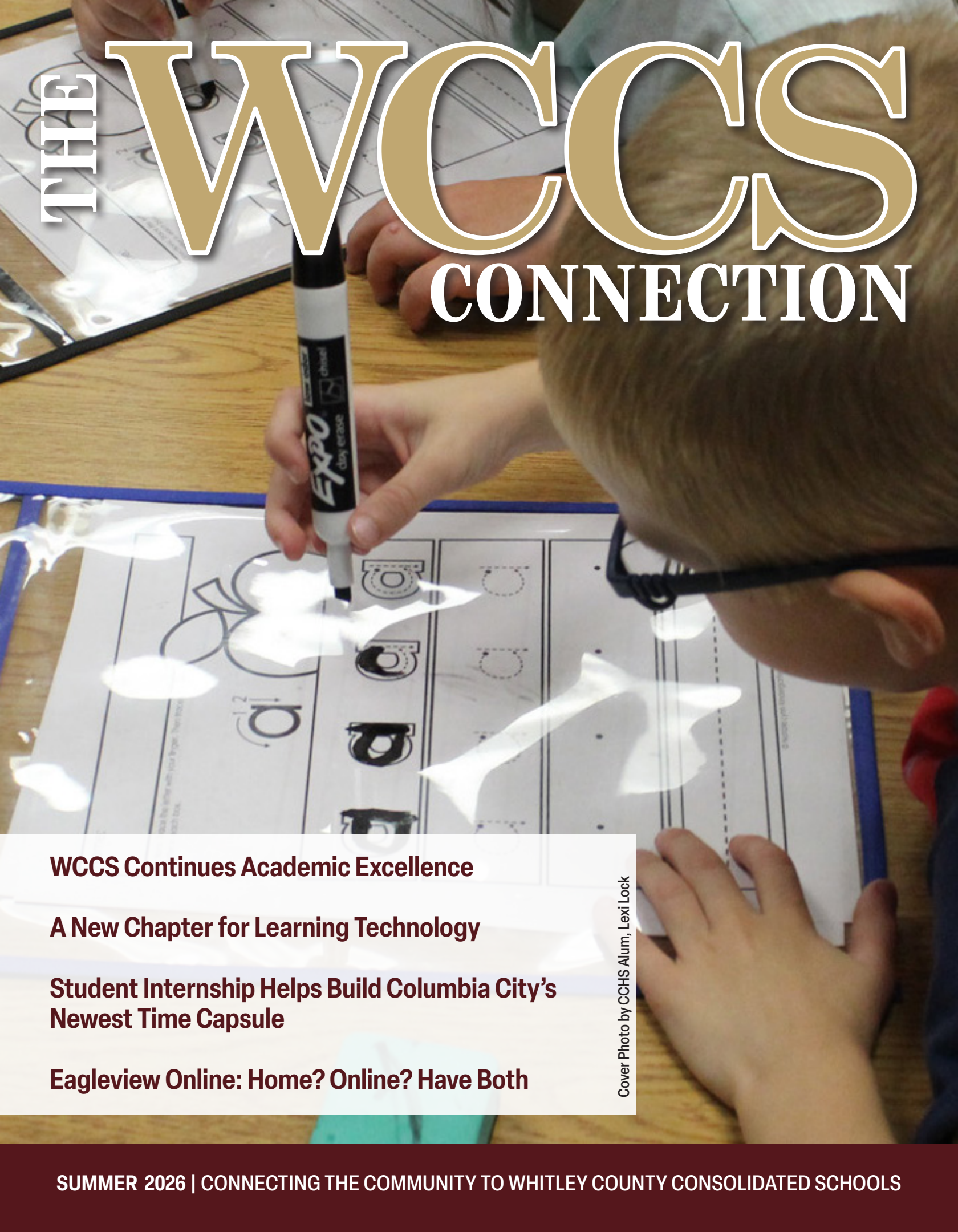


THE WCCS CONNECTION

A close-up photograph of a young student with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a blue shirt, focused on a worksheet. The student is holding a white Expo dry-erase marker and is in the process of drawing or tracing on the paper. The worksheet features large letters 'd' and 'b' with numbered arrows indicating stroke order, and smaller dashed versions of these letters for tracing. The background shows a wooden desk and other papers.

