EAST HOLMES LOCAL SCHOOLS

DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2026

East Holmes Local Schools Supports Student Learning Through Universal Breakfast

For several years, East Holmes Local Schools has provided breakfast to all students each school day, offering families the opportunity for their children to begin the morning with a nutritious meal at school.

Students may choose from a variety of balanced breakfast options, including sausage gravy with biscuits, homemade baked oatmeal, sausage-and-cheese bagel sandwiches, yogurt parfaits, cheese sticks, fresh fruit, and milk. Breakfast is available to all students at no charge, ensuring easy access for any student who wishes to participate.

District leaders view universal breakfast as a practical strategy to reduce barriers and support student readiness for learning. By making breakfast available to all students, the district ensures that every child can start the day with a meal without additional steps or stigma.

The program is operated through the district's Food Services Department and is funded through federal and state resources. District administrators continue to monitor and manage the program carefully, balancing fiscal responsibility with a commitment to student well-being and academic success.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the district offered breakfast; however, participation rates were low. During the pandemic, schools across the state received additional funding and expanded free meal programs for students. As a result of these temporary resources, the district was able to carry over funds and implement free breakfast for all students.

Following the pandemic, the district chose to continue offering universal free breakfast. Due to factors such as the absence of kitchen facilities in every building and limited state reimbursement tied to free and reduced-price meal eligibility, the Food Services fund currently operates at a deficit. By law, school food service programs must maintain a non-negative balance within the Food Services Department; therefore, the district supplements the program by transferring funds from the general fund.

District leadership emphasizes that this investment is made possible by the district's strong financial position and reflects a deliberate decision to prioritize and support student needs. Increased participation in the breakfast program further demonstrates its value to students and families within our community.

By continuing to provide breakfast to all students, East Holmes Local Schools aims to foster a consistent and welcoming start to each school day while supporting student health, well-being, and readiness to learn.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY

- **17** Hiland Graduation
- **22** Last Day of School for Students
  Berlin, Chestnut Ridge
- **25** Memorial Day (No School)
- **27** Last Day of School for Students
  Hiland, Flat Ridge, Mt. Hope, Walnut Creek, Winesburg, Wise (Two-Hour Early Dismissal)
- **28** District InService
- **29** Teacher Work Day

JUNE

- **5** Report Cards Mailed

MISSION *Inspiring excellence to prepare students in becoming productive and responsible citizens through a partnership of exceptional leadership, dedicated staff, and a supportive community.*

Safety Update

As part of our ongoing commitment to student and staff safety, we are making important progress in strengthening emergency communication across our district. Mr. Beun has been leading administrators in developing a comprehensive, district-wide communication system designed to ensure clear, timely, and coordinated responses.

This work has been a collaborative effort. Building leadership teams have partnered with principals to review and provide feedback on visuals and processes that will guide staff during emergency situations. Their input is helping ensure the system is practical, consistent, and effective across all schools.

Our goal is to enhance clarity, reduce uncertainty, and establish shared expectations so staff can respond confidently when it matters most. We appreciate the thoughtful work and dedication of our staff throughout this process. Please look for additional communications from the district as safety projects are completed.

Building Leadership Capacity Through Innovative Community Partnership Series



In a powerful example of what can happen when schools and communities work hand in hand, East Holmes Local Schools has launched its Leadership Development Series. In its inaugural year, this initiative is already making a meaningful impact on staff and strengthening ties with local partners.

Designed to build leadership capacity across the district, the series brings together classified and certified staff members with local business and community leaders who volunteer as facilitators. Together, they are creating a dynamic professional learning experience rooted in real-world insight, collaboration, and shared purpose.

The four-session series focuses on essential leadership practices, including self-awareness, communication and conflict resolution, team building, and decision-making in complex situations. The first session, Knowing Yourself as a Leader, challenged participants to reflect on their personal leadership styles, values, and influence, reinforcing the belief that leadership is not defined by title, but by everyday actions.

Subsequent sessions continue to build on this foundation, equipping staff with practical tools to strengthen communication, navigate conflict, foster positive team cultures, and confidently lead through real-world challenges. Local partners, including Bruce and Jocelyn Hamsher, Christie Mullet and Hummel Group staff, as well as professionals from Keim Lumber, have helped guide discussions and simulations.

