



SCHOOL BELL

A Publication of Watervliet Public Schools

Working Together to Keep Us Together

Issue 2, Spring 2026

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SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Watervliet Community,

I hope this correspondence finds you well and that you are getting through the winter months. I know that while some of our population enjoyed those snow days, let's be honest- the kids, I recognize it does cause families to adjust on the fly, and that can be frustrating. I appreciate your patience, and please know there is a lot that goes into those decisions, and at the core is the safety of our greatest community resource- the children.

It has been a pleasure to once again serve the community of Watervliet in the capacity of school superintendent. My 23 years here are truly the highlight of my career. While there have been bumps in the road in my time with you, I think we have worked through issues and come out on the other side better for listening. It is my hope that during the next few months, we identify your next school leader. The Board of Education will be making decisions in March, and I encourage you to attend the interviews. This is a big decision. I completely trust your Board of Education and know they will follow through with what is best for the District and, most importantly, the children of Watervliet Public Schools.

We have been busy with construction planning. In 2024, the community of Watervliet voted affirmatively for a bond presented by the school district. The construction will happen in three phases over the course of the next two and a half years.

This summer, unit vent replacement will take place in select areas of the high and middle schools. This will allow for some well-deserved cooling in the hot months and improved efficiency over the years. In addition, four restrooms in need of refreshing will be renovated with new plumbing, ADA accessible facilities, with new fixtures and flooring.

These improvements will greatly benefit the students of Watervliet and add value to the spaces. On behalf of the students, staff, and Board of Education, thank you for your support, and we will deliver for you.

As we look forward to spring and spring break, it can be an exciting time. We get a little more light in our evenings, kids get outside more, and the activities at Hays Park heat up. I encourage you to continue to talk with your child about school and what is going well for them, and if there are struggles during this busy time. Our goal is to close as strongly as we began. Please take care, and as always, know you can reach out to me if you think I can be of service.

Respectfully,

Kevin Schooley
Interim Superintendent of Schools

GSRP PRE-SCHOOL

Coordinator: Tiffany Williams twilliams@watervlietps.org



Great Start Readiness Program is a state-funded free preschool program and its income-based qualifications change yearly. GSRP is administered locally through Berrien RESA. Children countywide who turn four by September first are encouraged to apply. However, in-district children receive first consideration for the Watervliet GSRP as mandated by state law.

Watervliet's GSRP Coordinator is Tiffany Williams and she is assisted by Ashleigh Bobay. Both women have children in the Watervliet School System and Ashleigh is herself a Watervliet Graduate.

GSRP students are exposed to a variety of large and small group activities throughout the day, focussing on literacy, math, cognitive, social, language, and physical development. During the morning the children learn and grow through play and exploration in the classroom. They enjoy a morning breakfast and lunch provided by our nutrition program at the school. GSRP has its own playground and outside play is great gross motor activity. With their growing minds and bodies in mind, there is a rest time in the day to help our preschoolers reset for the afternoon.

"The students love exploring and building in our block area, creating castles, houses and buildings, says Williams. "We transform the dramatic play area throughout the year to go along with our study that we are working on, creating a music area during our instrument study, a light exploration lab for the light study, and a bakery during the holidays for cookies, donuts and cakes."

"For children this young, preschool is typically the start of social development and learning. Many students have never been in a daycare or school setting before. Helping them to grow with others and build the confidence to do things for themselves is a big part of our program," Williams says.

Parent meetings are scheduled throughout the year to share information about various topics such as the importance of routines and consistency, fostering independence in their children, fine and gross motor skills development, as well as their child's academic growth. It truly is a partnership with families at this age, building up the children and giving parents tools and resources to use at home.

Williams says the excitement and newness that the students find in learning is very rewarding. "They are little sponges and absorb so much throughout the year; the growth that they have from September to May is incredible."



Tiffany Williams grew up in Lansing, MI. She holds a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Western Governors University. She previously worked as the director of a large daycare center in Colorado and has also run a home daycare. Tiffany and her husband Howard have four boys who keep them busy with all of their sports and activities. This is her 8th year with GSRP.



SOUTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Principal Sherry Wheeler sherry.wheeler@watervlietps.org
Building Secretary Karli Loshbough karli.losbough@watervlietps.org
Office Phone: 269-463-0860



New Playground Equipment at South



After six years of dreaming big and working tirelessly, South Elementary is excited to celebrate the installation of brand-new playground equipment, made possible entirely through the incredible efforts of our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). Through thoughtful planning, fundraising, grant writing, and community events, the PTO's *Launching Playtime* campaign brought to life a safe, inclusive, and fun play space for all.

Adding to the excitement, South Student Council proudly contributed two new basketball hoops, funded through student-led fundraisers and Spirit Day participation. This meaningful contribution ensures even more opportunities for students to stay active and have fun at recess.