WCCS Continues Academic Excellence

A New Chapter for Learning Technology

**Student Internship Helps Build Columbia City's
Newest Time Capsule**

Eagleview Online: Home? Online? Have Both

Cover Photo by CCHS Alum, Lexi Lock

WELCOME!

We are excited about the start of the 2026-2027 school year here at WCCS!



I have enjoyed starting full-time this summer as your superintendent and am excited and honored to lead and serve students, staff, families, and the community.

Key priorities that have been identified for my first year include:

- Building Relationships, Trust, and Teamwork with Students, Staff, the School Board, Families, and the Community
- Student Achievement Growth
- Strategic Planning Development

Please join us in this noble endeavor of educating our students to become their very best and helping them develop their talents, gifts, and passions.

This educational journey works most effectively when we can all partner together as families, educators, and community members. I have been encouraged to meet so many great people here that want the best for our kids and school.

Our teachers, staff, and administrative team want an optimal experience for our students. Please reach out to us with any questions, concerns, ideas or feedback as we go through this journey together.

Dr. Trent Lehman, PhD
WCCS Superintendent

SUCCESS SHINES FROM START TO FINISH AT WCCS

Whitley County Consolidated Schools continues to demonstrate that a commitment to learning is carried forward each day by dedicated educators and determined students. From the earliest years of literacy development to the final steps across the graduation stage, the district's academic momentum reflects a community that believes in persistence, high expectations and the power of opportunity.

That commitment shows clearly in the district's most recent academic results. Nearly 70 percent of WCCS Advanced Placement (AP) exams earned a score of three or higher, placing the district above the state average and highlighting the strength of both student preparation and instructional support. These results are the product of teachers who push students to think critically, students who embrace challenge and a commitment to higher education.

The same upward momentum is visible in early literacy, where foundational skills set the tone for a student's entire academic journey. Preliminary IREAD results show continued improvement across the district. All general education students who took the assessment passed, and

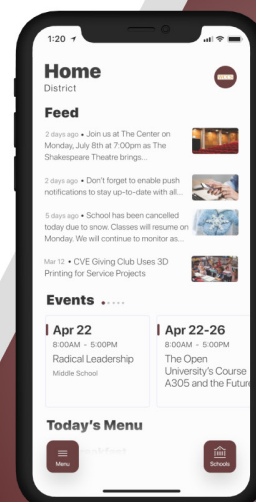
students receiving special education services improved their passing rate from the previous year. Northern Heights Elementary was again recognized by the state for exceeding the state's 95 percent proficiency goal. These gains reflect countless moments of staff engagement with students and families partnering with schools to reinforce learning at home.

By the time students reach high school, that early investment becomes visible in their readiness for life beyond WCCS. The Class of 2026 posted a graduation rate of 96.5 percent, rising from 94.9 percent the previous year. Each percentage point represents students who stayed the course, overcame obstacles and reached a milestone that opens doors to continued education, enlistment, employment, and community leadership. It also reflects counselors, teachers, coaches, and support staff who walk alongside students, ensuring they have the tools, encouragement, and stability needed to finish strong.

Across the district, these achievements share a common thread: a culture that believes every student can grow! WCCS remains committed to helping every student discover real opportunities for a prosperous future.

It's everything WCCS, in your pocket.

Documents · Events · Staff Directory · Alerts · News



COLUMBIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL'S CLASS OF 2026 CONTINUES WCCS ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The auditorium filled with pride as Columbia City High School (CCHS) celebrated the Class of 2026, a cohort that combined academic rigor, career readiness and community leadership. This year's ceremony showcased the multiple pathways Indiana schools now offer students to demonstrate readiness for college, careers or service.

With four valedictorians: **CLAIRE BERGMAN, GRANT SCHAFFER, ANISA TONKEL** and **MAYLAN WAGNER**, WCCS celebrates the academic success of our students. CCHS celebrated 30 percent of the graduates earning their Academic Honors Diploma, which means they sustained academic commitment. The students completed all the requirements for graduation plus additional math, world language and fine arts credits. They also had to have Advanced Placement (AP) course, dual credit courses in six college credits or higher SAT/ACT scores. This reflects the advanced coursework or career-technical preparation.

Additionally, 21 percent of diploma recipients earned a Technical Honors Diploma, which combines rigorous academics with industry-recognized technical training

and certifications.

