

# THE WOLFPACK REPORT

Laingsburg Community Schools

## Small Classes, Big Gains

LCS Tops State in Every Subject

**Students at Laingsburg Community Schools continue to outperform the state in all subject areas, according to scores released by the Michigan Department of Education.**

"Our students scored above state and county averages in all subject areas across all grade levels – including reading, math, science, and social studies," Superintendent Matt Shastal said.

LCS is the only district in Shiawassee County to score above the state average in both reading and math across all grade levels, and scores in all subject areas continue to trend upward since 2020.

"We continue to prioritize student success at every level through low class sizes, high-quality

instruction, and an investment in academic resources and support," Shastal said. "This ensures our students are prepared for college, careers, and citizenship in our community and beyond."

These improvements feature smaller class sizes and an updated curriculum across the district, such as a new K-5 reading program. Additionally, LCS has updated its intervention resources and provided staff training to deliver daily, personalized, skill-focused support to students who need it.

"Because of our focus on small class sizes, our teachers can better address the needs of students," Shastal said. "This leads to better grades, higher test scores, and fewer behavioral problems."

LCS elementary school classes average 21 students, while secondary classrooms average 22 students.

### AVERAGE PROFICIENCY RATES SINCE 2020-21

**+4%**  
READING

**+9%**  
MATH

**+20%**  
SCIENCE

**+28%**  
SOCIAL STUDIES

### ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



**Alexis Nickols**

**Class of 2007**

**Where she is now:**

Assistant Professor of Trauma, Acute Care Surgery, and Surgical Critical Care at the University of Kentucky

"I will always be grateful for the excellent education and mentorship I received at Laingsburg Community Schools. The AP and Spanish language courses offered allowed me to arrive at college a whole semester ahead of many of my classmates, and participating in sports helped me grow my leadership and self-discipline skills starting at a very young age."



# Sinking Fund Supports Safety and Repairs

## Millage Reduction Reflects Rising Property Values, Lowering Tax Rates While Sustaining School Investment

**The Laingsburg Community Schools sinking fund proposal, passed in May 2025, reduced the rate from 0.9939 mills to 0.75 mills to fund infrastructure improvements, school safety and security, transportation needs, technology upgrades, and building maintenance.**

This approved proposal authorizes the district to levy up to 0.75 mill (\$0.75 for every \$1,000 of taxable value) from 2026 to 2030, providing around \$235,384 in annual revenue.

"We're grateful for the continued support from our community," said Superintendent Matt Shastal. "The sinking fund helps ensure we have a safe, well-

equipped learning environment for our students and staff."

The millage supports security improvements to improve student safety, school bus maintenance, technology upgrades, and school building construction, repair, and maintenance.

"These investments help maintain high safety standards, support transportation reliability, and ensure buildings and equipment remain functional and efficient," Shastal said.

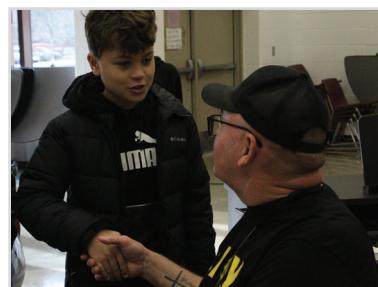
The fund has previously supported exterior repairs to buildings, drainage around buildings and athletic fields, as

well as electrical and efficiency upgrades. It has also been used to address unexpected facility issues, relieving the burden on the general fund that supports educational programming.

The millage reduction from 0.9939 to 0.75 mills reflects the board's strategic decision, acknowledging increased residential property values that allow the district to collect necessary funding at a lower tax rate per household. This approach strikes a balance between fiscal responsibility and community needs, minimizing the taxpayer burden while sustaining essential school investments.

## Laingsburg Students Honor Veterans

Laingsburg Community Schools marked Veterans Day with a heartfelt fifth-grade choir, a jazz band performance, and the Pledge of Allegiance led by kindergarteners. The middle school student council served breakfast. Veterans and students shared stories over Coffee & Conversation, showcasing treasured historical artifacts and building meaningful connections across generations.



## Laingsburg Eighth Graders Visit D.C.

**Laingsburg eighth graders journeyed to Washington, D.C., from Nov. 5-8 to immerse themselves in United States history and government.**

“The annual Washington, D.C. trip gives our students an unforgettable opportunity to connect what they’ve learned in the classroom to the real places where history happened,” said Tara Hengesbach, Laingsburg Middle School principal. “It’s inspiring to see them experience these landmarks firsthand and realize that they, too, are part of our nation’s ongoing story.”

During the trip, students toured several landmark sites, including Arlington National Cemetery, the Pentagon Memorial, and the Gettysburg Battlefield. They also visited the U.S. Naval Academy, admired the towering Washington Monument, and spent time reflecting at the Lincoln, World War II, MLK Jr., and Vietnam Veterans memorials.

