

# Wolverine Tracks

*A publication designed to build community pride and awareness in the West Geauga Local Schools*

## A Message from Dr. Rich Markwardt, Superintendent



Dear West Geauga Resident,

We have much to celebrate as we wrap up the first semester of the 2021-2022 school year. Thank you for the support that makes our accomplishments possible.

The recent District Report Card issued by the Ohio Department of Education brought good news to West G with a Performance Index that placed the district in the top 3% of Ohio's school districts based on academic achievement. We are understandably proud of our students and their teachers!

Students continue to experience success in our classrooms, sports programs, extracurricular activities, and the arts. This newsletter provides evidence of their achievements and offers a glimpse of what's to come. Included are highlights of the many events that make each of our school buildings great places to learn. We are truly grateful for the support of the West Geauga Board of Education, our students, staff, and parents. As superintendent, I have the privilege of being in the buildings to observe the lessons and activities that your children enjoy on a daily basis.

I hope that you enjoy a blessed 2021 holiday season. As 2022 approaches, each of us is anxiously anticipating

continued accomplishments and a return to more normal times. Thank you to our extended Wolverine Family for your continued support of our school district.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Markwardt, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools



*The West Geauga School District earned a #16 ranking among more than 600 schools in the State of Ohio. Lindsey Elementary was ranked in the top 1% in the entire state as well. Read more on Page 3 inside!*



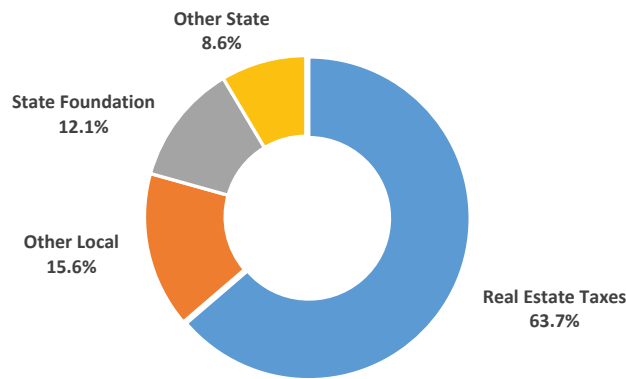
Like many of you, 2021 was an unusual year for West Geauga Local Schools. Not only was the District dealing with the restrictions and educational challenges of COVID-19, the Board of Education grade-leveled its two elementary buildings and completed the Newbury territory transfer. In fiscal year 2021, the District spent \$31.1 million including significant increases in expenditures related to COVID-19 for additional staffing, cleaning and sanitizing buildings and other social distancing protocols. While \$413,000 in Federal funding was received through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) in FY 2021, it was not enough to cover all the costs associated with opening schools for in-person learning and providing the necessary tutoring and summer school opportunities for those students developing learning gaps associated with online learning.

Some of our students also came back to new schools in 2021 as Westwood Elementary became a K-2 building, Lindsey Elementary changed to grades 3-5 and approximately 300 Newbury students transferred to the District. As part of the territory transfer, Newbury's assets and liabilities were added to the District's financial statements and new tax rates were assessed. Newbury residents benefited from a 14 mill drop in tax rates beginning in tax year 2020, while West Geauga residents will see a 2 mill drop in their tax rates starting in tax year 2021. The transfer brought in approximately \$5 million in additional tax revenue for a total of \$37.4 million in revenues for fiscal year 2021 and a one-time net cash transfer of approximately \$3.8 million. The Board of Education is in the process of determining what to do with the Newbury buildings as they are no longer needed for educational purposes.

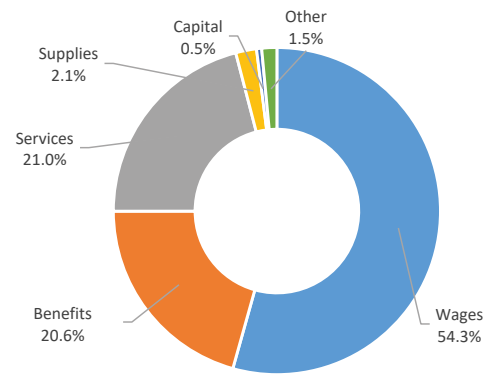
The District's Audited Consolidated Annual Financial Report, the November 2021 Five Year Forecast and monthly financial statements can be found on the District Treasurer's website for further information related to the financial condition of the District.