A huge thank you to our PTO, Student Council, families, and community members whose support made these projects possible. Because of you, recess at South is better than ever!

Kindergarten ROUND-UP!

JOIN US!

Wednesday, March 18
5:00 - 6:30 PM

Saturday, March 21st
12:00 - 1:30 PM

REGISTER NOW!

Call: 269-463-0860
Visit: www.watervlietps.org

Future Panthers Welcome!

Welcoming New Mighty Panthers! 🐾

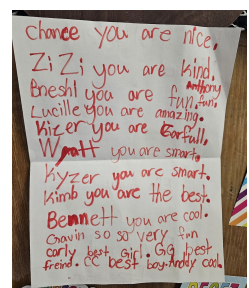
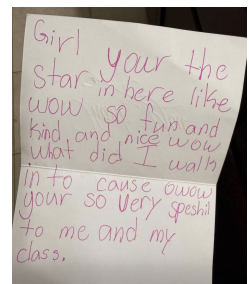
- **Kindergarten:** Turn 5 by **September 1**
- **Young 5's:** Turn 5 by **December 1**
- **GSRP:** Turn 4 by **September 1**

♥ Capturing Kids' Hearts at South Elementary

At South Elementary, Capturing Kids' Hearts (CKH) is positively shaping our school culture for both students and staff. CKH focuses on building strong, trusting relationships and reminds us to *connect with the heart before teaching the mind*.

Aligned with our PBIS framework, CKH helps ensure students experience consistent expectations and a learning environment that is safe—both physically and emotionally. One practice our school community has truly embraced is the use of affirmations, where students and staff intentionally share positive, encouraging words that build confidence, strengthen connections, and support a welcoming, inclusive school culture.

By capturing kids' hearts first, South Elementary continues to grow a culture where every student feels valued, supported, and ready to learn.



🎵 Celebrating 20 Years of Musical Excellence: Mr. Brandon Mattson

This year marks Mr. Brandon Mattson's 20th year of teaching elementary music in Watervliet, and his impact can be heard far beyond the walls of his classroom.

Over two decades, Mr. Mattson has shaped the musical journey of thousands of students, creating a strong foundation that feeds directly into our middle school and high school programs—and for many students, into a lifelong love of music. When asked what he is most thankful for, Brandon quickly points to the welcoming community and unwavering support of Watervliet. That support, paired with his passion and talent, has allowed his programs to flourish year after year.

A visit to Mr. Mattson's classroom is something special. Each day, students participate in engaging and joyful lessons that provide instruction that goes far beyond the basics of music; teaching confidence, collaboration, creativity, and expression. Students don't just learn music—they experience it.

Mr. Mattson's elementary choir programs are rooted in a simple but powerful belief: *students who want to perform should be given the opportunity*. Because of this philosophy, countless students have stepped onto stages they may have never imagined. Choir experiences have taken students to Mackinac Island, where they stayed at the Grand Hotel; to Miller Auditorium, where they learned about the history of Broadway before attending a performance of *Wicked*; and to Gurnee, Illinois, where students earned a top rating in the Treble Choir Division at the Music in the Park Festival.

Closer to home, his choirs are deeply connected to the community. South Elementary first-grade choir students have the opportunity to perform at the Coastline Children's Film Festival, while second, 4th, and 5th grade choir students proudly participate in the Hometown Christmas Parade, spreading music and joy throughout Watervliet.

Mr. Mattson's influence extends well beyond his elementary students. He has been invited to present at the Michigan Music Conference in Grand Rapids five times, sharing his expertise with fellow educators. He has served as a mentor to student teachers, helping shape the next generation of music educators. Since 2016, he has taught elementary music methods for educators at Western Michigan University, and many of his former university students have visited his classroom to witness the "magic" of his instruction in action.

During the summers, Brandon continues to bring music to life through a highly successful community music program, offering instruction in voice, ukulele, piano, guitar, and violin. Students, staff, and community members—from ages 5 to 75—come to learn, grow, and perform. Each summer concludes with a public showcase, celebrating both progress and passion.

Beyond music, Brandon is deeply rooted in family and perseverance. He met his wife, Brenda, just out of high school, and they will celebrate 19 years of marriage this July. Their son Brendan, 14, is a freshman at Mattawan and a dedicated travel hockey player, while their daughter Braelynn, 17, is a senior at Mattawan and dual-enrolled at KVCC. Brandon has also completed four marathons, a reflection of the same dedication and discipline he brings to his teaching.

Watervliet is truly blessed to have such an incredible talent shaping our students—not only as musicians, but as confident, courageous learners. Mr. Brandon Mattson's legacy is one of inspiration, opportunity, and lasting influence, ensuring that the future of music in our schools and beyond is in exceptionally strong hands.



NORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Principal Lori Pline lpine@watervlietps.org

Building Secretary Desiree Davis desiree.davis@watervlietps.org

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Snowflake the Elf made her appearance at our school the week before break, and right away she was busy checking her Naughty and Nice List on her very first day. Not long after, Snowflake found herself in detention for making a poor choice-she was caught sledding in the hallway, which is not allowed, even for elves! After learning her lesson, Snowflake turned things around and was later spotted ice fishing, catching "goldfish" to keep her energy up for her important elf responsibilities. Snowflake's adventures remind us that good choices matter every day!



Mrs. Jackson, our school counselor, recently welcomed some therapy dogs to school for a special visit with students. The handlers talked with students about what therapy dogs do and how they help people feel calm, safe, and supported.



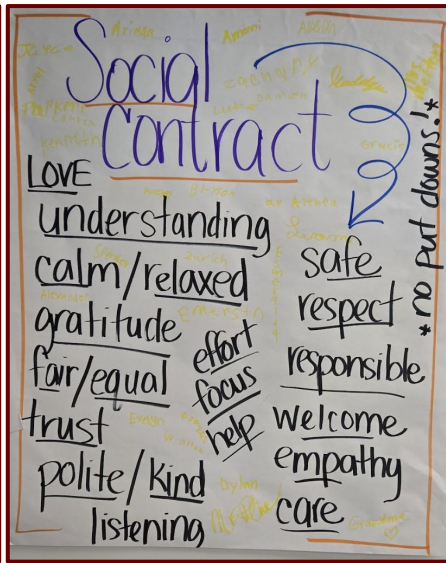
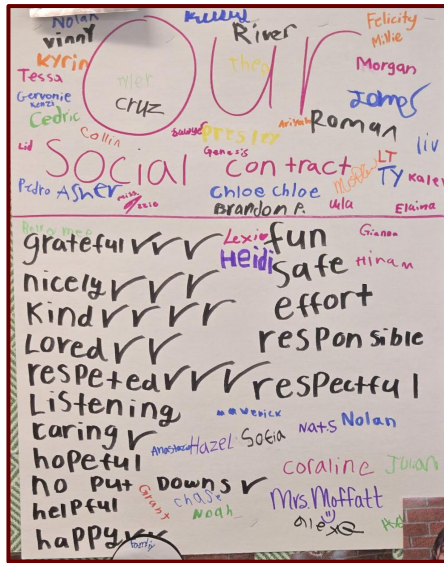
The dogs helped demonstrate ways they assist others by providing comfort, reducing stress, and bringing smiles to those who may be having a hard day. It was a fun and meaningful experience that helped students learn the importance of caring for others and taking care of their own feelings too.

As part of our PBIS program, during the first trimester, North School students who met behavior expectations earned a special trip to the movie, *Pets on a Train*. To attend, students worked hard to earn enough Pride Tickets to fill a fish bowl and maintained fewer than two personal referrals. This reward celebrated positive choices, responsibility, and teamwork. In the second trimester, students continue to earn Pride Tickets while also focusing on controlling the noise level in the cafeteria during lunch, helping create a calmer and more enjoyable environment for everyone. They are working toward another fun trip in March.



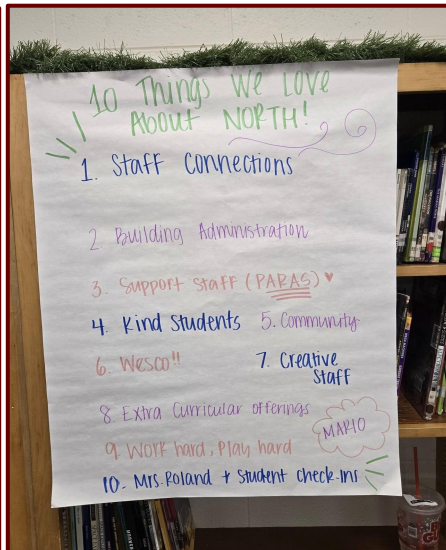
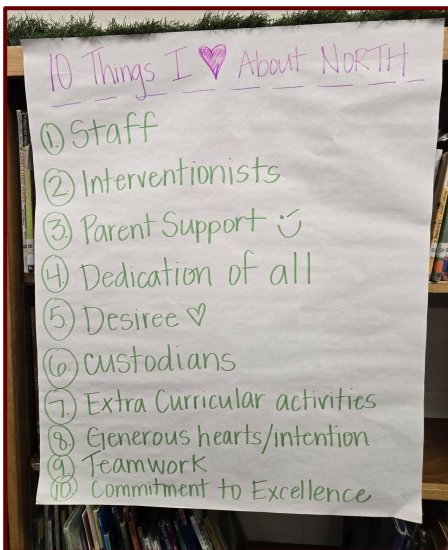
NORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL continued

At North School, we are working hard to strengthen our school community through Capturing Kids' Hearts. Our classrooms have already done a tremendous amount of meaningful work to build connections and trust. Students are welcoming one another with student greeters, sharing affirmations, and beginning each day by celebrating good things happening in their lives. Classrooms have also created Social Contracts together, outlining how everyone wants to feel and how we agree to treat one another each day.