One of the highlights was a Lincoln Assassination Walking Tour, where students traced the dramatic events surrounding President Abraham Lincoln’s final night and gained a deeper



understanding of this pivotal moment in history.

The students met two World War II veterans and four eighth graders—Jayda Olney, Quinn Klont, Brock McGee, and Mason Atkins—had the privilege of laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

## Wolfpack Spirit Shines at Annual Pack Run

Each September, Laingsburg Elementary transforms into a high-energy adventure zone for its annual Pack Run—a school-wide obstacle course fundraiser that unites the entire Wolfpack community.

Organized by dedicated parent volunteers, this one-day event features every elementary student running, climbing, crawling, and jumping through a series of fun challenges while being cheered on by staff, families, and classmates.

The 2025 Pack Run raised over \$22,000—an increase from the \$19,000 fundraised the year before. The fundraiser allows P.A.L.S.—the Parent Association for Laingsburg Students—to fund grants to support field trips, assemblies, library

needs, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) rewards, and more.

“Programs we support include the LMS Aspiring Teacher event and Ron Clark Academy training for teachers to develop the House System our fifth graders know and love,” said parent volunteer Lyndi Parmenter. “This year, we were able to approve a one-time grant for the fifth-grade teachers to welcome Dr. Marcia McEvoy for a student workshop, ‘Helping Kids Get Along: How to Reduce Student Cruelty and Improve Peer Relationships.’”

P.A.L.S. became a 501(c)(3) organization in 1994. In 2024, a new group of parents was elected to serve as board

members, replacing teachers who had kept the fundraiser afloat for many years.

Parents interested in becoming involved can email [lcs.pals@laingsburg.k12.mi.us](mailto:lcs.pals@laingsburg.k12.mi.us).



# Building Belonging

## Fifth Graders Find Community at Laingsburg Elementary

At Laingsburg Elementary, the House System transforms every fifth grader's day into an engaging adventure in teamwork and friendly competition, helping students build character, find personal growth, and develop strong connections with their peers and school community.

"The House System is a unique, creative group approach to building a community that strengthens the social and academic lives of students," said Sheila Freeman, ECEC/LES Principal. "Each student's achievements add to a collective group, making the reward communal and social."

At the end of the school year, fourth graders are sorted into one of four colorful houses—Amabilidad (Kindness), Duglegur (Determination), Ymholiad (Curiosity), or Mahalo (Respect)—with teachers balancing personalities and attributes using student questionnaires. The event is celebrated with a special "sorting hat" reveal and



vibrant house decorations in the lunchroom during the last week of school.

Rather than traditional gold stars or candy, students earn points by demonstrating positive behavioral and academic habits and contributing to their house's success.

"Fifth graders are in a transition. As the oldest students in the building, they crave more responsibility and novelty," Freeman said. "The House System gives them a crew and a cause. They get to experience being part of a community bigger than themselves. Students learn the value of hard work, commitment, kindness, and other soft skills to

help shape their character and leadership abilities."

The program offers students a variety of meaningful leadership roles—including House Prefect for top point earners, Captains recognized for leadership and exemplary behavior, and roles in a first-grade buddy program and community service projects.

The House System has its origins in British school systems and is inspired by the Ron Clark Academy. The system was launched in Spring 2022 by fifth-grade teachers Courtney Anderson, Melissa Hutchison, Dean Meyer, and Paul Phillips.





# Record-Breaking Enrollment Signals Trust in Early Learning at LCS

The Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) at Laingsburg Community Schools has welcomed its largest-ever group of preschool students in Fall 2025.

“It’s a wonderful reflection of the trust families place in our programs and the exceptional care and learning experiences our staff provide,” Assistant Principal Kerri DeVault said. “We’re rooted in Wolfpack traditions, providing a safe, inclusive, and engaging environment where children begin their educational journey with curiosity, confidence, and joy.”

ECEC serves the district’s youngest learners – from preschool through Young 5’s and Kindergarten – with a whole-child approach that balances academic readiness with social-emotional growth, creativity, and independence.

“The caring, family-like atmosphere helps children feel safe, connected, and valued,” DeVault said. “Children build independence, confidence, and a lifelong love of learning from the very start through our hands-on, intentional approach to learning.”

ECEC teachers use developmentally appropriate, research-based instruction to support each child’s growth and learning style. This includes purposeful instruction, social-emotional development, individualized support, and family collaboration.

“Our learning centers, small-group lessons, and active learning approach balance creativity with focused teaching,” DeVault said. “You’ll often hear laughter, music, and collaboration as teachers and students learn and grow together.”

ECEC’s curriculum stands out for its commitment to foundational learning. Preschoolers explore math, science, literacy, and social-emotional skills through Connect4Learning, an integrated curriculum focused on inquiry and discovery. As children move into Kindergarten, their literacy journey continues with Wonders Reading, which builds strong foundations in phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension. In math, hands-on activities guided by enVision Math help students develop conceptual understanding and strong problem-solving strategies, ensuring they are ready for each new academic step.