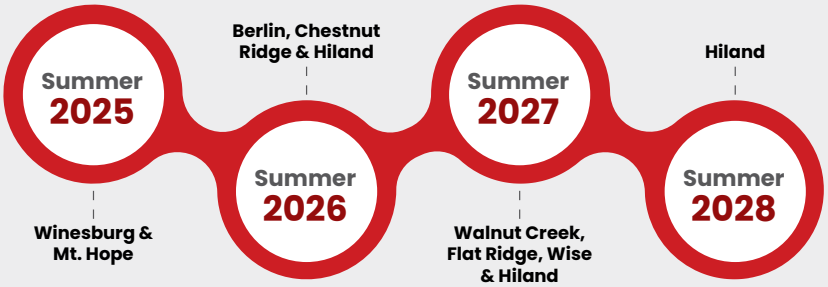
What makes this effort especially impactful is its emphasis on inclusion. By engaging staff across all roles, from teachers and administrators to support staff, the district is cultivating a shared understanding of leadership and reinforcing that every individual plays a vital role in student success.

As the series continues this spring, East Holmes Local Schools is setting a strong example for how districts can leverage community strengths to create meaningful, sustainable growth.

By tapping into local expertise and fostering a culture of continuous learning, the district is not only enhancing staff development but also reinforcing the deep connections that make East Holmes a special place to learn and lead.

Phased Classroom Renovation

Our district is preparing to begin the next phase of the Classroom Renovation Project, a multi-year effort to enhance learning environments across East Holmes Local Schools. This initiative focuses on updating existing classrooms and shared spaces while preserving the small, community-centered nature of our schools, all funded through careful use of district resources.



Renovation work will begin on June 1 at Berlin Elementary, Chestnut Ridge Elementary, and Hiland's middle school wing. To accommodate the work timeline, students at Berlin and Chestnut Ridge will have their last day of school on May 22. Students at Hiland, and all other buildings, will have their last day on May 27, as originally planned.

Improvements will include updated flooring, fresh paint, improved lighting, and new classroom furnishings designed to support student learning. Additional updates to select common areas will also help create more welcoming and functional spaces for students, staff, and visitors. We encourage families and community members to visit the district website to stay up to date on progress and updates throughout the summer.

East Holmes Students Find New Ways to Inspire, Prepare, and Challenge

Every day throughout East Holmes Local Schools, students are showing what it means to live our motto, "Inspire. Prepare. Challenge." From creative projects to leadership initiatives, our students are taking bold steps to learn, lead, and make a difference in their schools and community.

In February, the 7th-grade class at Chestnut Ridge transformed the school lobby into a museum to explore the question, "What contributed to the success of Ancient Greek and Roman culture?" Six detailed exhibits highlighted Pompeii, the Theatre of Dionysus, aqueducts, gladiators, the Parthenon, and the Colosseum. Each display showcased students' research, creativity, and presentation skills, inspiring both classmates and visitors alike.

Meanwhile, students at Mount Hope participated in Action Teams, working on meaningful tasks to keep the school clean, safe, and welcoming. Teams included the School Grounds Team, Library Helpers, Recycling Team, Bulletin Board Team, and Encouragement/Birthday Card Team, all of which allowed students to take ownership of their school and demonstrate kindness, responsibility, and leadership in everyday actions.

Student leadership was on full display in March at Berlin's 5th Annual Leadership Night. Families toured classrooms, supported raffles, and celebrated student-led initiatives that earned Berlin recognition as a Lighthouse School, an honor given to schools that successfully integrate student voice, character education, and the "7 Habits" to create a positive, student-centered learning culture.

East Holmes students continue to embody our motto in so many ways, preparing for the future while inspiring everyone around them.



Hiland Boys Basketball Captures OHSAA Division VI State Title

Hiland High School's boys basketball team has done it again, claiming its fourth OHSAA Division VI state championship! The double-overtime victory caps a remarkable 26-3 season, which ended with an incredible 21-game winning streak.

Hiland's championship run marks the team's fourth state title following previous wins in 1992, 2011, and 2012. Congratulations to Coach Mark Schlabach, the players, and staff for this unforgettable achievement!

Flat Ridge and Wise Welcome Principal Tyler Cook

East Holmes Local Schools is proud to announce the appointment of Tyler Cook as the next Principal of Flat Ridge Elementary and Wise Elementary, effective August 1, 2026, for the 2026-2027 school year.