In addition, Leadworthy lessons are being incorporated into Mrs. Roland's Behavior Games and our monthly Roundtable meetings, helping students practice leadership, responsibility, and positive decision-making. Through these intentional efforts, North School continues to build a strong, caring community where students feel valued, connected, and ready to learn.

As part of our Capturing Kids' Hearts work, we asked teachers to reflect on their experiences by naming the 10 things they love about North School. This activity gave staff an opportunity to celebrate what makes our school special, highlight the strengths of our community, and recognize the positive relationships, dedication, and culture that make North a great place to learn and grow. Their reflections reinforced the strong sense of pride and connection we are building together at North



Shout Outs:

- **Success Staff** for all you do to support the staff and students at North
- **Peggy Lloyd (Miss Peggy)** for 10 years of service to WPS. We will miss you
- **Mrs. Bohle** for pouring into the students of Watervliet over the last 16 years. Your influence will never be forgotten.
- **Mrs. Davis**, who keeps the place running, for your calm presence and never ending patience

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Principal Dave Kindt

Building Secretary Jennifer Higdon
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Middle School Highlights: Growth, Opportunity, and Pride



Despite a winter filled with weather-related interruptions and a challenging end to the first semester, our middle school students and staff continue to demonstrate resilience, commitment, and success. We recently completed our mid-year NWEA assessments and were thrilled to see **tremendous academic growth across grade levels**, a testament to the hard work happening in classrooms every day—even when schedules were less than ideal.

In addition to academic growth, we are seeing meaningful gains in **school culture and community** through the continued implementation of **Capturing Kids' Hearts (CKH)**. By focusing on relationship-building, intentional connections, and creating emotionally safe classrooms, CKH has helped strengthen student engagement and foster a greater sense of belonging across the building. Students are more connected to adults and one another, classrooms are grounded in shared expectations, and we are seeing positive momentum in how students approach learning, behavior, and leadership. These relationships are foundational to the success we are seeing academically and socially.

Beyond academics, our students continue to thrive through meaningful experiences and opportunities. On February 14 we hosted our **Valentine's Day Dance**, a semi-formal event that gives students the chance to dress up, connect with peers, and enjoy a fun, safe evening together. Events like these play an important role in building community and belonging at the middle school level.

Our **Student Council** has had an especially impactful year. During Thanksgiving, they organized a successful **Food Drive**, collecting boxes of food to support **six families** facing challenges this year. They also represented our building with pride at the recent **School Board Recognition Meeting**, and this winter they are sponsoring a **shoe collection drive** to raise funds and collect shoes for those in need.

Student leadership and enrichment continue to shine across the building. The **Honor Society** has been actively fundraising to support an upcoming trip to **Nashville**, while **E-Sports** is in full swing and continuing to grow in participation and success. Our **Middle School Robotics Team** recently finished **11th at the Coloma Invitational**, the highest placement in the program's history—an exciting milestone for our students and coaches.

We are also proud to share that our middle school has once again been recognized by **U.S. News & World Report as a Top Middle School**, marking the **third consecutive year** of this distinction. This recognition reflects our ongoing commitment to strong instruction, student support, and continuous improvement.

Continued on page 9

MIDDLE SCHOOL continued

To further strengthen student outcomes, we now have a **full-time interventionist** leading higher-tier instructional supports. Additionally, our **Science Department** has implemented both a **new curriculum** and **standards-based grading**, taking on meaningful instructional work that will benefit students for years to come.

Athletics continue to be a source of pride, with our teams performing well on the fields and courts. Our **Fine Arts programs** continue to enrich our hallways with impressive student artwork, including pieces recognized at the **St. Joseph Box Factory**. Meanwhile, our **choir and music students** are preparing for upcoming winter festival performances, and we look forward to celebrating their hard work and ratings.

From academics to athletics, leadership to the arts, our middle school continues to make outstanding gains while offering students a well-rounded and engaging experience. We are proud of our students, grateful for our staff, and excited about the momentum carrying us forward into the second half of the year.



8th Grade Parent Meeting - Preparing for High School

We invite all 8th grade parents to join us on **March 19 at 6:00 PM in the High School Media Center** for our first transition meeting with the high school team. During this session, we will focus on the skills, habits, and traits that help students be successful as they move into high school next year.

The same information will also be shared with your 8th grader during their English class so they can begin practicing these expectations now while they still have time to build confidence and strong habits before the transition.

We encourage all 8th grade families to attend and take part in this important step toward a smooth and successful start to high school.

New WHS Student Resource

A big thank you to **Wyatt MacMillan** and **Sienna Harris** for their thoughtful work in creating a new resource for our students. This idea came forward through our **SAC student group**, which works closely with the principal. Wyatt built the wooden box in Woodshop, and Sienna added the finishing touch by painting the lettering in Art class. It will be mounted outside the counseling office and will give students a simple, accessible way to communicate when they need support — whether they want to connect with the counselor or share something important with administration.