Karen A. Pavlat, CPA, CFE  
Treasurer/CFO

FY 2021 Revenues



FY 2021 Expenses



### Technology's Positive Strides During Pandemic Environment!

The role of technology came to the forefront while educating during the pandemic, and the West Geauga Schools responded with speed, efficiency and an opportunity for new learning. During the initial shut down in March 2020, the district provided devices to families while planning for an unknown return to the classroom. The district provided hot spots to those in need. In August 2020, the West Geauga Schools provided those that chose our remote model with individual Chromebooks, as needed, and hot spots where required. Hot spots are still currently offered to families who need additional connectivity support.

With the 2021 – 2022 school year underway, the district is pleased to report that all students in K-12 have been provided with their own device. All K-2 classrooms at Westwood have their own dedicated Chromebook carts. Grades 3-5 at Lindsey have already had this in place.

At West Geauga Middle School, students pick up their dedicated device at the beginning of the day and turn them in after their 8th period class for battery charging. Every West Geauga High School student has a district issued Chromebook which is taken home nightly. The need for a district issued Chromebook is to make sure it has the same hardware specifications as all of the others at the grade level, is properly filtered, and ensures its compatibility with our administration console for district instructional and assessment apps. Simply put, each student is able to have the same experience.

In the WGLSD, Chromebooks are refreshed/replaced on a 4-year cycle. The financial support from the school board and the community has allowed West Geauga Schools to be competitive with neighboring districts with regard to student access. Technology has played a leading role in helping students and staff succeed.





## **WEST GEAUGA TOP 3% IN ALL OF OHIO, RANKED 16TH OUT OF MORE THAN 600 DISTRICTS!**

The Ohio Department of Education's District Report Card validated the efforts of our teachers, administrators and support staff to keep learning alive during the pandemic. **West Geauga's Performance Index ranks our district 16th among Ohio's 608 school districts. That places West G in the top 3% state-wide** behind only four other Northeast Ohio districts (Solon, Chagrin Falls, Rocky River, and Beachwood).

Special recognition goes to the students and staff of **Lindsey Elementary School**. Its Performance Index places the building in the **top half of the top 1% of Ohio's school buildings**. Clearly, our students flourished despite the challenges associated with COVID-19. Congratulations to our hard-working staff, encouraging and positive parents, and our students, whose performance places our district among the best in the entire state.

### **West Geauga Educational Foundation's Person of the Year is Natalie Cooper, Former Science Teacher!**

Former West Geauga science teacher Natalie Cooper was awarded the 2021 West Geauga Educational Foundation's Person of Innovation Award for her generous and steadfast support of West Geauga High School's Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) efforts. Mrs. Cooper was a highly-respected physics teacher who was known for her work with the high school Robotics Club. To this day, she is a staunch supporter of the WGHS Science Department and the high school STEM initiative.

The West Geauga Educational Foundation annually awards grants to educators who wish to implement programs that seek seed money outside of the regular district equipment budget. Sometimes these projects are trial programs that, once established, become a part of traditional district expenditures. Recent innovative grants include an inflatable classroom-sized planetarium, Google Virtual Reality goggles, an Aquaponics lab, and mechanical equipment for the high school STEM space.

The annual Thanksgiving Pancake Breakfast, sponsored by the Ed Foundation and generously hosted by the Chesterland McDonald's restaurant, has been a highly visible source of Ed Foundation fundraising for the last 33 years. Although the breakfast event was offered this year only as a Pancake Breakfast at Home Hybrid package due to social distancing constraints, the foundation hopes to resume its on-site traditional Thanksgiving Breakfast in 2022.

### **Calamity Days... Important information When Weather Becomes Cold!**

It's the time of year when West Geauga Schools sometimes close due to adverse weather conditions. **Dr. Markwardt tries to alert families to a closure by 5:30 am.** Occasionally, this is not possible due to conditions that arise after that time. The district sends a recorded message to our families and also posts the closure on local television and radio stations.

Sometimes people ask at what temperature schools must close. There is no such trigger in law or board policy. The simple answer is that schools close when weather conditions warrant. This is due to heavy snowfall, hazardous road conditions, freezing rain, a power outage, or dangerous wind chill. Sometimes school is closed due to a combination of those factors.