Some of the graduates earned both Academic and Technical Honors Diplomas while completing their Career and Technical Education pathways, academic teams, athletics, community service projects and more!

To highlight leadership and service, 26 percent were inducted into the National Honor Society. This reflects both individual dedication and the district's commitment to offering diverse, high-quality pathways for all learners while keeping **Eagle P.R.I.D.E.** Characteristics maintained from pre-K through 12. **Eagle P.R.I.D.E.** Characteristics demonstrate **Persistence, Respectfulness, Initiative, Dependability** and **Efficiency**.

Teachers, counselors and families play a central role in guiding students through advanced coursework, dual-credit options, industry certifications, and capstone projects that meet state expectations. The result is a graduating class that is academically prepared, career-aware and engaged.

Congratulations to every graduate, and to the educators and families who helped them reach this milestone.

Congratulations, Eagles!



Columbia City High School Class of 2026. Photo by Mayor Daniel, City of Columbia City

A NEW CHAPTER FOR LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

When students file into classrooms this August, the hum of screens will be quieter and the school day will feel a little more focused. A new Indiana law taking effect July 1 requires every district to prohibit personal electronic devices during the instructional day. Whitley County Consolidated Schools is sharing how that statewide change will look here and how the district is ensuring students, families, and staff stay connected and supported.

WHY THE CHANGE MATTERS

This is a state law, not a local initiative. Indiana lawmakers have directed every school district to adopt rules that keep personal devices powered off, stored away and inaccessible while instruction is underway. The WCCS Board of Trustees presented Board Policy 5136 at the May 4 work session and adopted it at the May 18 board meeting to comply with the law. The policy applies to personal devices only; school-issued devices used for classroom learning are exempt.

Educators and students across the state have already seen how

limiting device distractions can change the rhythm of a school day. Teachers report fewer interruptions, and many students say they notice deeper conversations and better focus when phones and smartwatches are out of reach.

WHAT WCCS IS DOING

WCCS is taking practical steps to honor the law while keeping lines of communication open and ensuring student safety.

A phone in every classroom

Every classroom is equipped with a phone so students and staff can make or receive necessary calls during the school day without reaching for a personal device. This ensures urgent communication—between students and the office or between school and families—remains simple and secure.

Thrillshare for real-time notifications

To keep families informed in real time, WCCS will use the Thrillshare app for emergency alerts, school closings, attendance messages, and other timely communications.

Thrillshare is the district's primary tool for sending fast, reliable updates to parents and guardians.

Instructional technology remains

Classroom learning that relies on school-issued devices will continue. Teachers will guide any permitted instructional use of technology so learning objectives remain the priority.



Whitley County Consolidated Schools Bell-to-Bell Phone Law

Indiana Law Senate Enrolled Act 78 • Effective July 1, 2026.

Indiana law now requires schools to prohibit student use of personal electronic devices for the entire school day. This includes class time, passing periods, lunch, study halls, and any other time within WCCS buildings during the school day. Extracurricular clubs and athletics should be considered as classroom time.

WHAT DEVICES ARE INCLUDED?



Cell Phones



Smartwatches



Personal Tablets



Earbuds / Headphones



Personal Laptops



Gaming Devices

During the school day, personal devices must be:



Powered Off



Stored Away



Not Accessible

HOW THIS SUPPORTS STUDENTS



Improved Engagement for our whole school



Stronger student-to-teacher and peer-to-peer connection



Protects learning time in the classroom with fewer distractions



Promotes a calm, safe, distraction free school day

WCCS is rooted in creating opportunities for an engaged and prosperous future for all.

- Eagle P.R.I.D.E. Mission Statement

WCCS Students Will

Be Present

Focus on the people and opportunities around you

Be Persistent

This is a big change and WCCS commends your work to follow the law and policies of Indiana and WCCS

Be Respectful

Give your full attention to learning

Show Initiative

Lead others to keep their personal devices off and away

Be Efficient

Take the opportunity to learn with resources and use critical thinking

WCCS Parents Will

Communicate with learners before the school day. Please call your student(s)' school office for notices and communication needs to your child. Help maintain a safe, distraction-free, engaged learning environment.



****The School Office is Your Resource****

HOW FAMILIES CAN PREPARE

Note the timeline. The law takes effect July 1; WCCS will enforce the policy starting with the new school year in August.