“We’re so thankful for the care the teachers and staff show our little wolf pups,” said Jordan Hankwitz, an LCS parent. “We’re grateful for the ECEC’s genuine commitment to our children, our community, and excellence.”



# Building Leaders, One Note at a Time

At Laingsburg High School, the Marching Band offers students an opportunity that reaches far beyond performance. It's an experience where they learn leadership, teamwork, and resilience—skills that last well beyond their time on the field.

"It's about the collective. Students learn early that what they do impacts everyone around them," Band Director Thomas Cousineau said. "If I fail a math test, that only affects me. But, if I make a mistake on the field, it affects 75 other people."

For Cousineau, that lesson in accountability and collective effort is central to what the marching band teaches. Students quickly learn how to manage expectations, solve problems, and set the standard for their peers.

"Leadership is an action, not a title," Cousineau said. "Everyone in the band is a leader. It's about how they choose to approach what they do. Sometimes things don't work the first time, and we talk about why, and what we can do differently next time to make it more successful. They're learning skills that will serve them in their adult lives."

The program also welcomes students of all experience levels.

"It's never too late to start," he said. "I've had seniors join who have never played before."

If they're willing to work hard, there's always a spot for them."

Nearly one-quarter of the high school student body participates in the Marching Band. Cousineau said there are members involved in robotics, drama, FFA, varsity and travel sports, academic programs, and countless other clubs and activities across the school.

"We want kids to do everything," Cousineau said. "That's what gives them a well-rounded experience. Our students truly represent the entire student body. The band brings together students from all walks of life, united by their love of music and pride in being part of something bigger than themselves."

For Cousineau, the ultimate goal extends beyond concerts and exhibitions.

It's about developing capable, compassionate young people ready to contribute wherever they go next.

"Our culture is about relationships," he said. "Students learn how to work alongside each other, how to lead, and how to make the experience positive for everyone. That's what matters most."

Following the end of the football season, the group has shifted its focus to the concert band. Performances include school assemblies, evening concerts, and band festivals.



**SAVE THE DATE**  
**High School**  
**Spring Band Concert**  
**Monday, May 11**





# Closer Connections, Stronger Students

## Laingsburg Leads the Way with Counselor Access

**At Laingsburg Community Schools, students benefit from the support of a dedicated network of caring teachers, staff, and counselors, each of whom takes the time to know each child and help them reach their full potential.**

This year, LCS strengthened its commitment to student well-being by expanding its K-12 counseling team, resulting in an impressive counselor-to-student ratio of one counselor for every 191 students. With this exceptional level of access, Laingsburg students enjoy far more personalized support than the state average of nearly 600 students per counselor.

"We've invested significantly in our counselors because we know emotional wellness is connected to academic success," Superintendent Matt Shastal said. "Our goal is to meet the needs of the whole child, giving kids access to trusted adults who can help them navigate challenges and celebrate successes."

With three elementary counselors, one middle school counselor, and two high school counselors, LCS students benefit from personalized attention leading to stronger attendance, higher achievement, and a greater sense of belonging.

"Research shows that students with greater access to counselors

have better attendance, higher achievement, and stronger connections to their school," Shastal said. "Our expanded counseling team reflects our commitment to growing not only strong learners, but confident and compassionate young people."

### Meet the Counselors

#### Elementary School

- Hanna Angst
- Kristina Bruggink
- Erin Brawner

#### Middle School

- Kristen Johnson

#### High School

- Alyssa Klein
- Katie Kostal

**"From academic advising and crisis support to college planning and emotional counseling to administrative tasks and assessment coordination, our work touches nearly every aspect of a student's school experience."**

– Alyssa Klein, High School Counselor



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## RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

### Nurturing Tomorrow's Leaders

#### Shiawassee Scholars Program Empowers Gifted Students

Shiawassee Scholars, a program of the Shiawassee Regional Education Service District funded by the Cook Family Foundation, recognizes high-achieving eighth-grade students and helps them reach their full academic potential through guidance, enrichment, and community.

"Programs like Shiawassee Scholars give gifted and talented students the chance to look beyond the classroom and start imagining what's possible for their future," said Assistant Superintendent Julie Nosek. "By connecting them with resources, mentors, and



*Back row (left to right): Eliza Aldrich, Sophia Lapinski, Kaylyn Lefevre  
Front row (left to right): Adeline Wright, Mason Kent, Rhiannon Dombroski  
Not pictured: Camden McGee*

opportunities early on, we help them see that their goals are within reach."

Through the program, Scholars participate in summer camps, college visits, and workshops focused on leadership and academic growth. They also receive individualized support

with scholarship applications and long-term academic planning.

Students are selected based on their PSAT 8 scores, taken during the spring of their eighth-grade year. Each year, one scholar earns a full-ride scholarship to the University of Michigan.