This project is a great example of **student leadership in action** and truly reflects **Panther Pride** and our **“Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop”** mindset.



HIGH SCHOOL

Principal Christina Powers cpowers@watervlietps.org

Building Secretary Teri Richcreek trichcreek@watervlietps.org

Office Phone: 269-463-0730

Professionals Share Job Insights with Students at Annual Career Fair

This year's event in early February was planned and organized by our JMG (Jobs for Michigan Graduates) students, who did an outstanding job coordinating speakers and creating student schedules for the day. We are incredibly proud of their leadership, initiative, and hard work!

Students had the opportunity to hear from a wide variety of excellent speakers representing multiple career pathways, providing valuable insight into future options, education, and workforce opportunities. We are especially thankful for the many family members, community partners, and professionals who took time out of their day to present to our students and share their experiences. Your support truly helps bring learning to life.

If you would like to get on the docket to speak to our students next year about your chosen profession, please email Ms. Irmen at lauren.irmen@watervlietps.org.



This Year's Presenters Included:

Kyle F. - Manager at Degroot
Keith Boswell - Engineer
Devon DiGiacomo - National Guard
Jeremy Lucas & Stephen Dawson -- D.A. Dobbs
Kaylah Robart - Mental Health Professional
Debi Romain - Carpenter
Nursing Staff - Corewell Health
Ed Hern - Lawyer

Shannon White - Therapist
Tim Bartee - CD/Truck Driving
Kristopher Hickman - Edward Jones
Tom Dermody - Mayor of LaPorte, IN
Jon Van Lente - Fire Chief/Battalion
Greg Borr - Bar/Stock Company
Brittany Bartee - Surgical Tech
Nick Polaskey - Heaven Scent
Ryan Lefor - Construction
Jim Tyler - Cyber Security

Upcoming Events for Panther Seniors

FAFSA

Due Friday March 8 - Complete to earn a gift card

Scholarships

Deadlines listed in every Parent Newsletter

Senior Trip - Sevierville, Tennessee

March 5-8

Decision Day

Friday, May 1, 10:00 AM -- Families Invited

Prom

Saturday, May 2, 8:00 - 11:00 PM

After Prom

12:00 - 5:30 AM -- Information emailed to students and parents

Scholarship & Academic Awards

Wednesday, May 6, 6:00 PM, Auditorium

Create a Memory Board Graduate Poster

By the week of May 5 - Select pictures (early years through high school, with friends, family, etc.)

Semester 2 Exams

May 20 - 23 (Three and a B / Five and an A applies)

Checkout Sheet Due & Cap and Gown Pickup

Friday, May 22

Final Academic Requirement

Passing all semester 2 coursework by May 22, at 3:10 PM

Senior Sunset @ Camp Ronora

Friday, May 22, 6:30 - 11:30 PM -- Food Provided

Last Day for Seniors

Friday, May 22 -- Busses to other buildings at 10:00 AM (wear caps & gowns)

Senior Car Parade

Friday May 22 4:00 PM (Old Paper Mill Site Start)

Baccalaureate

Wednesday May 27, 6:00 PM, Auditorium

Field Day & Senior Picnic

Thursday, May 28 (Picnic at 2:00 PM)

Graduation Rehearsal

Thursday, May 28 -- Report to Media Center by 3:15 & Check in with Mrs. Richcreek

Graduation Ceremony

Friday, May 29, 6:30 PM, Panther Stadium (Graduates report the Media Center by 5:30 PM and check in with Mrs. Richcreek.



Academic Top Ten

Ten Highest Weighted GPAs

Julian Cardoso

Alina Bell

Giovanni Ayala

Marissa Lowell

Christopher Parkhurst

Jaylee Havenaar

Benjamin Ruland

Keira Tremblay

Brianna Zwar

Moeke Crago

Greg Chisek Senior Scholars

Weighted GPA multiplied by 250, plus student's highest GPA score, divided by 1.6.

Those with 1700 or higher are Senior Scholars

Benjamin Ruland

Julian Cardoso

Jaylee Havenaar

Christopher Parkhurst

Alina Bell

Marissa Lowell

Keira Tremblay

Thank you to WHS student Marley Alsup, her father Skyler Alsup, and her younger brother Bneshifor sharing their cultural heritage with us through verbal history and traditional woodland dances of the PokagPeople during Indigenous Peoples' Week in November.



TCIS Training Strengthens Support for Students at WPS

Watervliet Public Schools continues to prioritize safe, supportive learning environments through ongoing staff development in **Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Schools (TCIS)**. This year, **more than 50 WPS faculty and staff members** have completed TCIS training, strengthening our collective ability to support students both academically and emotionally.