Download Thrillshare. Families should install the Thrillshare app and enable notifications to receive district and building-level messages in real time.

Talk with your student. Remind children that personal devices must be powered off and stored away during the school day.

Know the exceptions. School-issued devices used for instruction are allowed; classroom phones will be available for necessary communication.

This statewide law marks a shift toward a more intentional school day. Whitley County Consolidated Schools is committed to following the law while making thoughtful choices that protect student safety, preserve instructional time, and keep families connected. As the new year begins, the WCCS invites the whole community to join us in making classrooms places of focus, conversation and discovery.



Arrow Mullinax, Brent Bockelman and Tyler Ledgerwood pose for a picture during the students' internship visit.

STUDENT INTERNSHIP HELPS BUILD COLUMBIA CITY'S NEWEST TIME CAPSULE

On July 4, Columbia City didn't just celebrate America's 250th birthday, we watched a new generation step into its place in local history.

Among the volunteers who helped construct and prepare the 2026 Whitley County Time Capsule were two Columbia City High School student interns, **TYLER LEDGERWOOD** and **ARROW MULLINAX**, whose hands-on work connected them directly to the legacy of the community through their internship with Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department under the supervision of **BRENT BOCKELMAN**.

The original 1976 capsule was lifted and opened to reveal fragile yearbooks, handwritten letters, church bulletins, photographs, and even a list of the children born in Whitley County in 1976. As historians and community members reflected on the past, Arrow and Tyler were busy helping build the vessel that will carry today's stories forward.

The newest time capsule is located on the Whitley County Courthouse lawn and is now on County property, which allowed the students to help.

"When we were notified of the capsule opening and the new one, I had the guys start researching time capsules from different places and they ran away with it," said Bockelman. "They researched materials, capsule dimensions, where to propose putting the new capsule and everything."

Dan Krill, former CCHS Civil Construction instructor, also laid the concrete for the time capsule that protects letters, artifacts and reflections from 2026 until the capsule is

opened again in 2076.

For Arrow and Tyler, the project is more than an internship. Their project allowed them a chance to protect how everyday people, students, farmers, artists, veterans, public servants, and all people, contribute to the story of Whitley County.

As America 250 Committee Chair, **KRISTIN RENTSCHLER** shared, the capsule represents "the people of this community – educators, students, farmers, churches, athletes, artists, businesses, the pride community, the indigenous community, political leaders, public servants, historians, and veterans. We may be divided in our ideas, but we are still united as a community working toward becoming more perfect." Arrow and Tyler are now part of that story.

As the new capsule rests on the courthouse grounds facing Market Street, Arrow and Tyler's work will remain sealed inside, a reminder that the next fifty years of Whitley County history were built, in part, by two students who showed up, lent their hands, and helped preserve the story of today.

Student experiences are numerous throughout our region through the Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways and CCHS' Work Based Learning program led by Lori Heuer. Seniors have the opportunity to explore hands-on career exploration with an intern host through personalized experiences like that of Ledgerwood and Mullinax. To learn more, follow Columbia City High School on Facebook and connect with WCCS at wccsonline.com.

EAGLEVIEW ONLINE: HOME? ONLINE? HAVE BOTH

When families in Whitley County imagine schooling that fits life, travel, work schedules, or a preference for learning at home, Eagleview Online offers a bridge between independence and support. Launched by Whitley County Consolidated Schools during the 2025-2026 school year, Eagleview Online blends live instruction, self-paced learning, and access to school activities.

Eagleview is WCCS' fully supported online school option for K-12 students. "Learn Your Way: K-5 students participate in live instruction with an online teacher in real time. 6-12 students learn through lessons content at their own pace." This model gives younger learners the structure of scheduled, teacher-led classes while older students move through curriculum at a rhythm that fits their needs.

With instructional support and access to WCCS counselors and administration, Eagleview Online offers additional online resources, student coaching, and additional guidance built into the program to keep learners on track.

These elements combine to create a learning experience that's both rigorous and adaptable while students follow standards-aligned coursework.

If one of my kids is struggling on something I can take the time to help them one on one or we can do an online tutor session, this makes it better for our children. If our children are struggling on a subject they can take their time to know the subject better, if they are really knowledgeable about a subject it allows them to work ahead in the subject," said **JESSICA PRATT**, Eagleview Online parent. "Since Eagleview is connected with WCCS this allows our children to still be able to be apart of the WCCS sports programs."

