and send your friends a birthday card. She reminded them that time moves faster as they get older and that the antidote is to stop, be present, and enjoy it. "Westlake will always be your home, even though you're leaving. Congratulations, Class of 2026. The world is waiting for you."

Salutatorian Isabelle Chacko reflected on how far the class had come since her 8th grade graduation speech, recalling that they had survived 6th grade paint fumes, COVID, and a rainstorm forty minutes before the ceremony. She left classmates with her yearbook quote: "Shoot for the moon, because even if you miss, you'll land among the stars."

Valedictorian Christina Rodrigues brought the class back to their first day

Your character and kindness will define

NS CLASS OF 2026!



Charlotte Michelle Malone*‡
 Cara Brooke Maloney*
 Yunning Mao
 Marilyn Maraglino
 Giana Marchese*‡
 Tierney Mae Martin
 Hailey S. McCloskey
 Tyler Logan McDonough
 Chloe A. McKeon*
 Ashley Marie McKiernan*
 Julia Marie Menichino
 Gabriella Mingione
 Kimberly Autumn Molina
 Romen Lazarus Monaco
 Matthew Thomas Montuschi*
 Kolby Cynthia Moody
 Sofia Alexandra Mora
 Thomas J. Morrone*
 Kieran J. Murray
 Cole Joseph Nazaruk
 John Theodore Nichols IV*
 Anthony G. Nigrelli
 Grayce Kathleen O'Dell
 Christopher Peter Orlando
 Ethan A. Orrego
 Susanna Marie Palumbo*
 Valeria Fernanda Pani
 Gianna Elizabeth Parrotta
 Jasmin Perez Miguel
 Gianluca Persampieri*
 Robert Louis Persico
 Brooke A. Pfeiffer*
 Luca Piazza
 Amelia Pintavalle*
 Matthew James Pippo*
 Erlene Prasad*
 Nolan Peter Quinn
 Christopher Ramos
 Christina Elizabeth Rodrigues*
 Mason James Rossi
 Owen John Samoyedny*
 Sean William Samoyedny*
 Ella Silvana Savino*
 Gabriella Yvonne Segarra*
 Brooklynn Shaw
 Serena Shim*
 Christian James Short
 Elizabeth Lilian Singh*
 Lyla Alayne Snyder
 Evan Christopher Staar
 Mia Francesca Stanco
 Peter Suhay
 Simon Syku
 Andrew P. Szeszko*
 Jonathan Thomas*
 Paul Michael Tothill
 Nicolas Angel Gregori Valencia
 Jozsef Varadi*
 Eddie Vazquez
 Frank Robert Vessa*
 Emma Villa*
 Elias Vincent
 Mason Ronald Walpole*
 Maeve K. Walsh*
 Dane Sebastian Weinerman
 Joseph Wilches
 Juliana Anne Williams
 Fiona Zaimi*‡
 Alyssa Marie Zeolla

together in September 2022, freshmen trying to figure out how moles could be anything other than something on your arm. She spoke honestly about the balance she wished she had struck and thanked her family, including grandparents who traveled from Portugal. She closed with quiet confidence: "We have outgrown this place. Look how far we have come. We did it."

Principal Daniel Brady thanked the community for coming together despite the morning's weather and recognized retiring staff members Mandy Goldstone and Kevin O'Connor. He described the Class of 2026 as wildly different but deeply connected, energetic and close-knit, and, in their own words, slay-tastic. "Schools are not buildings," he told them. "They are what's inside them." His closing message stayed simple: "Your character and kindness will define you more than your grades ever will."

Math teacher Marissa Fata (who also

happens to be a WHS graduate!) delivered the commencement address, telling graduates she sat in their exact seats twenty years ago and never planned to come back. As a calculus teacher, she knows something about continuous change, and her message centered on embracing it: ask for help, reflect and reset, protect your peace, and carry your dreams across the stage.

Dr.G closed the ceremony with his annual song-based address, choosing "Little Wonders" by Rob Thomas to reflect on letting go of regret and finding meaning in life's small, unmapped moments. He challenged graduates to become artists of the everyday, finding joy not in the perfect milestone but in an ordinary morning or a moment of real connection. "Let go of what is behind, protect the small hours, and live so deeply in the ordinary moments that life becomes extraordinary." Congratulations Class of 2026!

...e you more than your grades ever will.

* National Honor Society
 ‡ Capstone Diploma



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Mount Pleasant Central School District
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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SPRING 2026 ATHLETES!



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GIRLS LACROSSE



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TENNIS



BOYS & GIRLS TRACK