TCIS, developed through **Cornell University**, is a research-based crisis prevention and intervention model designed to help educators:

- Recognize student stress triggers
- Use proactive relationship-building strategies
- Apply effective **de-escalation techniques**
- Respond safely and respectfully when students experience emotional or behavioral challenges

The focus is always on prevention first — building connection, understanding behavior as communication, and helping students regulate emotions before situations escalate.

Training at WPS is led by **Jamie Dawson, High School Counselor**, and **Christina Powers, High School Principal**, both certified TCIS trainers. Their leadership ensures staff receive consistent, high-quality preparation rooted in compassion, safety, and practical classroom application.

To keep skills strong and accessible:

- **Two full 4-day TCIS trainings are offered each year** for faculty and staff.
- Staff who have completed certification participate in a **1-day refresher every two years** to maintain best practices and stay current with strategies.

This ongoing investment reflects WPS's commitment to equipping staff with tools that foster calm classrooms, strong relationships, and positive outcomes for students. We're proud of the many educators dedicating time to this important work and the positive difference it continues to make across our school community.

The HS Student Council Food drive was a huge success. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our students and staff, we collected over 1,100 food items to donate to the Living Water Food Pantry right here in Watervliet. #Panther Pride



WHS wishes the very best of luck to Gio, Felipe, and Emma as they compete in the Mr. Blossomtime and Miss Blossomtime pageants. Each of you represents Watervliet with pride, confidence and class, and we couldn't be more proud. Enjoy every moment, be yourselves, and know that the Watervliet Community is cheering you on every step of the way.

Go Panthers!



WAY WATERVLIET HIGH SCHOOL



Coordinator Alecia Hickman ahickman@watervlietps.org
Building Secretary Autumn Kendzior autumn.kendzior@watervlietps.org
Office Phone: 269-463-0898

Congratulations 2026 Graduates!

We are thrilled to celebrate the accomplishments of our incredible students who earned their high school diplomas from the WAY Program in January. These graduates have shown dedication, resilience, and hard work — and we couldn't be prouder!

Please join us in congratulating: Olivia Camp, Addison Shuburte, Cameron Huff, Wesley Tillotson, Daniel Alvarado, Ariana Welty, and Camdyn Gerlach.



From One Great Fit To Another:

After five years of dedication to our WAY students, **Benny** has transitioned into a new **IT role with the district**. While he will no longer be working in the WAY Lab on a daily basis, we are fortunate that his new position will allow him to remain an active presence within the district.

Benny made a lasting impact on countless students. He consistently served as a supportive teacher, mentor, and positive role model! We are deeply grateful for his commitment and wish him continued success!

We are also pleased to **welcome Heather Whitney as the newest member of the Watervliet WAY High School team**. Heather is excited to join the WAY Program and looks forward to building upon the strong foundation already in place to support students and families.



Please join us in congratulating **Benny** on his new role and in extending a warm welcome to **Heather**.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Join us in celebrating our **WAY Student Spotlight** recipients!

September: Robert Holmes

October: Kai Willis

November: Mackenzie Daugherty

December: Olivia Camp

January: Cameron Huff

February: Adoracion Rader

Watervliet WAY Lab Hours:

Monday & Tuesday – MATH ONLY:
8:30 AM – 10:00 AM

Monday & Tuesday
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
12:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Wednesday & Thursday
8:30 AM – 10:30 AM
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Lab is closed to students on Fridays.

Our program is built on the belief that our students can succeed when given the right support, flexibility, and encouragement. We meet students where they are and work alongside them to build confidence and a path toward graduation. Student success here is not just an outcome—it's the purpose behind everything we do.



SPECIAL EDUCATION

Supervisor Heather Cram heather.cram@watervlietps.org

Department Secretary: Kari Crippen kari.crippen@watervlietps.org

Office Phone: 269-460-0706

Watervliet Public Schools Partners with Berrien County Hearing Impaired Program

Do you have a concern regarding hearing and audiological services?

The Berrien County Hearing Impaired Program performs hearing evaluations for children ages birth through grade 12 in which licensed audiologists identify or rule out hearing loss.

If hearing loss is identified, audiologists can:

- *discuss what sound amplification options a family may have for their child
- *help with the selection, fitting, and service of hearing aids, as well as troubleshooting cochlear implants
- *help with the fitting of assistive listening devices in the form of personal FM devices and classroom FM devices
- *provide professional in-services for teachers and school staff on the signs/causes/treatments of hearing loss, how to troubleshoot hearing aids, cochlear implants, and/or FM system issues a student may have in the classroom, and education on hearing conservation

Students can be referred for a hearing evaluation by:

- *Doctors
- *Teachers
- *Service providers
- *Parents

You may call their office directly at **269-471-8858** to discuss or schedule a hearing evaluation for a child they have concerns about. The evaluations and services are free of charge for families in Berrien County!