Students who thrive with fewer in-person distractions or who need extra time to master concepts can progress confidently. Because Eagleview Online is part of WCCS, families keep access to district services and extracurriculars that matter.

Eagleview Online is open to Whitley County families who want an alternative to the traditional classroom without losing the support of their local district. To register or learn more, start with wccsonline.com/o/evo.

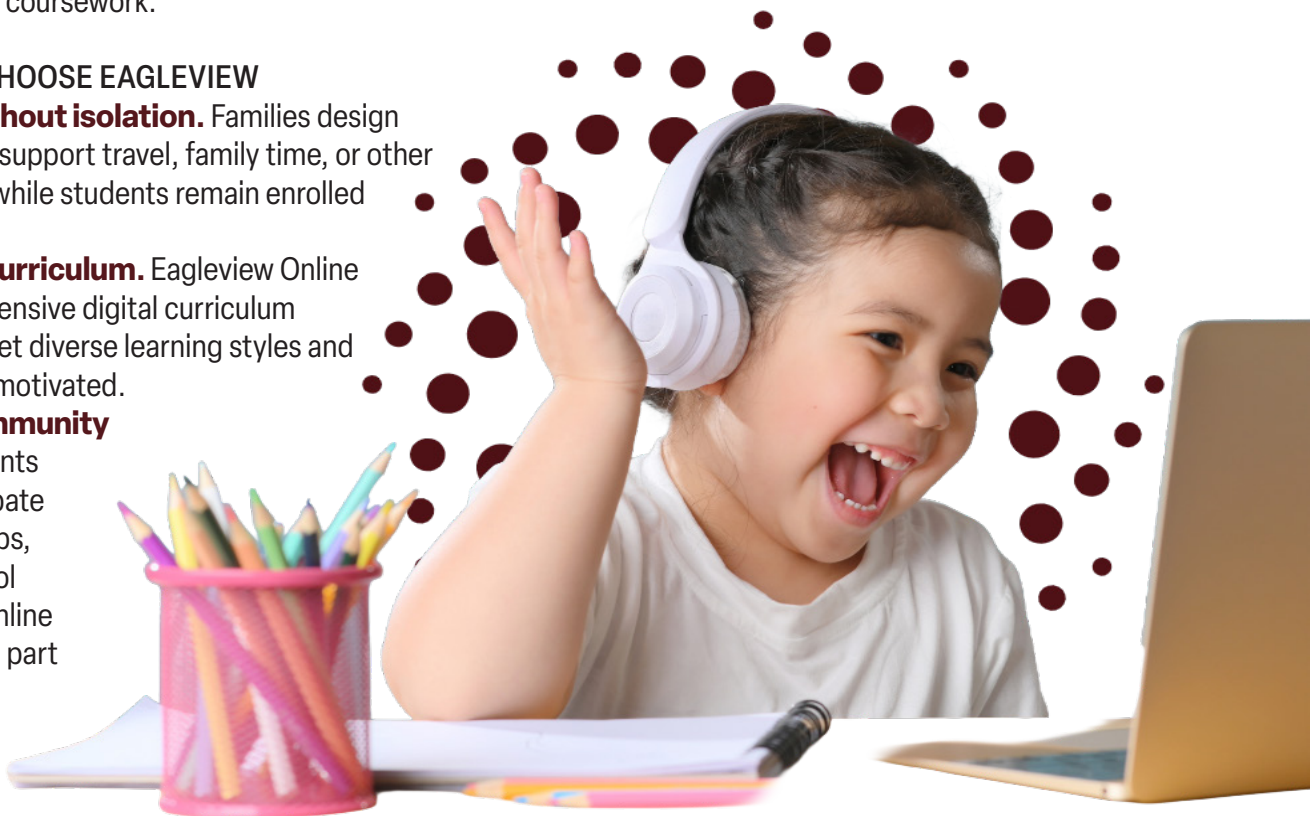
WHY FAMILIES CHOOSE EAGLEVIEW

Flexibility without isolation. Families design schedules that support travel, family time, or other commitments while students remain enrolled within WCCS.

Engaging curriculum. Eagleview Online provides an extensive digital curriculum intended to meet diverse learning styles and keep students motivated.