West Geauga's calamity days are "no school" days. That means that no lessons are taught. Students and their families can treat the days much as they would a weekend or holiday. Generally, on a calamity day, schools are closed to all activities, including athletic practices. On some occasions, if roads and weather conditions permit, practices may take place with the approval of coaches, the athletic director, the principal, and the superintendent. There exists no magic formula to close school. It is a judgment call that incorporates many factors. So when you hear Dr. Markwardt's cheerful voice at 5:30 am, keep in mind it's being done out of a desire to keep our students and their teachers safe.



*Congratulations Natalie Cooper for Being This Year's Person of Innovation Award Winner from the West Geauga Educational Foundation!*





West Geauga High School had an exciting start to the school year. Our students have engaged academically, and our clubs have re-engaged the community and region in a positive manner. Examples include our National Honor Society Coat Drive, and our Interact Club Food Drive which collected 5,000 cans and \$600 for those in need. In addition, the student body and staff came together to successfully host our first-ever outdoor Homecoming Dance. Events such as these drive optimism and school spirit.

**Successful Fall Athletics Season Completed**

The fall athletics and co-curricular season was quite successful this year, complete with team and individual accomplishments. Boys and Girls Cross Country demonstrated great achievement, as the boys team finished 2nd overall in the Chagrin Division, finished 5th at the Regional competition and qualified as a team to the state competition for the first time in school history! Congratulations to Daniel Kearns and Matt Dienes, who were named 1st team all-conference, John Mikes, Chris Whiting and Grant Congdon, who earned 2nd team all-conference, and Lorenzo Linek and Dakota Deets who were named Honorable Mention all-conference. In girls cross country, congratulations to Senior Grace Gyetko, who finished first team all-conference, 13th overall at regionals and qualified as an individual for the state meet, where she finished 32nd overall. Way to go! Congratulations to Skye Hackathorne and Taylor Deets, who earned 2nd team all-conference and Julia Martinez and Emily Berdis who earned Honorable Mention honors.

Girls Soccer finished with an overall record of 11-4-6 and won the district championship for the 2nd consecutive year. They won their regional semifinal contest, and lost in the regional finals, tying them for furthest advancement in school history. Girls soccer had six seniors earn academic all-Ohio honors for having 3.7 GPA or higher. Congratulations to Frankee Flesher, Megan McGinnis and Rae Ehrbar who earned 1st team all-conference recognition and Ashlyn Drayer, Bella Pollack and Holly Juennette who were named 2nd team all-conference. Honorable Mention for the conference went to Savannah Swaye and Zoe Cowles. Congratulations to our Boys Soccer team, and Patricio Ramirez, who was named to the 1st team all-conference, Cole Frate and Ayden Vargo, who were 2nd team all-conference, and Clayton Timm and Ricky Platt who made Honorable Mention all-conference. Volleyball had a great season as well, finishing with 15



*State Qualifying Boys Cross Country Team*

wins and 6 losses, going 9 and 1 in the conference, winning the division title for the 2nd year in a row. Congratulations to Coach Amber Baker, who won Coach of the Year honors. Junior Kaitlyn Danszczak was named CVC Most Valuable Player, and who along with Stephanie Meyer and Hannah Laurich, were named 1st team all-conference. Second team all-conference honors went to Kayla Herbst and Olivia Bartlett, and Preston Clayman and Ceci Jadrych earned Honorable Mention recognition.

In football action, the team finished with a record of 7 wins and 3 losses and qualified for the playoffs for the 2nd year in a row. Senior kicker Joey DiLalla broke the school record for points in a career with 184, and points in a season with 68. Along with this, he tied the school record for most field goals in a season with 9, and broke the school record for most points in a single game with 14. West G featured five 1st team all-conference honorees, including Torry Stazzone, Luca Gasbarrino, Austin Pascoe, Lucas Sadler and Joey DiLalla. All-conference 2nd team honors were earned by David Fofana and Nate Meyers, and Honorable Mention went to Danny Stewart and Chris Ranallo. Congratulations to all!

Girls golfer Jane Javorek was second team all-CVC for golf. Thank you to our girls tennis participants. The West Geauga Schools would like to thank the parents, our Athletic Boosters, the Grid Iron Club, our cheerleaders, the Wolverettes and the Marching Band for their support. We were able to successfully navigate the fall season with no distractions or interruptions of any sort, and thank everyone for their partnership.