If there is a Watervliet family that needs to have their student/s evaluated for a hearing loss and needs assistance, please contact the Special Education Department at 269-463-0706.



Robin Aitchison, Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Teacher at South Elementary, was recently awarded a \$960 grant from Midwest Energy & Communications (MEC).

She will use the funds to purchase class sets of books for her students. Robin has been incorporating familiar children's board books to increase engagement, support early literacy skills, and strengthen communication in her classroom.

We appreciate Robin's continued dedication to her students and her efforts to bring additional resources into her program. Congratulations, Robin!



Curriculum

Director Brandon Waggoner

brandon.waggoner@watervlietps.org



Our schools have always worked hard to help students succeed academically. Skills like reading, writing, math, and science remain important. However, the world our students are entering is changing quickly. Colleges, employers, and communities are looking for graduates who can think critically, communicate clearly, work with others, and solve real-world problems.

To make sure our students are ready for life beyond school, we are excited to begin an initiative called Portrait of a Graduate.

Portrait of a Graduate is a shared vision of the skills, knowledge, and personal qualities we want every student to possess when they graduate. It describes what success looks like not only in the classroom, but also in careers, college, and the community. This portrait goes beyond test scores to include important skills such as responsibility, problem-solving, creativity, and perseverance.

This work will be shaped by input from many important stakeholder groups. We will engage students, parents, and clergy, as well as post-secondary education institutions, including colleges and trade schools. We will also seek feedback from businesses and employers and municipal leaders. Each group brings a unique perspective on what students need to be successful after graduation.

The final Portrait of a Graduate will serve as a guide for planning future programming for students. It will help schools align instruction, activities, and experiences to ensure students are developing the skills they need at every grade level. Teachers will continue teaching academic standards while also creating opportunities for students to practice real-life skills.

Most importantly, this initiative keeps students at the center of our work. Together, with input from our community, we are building a clear path to help every student graduate prepared for whatever future they choose.

We look forward to hearing from everyone when it comes to what knowledge, skills, and behaviors students need to be successful in life after graduation.

resilient
communicator
responsible
self-directed
adaptable citizen
college decision-maker
innovative
collaborator
creative
problem-solver
critical-thinker
career
learner empathetic
globally-aware



Athletics

Director John Guillean
Assistant Edie Daugherty

john.guillean@watervlietps.org
edie.daugherty@watervlietps.org

Fall Team and Individual Academic All State **Individual (3.7 or higher GPA)**



Miranda Lowell - Cross Country
Isabella Bultema - Volleyball
Keira Tremblay - Volleyball
Addison Smith - Volleyball
Brianna Zwar - Volleyball

Fall Team Academic All State (3.3 or higher GPA)

2025 Varsity Volleyball Team - 3.67 Team GPA

Isabella Bultema, Keira Tremblay, Emma Owens,
Leila Liberto-Taylor, Kelsie Gaston, Ava Thomas,
Addison Smith, Brianna Zwar, Ava Hobson,
Katelynn Kostrzewa, Adelyn Campbell,
Aubrey Winnell, Braelyn Campbell,
Gianna Berry

All State 1st Team(Tight End)

Cole Getz



State Qualifiers Cross Country

Samuel Casiano

Miranda Lowell



Athletic BOOSTERS Impact

Cheer Uniforms	Volleyball Official Stand
Bus for Pistons Game	Soccer Backpacks
Baseball Fence	Track Equipment
Baseball Championship Rings	Baseball Windscreen
Football Uniforms	Softball Equipment
Pole Vault Pad	Stadium Benches
Stadium Concession Upgrade	Hudl
Camp Donation Girls Volleyball	Scorers Table
Camp Donation Girls Basketball	Volleyball AcuSpire

Donations 2024 - 2025
\$50,711.53

Boosters Committee

Nicole Klimkiewicz - President

Ben Lowell - Vice President

Holly Musick - Secretary

**BOOSTER
CONCESSIONS**



SCAN
to VOLUNTEER

Jeff Klimkiewicz

Kylee Lowell

Cindy Hall

Kate Rodell

ONE STOP for All Your Athletic Needs

wspanther.com

Hall of Fame Nomination Form
Concession Sign Up
SAC Conference Standings
NFHS Network Live Stream



FINAL FORMS

MHSAA Physical Forms
GOFAN Tickets
HUDL Live Stream
Return to Play Concussion Forms

ATHLETICS continued

WHY ATHLETICS: Being a student-athlete fosters a unique blend of discipline and social skills that serves as a blueprint for adult success. Academically, the pressure to remain eligible drives better time management and higher levels of focus. Socially, the team environment builds strong communication skills and a sense of accountability to others. Ultimately, the resilience and leadership developed through competition provide a competitive edge in the professional world, equipping student-athletes with the grit to handle high-pressure environments.