School community access. Students can still participate in athletics, clubs, and other school experiences. Online learners remain part of the broader WCCS community.

"Eagleview for our family has really helped with going at our

A young girl with dark hair, wearing large white headphones, is smiling broadly and waving her right hand. She is sitting at a desk with a laptop open in front of her. To her left is a pink pencil holder filled with various colored pencils. The background is white with several dark red circles of varying sizes scattered around the girl's head.

REGISTER NOW

UNDERSTANDING THE WORK BEHIND OUR SCHOOLS

The School Board of Trustee work is guided by statewide standards established by the Indiana School Boards Association (ISBA), which outlines how trustees should govern effectively, ethically, and with a focus on student achievement. Although trustees are often recognized for the decisions made during public meetings, the scope of their responsibilities extends far beyond the meeting room.

At the heart of their work is governance. Trustees are responsible for setting the vision and mission of WCCS, determining what the district aims to accomplish and how progress should be measured. Trustees do not manage daily operations; instead, they establish the rules, expectations, and strategic priorities that shape those operations. This distinction between governance and administration is central to ISBA's guidance and helps ensure that trustees remain focused on long-term goals.

Trustees also serve as representatives of the community, a role that requires listening and transparency. They are elected to reflect the values and priorities of residents while making decisions that serve the entire school corporation. This means engaging with stakeholders, communicating board actions clearly, and ensuring that meetings and decision-making processes remain accessible to the public. Trustees act as a bridge between the community and the school system, helping maintain trust and ensuring that public education remains responsive to local needs.

Financial oversight is another critical part of the trustee role. Trustees approve budgets, monitor expenditures, and ensure that taxpayer dollars are used responsibly. Their job is not to micromanage spending but to confirm that financial decisions support district goals, comply with state and federal requirements, and promote long-term sustainability.

Strategic planning is woven throughout all trustee responsibilities. Trustees routinely participate in retreats, workshops, and planning sessions to set measurable goals and monitor progress. They help maintain focus on student achievement, ensuring that initiatives, programs, and policies support learning and growth. ISBA and WCCS encourages trustees to engage in ongoing professional development to stay informed about legal updates, governance best practices, and emerging educational topics. This

The people who govern our schools are chosen by the community. Understanding their role matters for every learner.

ISBA, Resources

commitment to learning strengthens board effectiveness and helps trustees make informed decisions in a rapidly changing educational landscape.

For Whitley County Consolidated Schools, the work of trustees directly influences the quality of education students receive, the support teachers experience, and the confidence the community has in its public schools. Their decisions shape learning environments, guide district priorities, and uphold the values of transparency and accountability. By fulfilling their roles with integrity and a focus on student success, trustees help ensure that WCCS remains a strong school system committed to serving every student.

STUDENT SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING STARTS AT HOME

Every success story starts long before the first day of school. When students feel supported, encouraged, and cared for at home, they walk into school ready to learn, grow and thrive. Families play a powerful role in shaping confidence, resilience and motivation. When home and school partner together, students gain the foundation they need to reach their full potential.

Let's continue celebrating and strengthening the connection between home and school, because student well-being isn't just nurtured in school building; it begins with the people who know them best.



Connect with WCCS

WCCS Administrative Office	260.244.5771
Columbia City High School	260.244.6136
Indian Springs Middle School	260.244.5148
Coesse Elementary School	260.244.3351
Little Turtle Elementary School	260.244.3343
Mary Raber Montessori School	260.244.5857
Northern Heights Elementary School	260.691.2371

Whitley County Consolidated Schools
107 North Walnut Street, Suite A
Columbia City, IN 46725

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POSTAL CUSTOMER**

WCCS Board of School Trustees

David Smith, President	Kate Method
Mary Ann Schaefer, Vice President	Lisa Doehrman
Tom Rentschler, Secretary	James Renbarger
Chad Moore	Heather Shively
	Jill Western

Feedback is Welcome

We welcome feedback, story ideas or comments. Email us at wccsconnection@wccsonline.com or call 260.244.5771.



BACK TO SCHOOL EVENTS

★ Aug. 10, 2026 ★

Elementary Back to School 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

ISMS Back to School 4 to 6 p.m.

★ Aug. 11, 2026 ★

Sixth Grade Family Night 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Freshman Orientation 6 to 8 p.m.

Check the WCCS App for more information about each event