Following a comprehensive search and interview process, Mr. Cook emerged as the clear choice to lead both buildings, bringing a strong commitment to student success, staff collaboration, and community engagement across the Valley.

Mr. Cook has been a dedicated member of the East Holmes Local Schools community for more than a decade. He currently serves as a third-grade teacher at Flat Ridge, where he has spent the past 11 years supporting students and families. Over the last seven years, he has served as both a Title I teacher and a third-grade classroom teacher, building strong relationships and delivering impactful instruction.

He began his career in education at Mansfield City Schools as a building substitute in a PreK–3 setting and also gained early childhood experience teaching preschool at Whitehall City Schools before joining East Holmes.

Mr. Cook will officially assume his new responsibilities on August 1 and will spend the coming months working alongside current Principal Mr. Casey Travis to ensure a smooth and successful transition. The district is grateful to Mr. Travis for his years of dedication to Flat Ridge and Wise, and is excited for him to move into a new role this fall as the Assistant Transportation Manager.

Superintendent's Message



Dear East Holmes Families and Community,

As students and staff look ahead to a well-earned summer break, I'd like to reflect on our successful spring semester. From the Hiland Boys Basketball team winning the state championship to the Action Teams at Mount Hope making a positive impact in their school, our students continue to inspire me with their dedication, creativity, and care for others.

We remain committed to equipping both students and staff with the tools they need to thrive. From providing every student with a nutritious breakfast each morning to offering professional growth opportunities through our Leadership Development Series and planning for classroom renovations and updates, we are dedicated to fostering growth and success at every level.

As always, safety is a top priority. We are taking thoughtful steps to strengthen and standardize communication and security across the district and to continue improving existing safety protocols. The district will share further updates once these measures are implemented.

As the school year comes to a close, I want to share a reminder of the changes to our academic calendar. Thursday, May 14, which was previously scheduled as a District In-Service Day, will now be a regular student day. Additionally, to accommodate classroom renovations occurring at Berlin and Chestnut Ridge this summer, students in these buildings will have their last day on May 22. For students in all other buildings, the last day of school will be May 27.

Lastly, I'd like to congratulate our students on a successful year and offer a special congratulations to our graduating seniors as they begin their next chapter.

Thank you to our families and community for your continued support. I also want to thank our staff for their dedication and hard work. Together, we make East Holmes a place where students are inspired, prepared, and challenged each day.

Sincerely,

Erik Beun
Superintendent
East Holmes Local Schools

Board of Education

The Board is comprised of five elected citizens and meets in regular session on the third Friday of each month unless otherwise noted.

Meetings are held at the East Holmes Administration Office and begin at 7:30 am. The public is invited to attend.

Board Members

Bryan Coblentz, President

Steve Miller, Vice President

Julia Ann Klink

Bryce Troyer

Wendyl Swartzentruber

Meeting Dates

May 15, 2026

June 12, 2026

District Leadership Team Update

At the end of February, the District Leadership Team (DLT) met to review samples of Student Success Trackers as part of the district's ongoing focus on Instructional Clarity. Through this process, the DLT analyzed current practices and used informal data to help guide planning for upcoming spring professional learning.

Looking ahead, the DLT will continue to prioritize Progress goals, which are focused on aligning student growth across the district. This work will build on Instructional Clarity and focus professional learning on key instructional strategies, including Assessment Literacy, Formative Instruction and Feedback, and Differentiation. During the May DLT meeting, team members will collaborate on the focus areas of their choice to define key components and develop recommendations for professional learning, along with implementation and support timelines.

Say Something Anonymous Reporting System

East Holmes Local School District utilizes the "Say Something" Anonymous Reporting System (ARS) in partnership with Sandy Hook Promise, a national leader in school safety programs. This initiative is part of East Holmes' ongoing commitment to creating a safer, more supportive environment for all students, educators, and community members.

The Say Something ARS program is designed to educate students and staff on how to identify warning signs and threats, whether online or in person, and respond effectively. Through this program, students learn to recognize at-risk behaviors in their peers, take them seriously, and act promptly. They can choose to talk to a trusted adult or report concerns anonymously via the Say Something ARS mobile app, website, or a 24/7/365 crisis hotline.