Little Caesars Arena - Court of Dreams Event

The boys and girls basketball teams took part in an unforgettable **"Court of Dreams"** event. Our athletes had the incredible opportunity to compete on the same floor as the Detroit Pistons at Little Caesars Arena.



Notre Dame - Volleyball



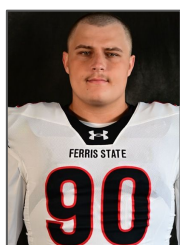
Hope College - Basketball



ALUMNI NEXT LEVEL STUDENT-ATHLETE UPDATE



Abby Whorton
2024 Grad
Softball
Hope College



Royce Daugherty
2023 Grad
Football/Track
Ferris State
2X National
Champion



Emmett Williams
2025 Grad
Basketball
LMC



Angel Nearpass
2025 Grad
Cross Country
SMC



Wyatt Epple
2024 Grad
Davenport
Baseball
2025 Conference
Champion



Gabrielle Wisdom
2025 Grad
Cross Country
SMC



Tyson Williams
2023 Grad
Hope College
Football/
Baseball



Nutrition Services

Director Terry Adams

tadams@watervlietsps.org



EAT BREAKFAST AT SCHOOL!



Mornings can be really crazy...the alarm doesn't go off...the kids don't want to get up...there's no time to eat breakfast before the bus comes...or they're just not ready to eat. Or maybe your teenager grabs a can of soda and a candy bar on the way to school. If this sounds like your house, we have good news for you: **Breakfast is served at school!**



School breakfast will give your child a healthy start to the day. A nutritious breakfast helps students be more alert so they can learn more in class. Breakfast provides vitamins and nutrients for a strong, healthy body. Help your child start the day right with a free school breakfast!



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

WPS ALL CLASS REUNION SET FOR AUGUST 15, 2026

This year's All Class Reunion will be held on Saturday, August 15, 2026 in the Watervliet High School cafeteria, with a start time of 11:00 a.m. Yearbooks, class composite photos, and other school memorabilia will be on display, and it will be a great opportunity for sharing memories with your fellow Panther alumni. Watch for more information as it becomes available on the **Watervliet All Class Reunion** Facebook page, in the Tri-City Record, and in the Herald Palladium.

courtesy of Greg Krell



Bringing the Drama

If you've stepped into the auditorium recently, you may have noticed a dramatic upgrade, and that's no coincidence. Watervliet's award-winning performing arts programs are powered by students who dedicate countless hours to their craft. The Watervliet Public Schools Foundation for Excellence is proud to support that commitment with the donation of brand-new auditorium curtains. Our Panther performers shine on stages near and far, and now their home stage reflects the same level of excellence. We're honored to help provide a professional, polished backdrop worthy of their talent, hard work, and achievements.

2025 Classroom Grants: Supporting our Educators

One of our greatest priorities is supporting innovation in the classroom through our classroom grants. The grants allow teachers to think creatively, dream bigger and support classroom learning. The yearly grants are made possible by the generous donations of the class of 1965.

Jack of Spades Fundraiser Continues to GROW

Our progressive raffle is still going strong! Each drawing brings important funds that go directly to our grants and projects. You can join in on the fun weekly. Head over to our Facebook page for more information.

Welcoming our 2026 Officers

Behind every fundraiser, classroom grant, and donation is a team of dedicated volunteers working to raise and steward funds to support WPS.

We are proud to announce our newly elected Watervliet Public Schools Foundation for Excellence officers:

Chairman: Rebecca Oliphant

Vice Chair: Mary Andres

Secretary: Sarah Busick

Treasurer: Barb Schofield

Director to the Executive Board: Greg Krell

With this team of dedicated officers, 2026 is shaping up to be another year of meaningful impact for our Panther community.

SCHOOL BELL Issue 02 Spring 2026

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Technology Services

Director Bill Tiefenbach

wtiefenbach@watervlietps.org

With the retirement of Mr. Jimmie Paskel in December after 26 years as the IT Director of W.P.S., we have brought Ben Loshbough on as our new IT Support Technician. Mr. Loshbough is a graduate of Watervliet and has been an instructor at North Elementary, WAY Program and heavily involved in coaching our sports teams. He's an asset to the district and he's excited to take on this new position.



Technology in our classrooms is designed to support learning—not replace great teaching. While students may use devices for research, collaboration, practice, and creativity, our teachers remain at the center of instruction. Digital tools allow educators to personalize lessons, provide immediate feedback, and offer additional support or enrichment when needed. For some students, technology also provides important accessibility features such as speech-to-text, audiobooks, or language translation, helping ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed.

We are intentional about how and when technology is used. Screen time in our district is purposeful, guided, and connected directly to learning goals. Students continue to engage in hands-on activities, discussions, and face-to-face collaboration every day. Our goal is to equip students with the skills they need for the future—critical thinking, digital responsibility, and problem-solving—while maintaining a balanced, student-centered learning environment.