### Middle School Has Very Productive Fall of the 2021-2022 School Year

West Geauga Middle School has maintained a steady pace for the start of the 2021-2022 School Year. After not seeing one another during the coronavirus time away from in-person learning, staff and students are certainly taking advantage of education in the school buildings, and becoming positively re-acquainted with one another. The individual interaction is definitely an integral part of the learning process, and the first several months at West Geauga Middle School affirms what research shows, which is that learning is optimal when students are learning in the classroom with live instruction. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to making our first few months together successful.

As winter weather approaches, the Middle School encourages families to remember a few important items. First, please dress for the weather accordingly, to prevent illness and ensuring students remain in the classroom. Next, be extra cautious in the drop off and pick up lines coming to and from school. Your help during the cold winter weather always goes a long way to ensuring students remain in the classroom.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (P.B.I.S.) has been a distinct focus of the Middle School, and everyone in the West Geauga Local Schools, for some time. During the first quarter, students and staff were recognized for the positive things they do to help make our building a great place to be. Such focus manifests itself in the three R's, which stand for being **Respectful...Responsible...** and **Ready to Learn**. Students have done a fantastic job



in demonstrating these behaviors and characteristics, and staff has done a great job of encouraging them. In fact, students receive weekly "shout-outs" over the announcements and "I See in You" (I.C.N.U.) magnets on their lockers praising them for helping to create and promote a positive school climate. Stay tuned for more updates relative to P.B.I.S. in the future.

In other Middle School news, as part of the State of Ohio's Pathways to Graduation initiative, the building has created Tech classes for students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades over the past several years. We have also launched business classes for grades 7th and 8th, which began this year. Within the Tech class curriculum, students get real world, hands-on experience in coding, 3D printing and Digital Media editing each year (6th through 8th). The learning spirals to help build upon the skills students have learned in previous years. In the 7th grade Business class, students learn basic fundamentals of business and personal finance. There is a focus on understanding money, budgeting, credit and other financial concepts. The focus in the 8th grade business class is on marketing principles and starting a business, promoting the entrepreneurial spirit, hard work, understanding the principles of the stock market, saving and investing. These courses are truly designed to expose 7th and 8th graders to success in life beyond school, and to help make their pathway to graduation more meaningful.

Thank you for your continued support, and as always, Go Wolverines!





**Lindsey Elementary School: Productive, Energetic and Enthusiastic!**

The first several months of the academic year can easily be described as productive, energetic and filled with enthusiasm. Productive, in the sense that students and staff have pursued quality academic initiatives that are beginning to materialize tangible results that will only continue to be enhanced throughout the rest of the school year. Energetic, in the sense that students and staff come prepared for learning each and every day. We thank the families for preparing their students mentally and emotionally to meet each day as a new challenge, and to try and stretch and grow along the way. Enthusiastic, in the sense that Lindsey Elementary is developing a true building pride and school spirit for being together in a quality learning environment. To the students, we say thank you for the dedication to learning. To the staff, your devotion to our students is very real and palpable and the administration appreciates your can-do approach to work each and every day. The families of Lindsey Elementary School are to be commended for remaining positive, flexible and prepared during the first several months as well. It's this type of optimism and collaboration that translates into student success. Thank you all!

Lindsey Elementary School has been focused on students setting and then working toward the achievement of various goals. While district leaders find goal-setting to be very meaningful, what's even more rewarding is the journey each individual student takes on their respective path toward achievement. Please continue to encourage your students to set goals, and to be focused on accomplishing those goals, however long it may take.

On November 5, 2021, Lindsey Elementary came together for an academic celebration to applaud students and staff for the success achieved from state testing. PTO helped



*Lindsey Elementary student council members help generate non-perishable food items for the needy this holiday season!*

plan and coordinate this outdoor celebration filled with music, cheering, and dancing. This success was due to the hard work of our students, our teachers, and our parents to help students achieve at levels we had never yet achieved. When you drive past our building, you will see a big banner that we are displaying proudly that declares that our building was in the top 1% in the state of Ohio. Thank you for the ongoing support you give to Lindsey Elementary.

Third graders at Lindsey kicked off a mystery unit that is being studied in English Language Arts by helping to solve a mystery created by the teachers who set up a "crime scene" in the computer lab. Students had the opportunity to interview "suspects" and ultimately solved the case. When our teachers then began the grade-level exemplar text that will be studied, students were eager to study the genre of mysteries! Lindsey intends for third graders to become familiar with problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and the mystery unit is a perfect example of such creative learning.

Students took the time and invested their energy into celebrating Veterans Day at Lindsey Elementary this year with the creation of a special video that highlights family members of those associated with our building who have served our nation in one of the branches of the Armed Forces. In addition to the commemorative video, 78 American flags were cleverly displayed in the lawn to represent the 78 veterans who are in some way affiliated with the students and staff in our building. Lindsey Elementary School recognizes the sacrifices of our veterans and their families and was proud to share a tribute with both the video and the flag representation. Thank you all, for your service!





### Westwood Focuses on Collaboration & Family Engagement During First Quarter!

Westwood Elementary School experienced a great deal of success and constructive work during the first several months of the school year. With an overall strongly positive climate throughout the building, students and staff were able to maintain a high level of productivity. Westwood hosted several family engagement opportunities including in-person and virtual orientation, open house, kindergarten orientation and conferences. Families, our student body and our staff should be applauded for their positivity, deep desire to keep engaged with the process and maintain high levels of energy.

In reflecting on the first quarter, a number of initiatives and special activities must be highlighted for the community's awareness. First, the Westwood Walk took place as an event that raised an incredible total of \$28,000. Our loyal, dedicated and hard-working PTO is to be praised for the organization of this event. The entire building will benefit from the funds raised. Thank you very much to all involved.

Academically speaking, Westwood Elementary School is currently involved in the Science of Reading initiative. In this program, student needs are identified, and are then worked on in a collaborative small group setting with their teacher and other staff members. Most importantly, the entire building is involved in this initiative, and the **Science of Reading** has been incorporated into our existing programming and curriculum. Engaging interventions are



*Mrs. Lillash works with students at Westwood!*

being used with each student throughout the building as well, to boost their reading skills. The overall goal is to teach all of our students to read at the most proficient level possible for understanding and enjoyment. It's working, and the students are having fun while enhancing their skills. Please be mindful that we will be taking benchmark assessments (MAP) soon to see just how much progress has been made. Want to help? You can play a big role in improving your son or daughter's overall reading acumen by reading with them on a daily basis.

Cold weather is right around the corner, and so that our Westwood students can stay healthy, safe and warm, please make sure that coats, hats, gloves and boots are worn on a regular basis. Doing this optimizes your child's health, and in this environment, the well-being of individuals around them. If you do find your son or daughter to be sick, please keep them home and inform us at the building. Thank you for your cooperation as we head into the cold winter weather season.

Westwood Elementary School thanks the families for their continued engagement, the staff for their dedication, and the students for their hard work. Have a safe and enjoyable holiday season.



*Mrs. Javorek doing a "Sound Box" activity with one of our Westwood students*





*West Geauga High School students offer gifts from local businesses to the representatives from London, England, who joined us for a special ceremony on November 17th, 2021.*



## High School Marching Band to Perform in London, England for Highly Coveted New Year's Day Parade on January 1, 2023

### Special Ceremony on November 17th Officially Invites Marching Band to London...

On January 1st, 2023, West Geauga High School Marching Band students will participate in the largest parade in the world, which will include nearly 10,000 individuals in total. Some 475 floats and acts will represent approximately 20 countries from around the globe. The parade is live broadcast internationally for all to see on this day as well, giving our very own West Geauga students a global audience.

In a special ceremony that took place on Wednesday, November 17th 2021, representatives from the London New Year's Day Parade visited West Geauga High School to extend the formal invitation to Principal Ryan Patti. An assembly with members of the West Geauga High School Marching Band, members of the 8th grade Marching Band, and the Wolverettes entertained the distinguished guests from London with a performance of contemporary and traditional songs. Approximately 100 students delivered the uplifting performance in the High School gymnasium. The Chairman of the London New Year's Day Parade, and also the Co-founder and Executive Director of the parade itself made the special trip from London and gave a video presentation. Our student ambassadors, including

seniors Phillip Moore, Aiden Bindokas, Lauren Kercher and Shannon Swinerton thanked the distinguished guests from London with gifts unique to Northeast Ohio including chocolate and locally produced tea.

Congratulations to Jason Branch, Taylor DeSapri and all of the participants in the West Geauga High School Marching Band!

