Ephrata Area School District

NEWS

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www.easdpa.org



Meet Cliff,

the newest member of the Mountaineer family!

Strong, thoughtful, and brave, Cliff embodies the true spirit of a Mountaineer, a leader who takes responsible risks and reaches for new heights.

The selection of his name was a collaborative effort between staff and students. Staff first submitted name ideas, which were narrowed down to three finalists: Cliff, Mount-E, and Rock-E. The entire K–12 student body then voted, and the overwhelming favorite was Cliff, a fitting name for a mascot who reminds us to be courageous and keep climbing toward and achieving new goals.

Look for Cliff at sporting and school events and throughout the community where he loves giving high-fives and taking selfies!

SUPPORTED BY THE EPHRATA AREA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Ephrata Area School District to provide all students with a secure learning environment and exemplary academic programs that inspire all students to reach their full potential.

VISION STATEMENT

Achieving Success
One Student at a Time



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Welcome!

Each year, this collection of updates and information offers an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of our students, dedication of our staff, strengths of our programs, and growth of our community partnerships. You will see inspiring examples - from early learning through graduation - of how leadership, service, resilience, grit, teamwork, creativity, and more define the EASD experience, fuel the growth, and ensure the success of our students.

This year marks an exciting milestone with the addition of full-day kindergarten. A change that allows us to provide a more comprehensive early learning experience and increased time for students to explore, grow, and build strong relationships with their classmates and teachers – setting them up for a confident and successful start to their formal school journey.

Many of the featured stories shine a spotlight on programs and experiences that help students develop the traits essential for success in an ever-changing world. The smiling student faces across these pages reflect the joy and fulfillment that come from working toward their potential and discovering who they are becoming.

Finally, we are also thrilled to officially welcome Cliff, our Mountaineer mascot, who brings an extra dose of EASD spirit to every event and activity he attends!

Thank you for your continued support of the Ephrata Area School District. Together, we celebrate the achievements of today and the promise of brighter days ahead!

Sincerely,

Brian M. Troop, Ed.D.
Superintendent



Just as the letter "E" frequently appears in the Life Ready Graduate Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions, this theme continues from last school year - recognizing and celebrating individuals who exemplify the qualities that foster success in our schools, communities, and an ever-changing world. New this year, we're expanding the recognition to include not only staff but also community members making a positive impact. **For more information, including the monthly honorees, visit easdpa.org/BeTheE**

EPHRATA AREA BeThe E SCHOOL DISTRICT

JOIN US IN CONNECTING *Classrooms and Careers*

There are countless ways for local businesses and community members to partner with our schools and programs. **Opportunities include:**

- Classroom career talks and Q&A
- Hosting industry field trips or facility tours
- Job-shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships
- Mentorship, mock interviews, and résumé feedback
- Real-world projects, design challenges, or judging student competitions
- Advisory panels, curriculum input, and guest demonstrations
- In-kind support such as materials, equipment, or expertise

If you're interested personally, or if something at work makes you think "Students should see this!" or "We could use a student perspective," please reach out. **Contact our Community Relations Director, Sarah McBee, at sarah_mcbee@easdpa.org to start the conversation.**





A Strong Start for Full-Day K

Full-day kindergarten is underway and is receiving enthusiastic support from both families and educators.

"Our child is thriving in an atmosphere of full-day kindergarten," shared Nate and Jen Sayre. ***"Having the additional time to spend with teachers and communicate with peers has certainly helped our child develop both academically as well as socially."***

Parents Ashley and Brandon Updike echoed that sentiment, saying the extended schedule helps students grow in remarkable ways. ***"The new schedule isn't just beneficial to learning – it also allows students to develop deeper relationships, important routines, and provides extra time for enrichment,"*** they said.

Teachers are seeing the benefits, too. ***"Full-day kindergarten has given students the time and space they need to begin growing,"*** said Christa Pearson, EASD Kindergarten Teacher. ***"With a full day together, I can build stronger relationships and create meaningful learning experiences that spark curiosity and confidence."***

Approved last winter based on positive recommendations and feedback, the full-day option now serves over 250 kindergarteners, reflecting the community's enthusiasm for supporting our youngest learners at the start of their educational journey.



Highland Elementary School is one of only 13 schools across the Commonwealth to receive this prestigious recognition from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

"At Highland, we are a family. This honor belongs to every teacher, staff member, student, and family who has helped make Highland Elementary School a place where learning is fostered, relationships are built, and every child feels supported, challenged, and inspired to succeed," shared Mr. Brett Esbenshade, Highland Principal.

Highland Elementary was recognized for creating a safe, supportive, and engaging school environment that fosters both academic and personal growth. The school's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program plays a central role, teaching and modeling expectations through its Highland Expected Behavior Matrix, classroom vision statements, and a monthly focus on the Ephrata Area School District's Life Ready Graduate Profile dispositions. Students are celebrated weekly and monthly, with end-of-month Game Show Day events highlighting "Highland Heroes," who exemplify the school's values.



Exploring the Wonders of Elementary STEAM Days

These exciting, schoolwide events bring Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) to life through hands-on activities, creative challenges, and engaging demonstrations. Each day is designed to spark curiosity and connect classroom learning to the real world, giving students opportunities to experiment, build, problem-solve, and collaborate.

These events often feature guest presenters and industry experts who share real-world applications of STEAM fields. Themes have included "Extreme Science," "Amazing Air," "Wild Weather," and "Superhero Science," offering memorable experiences that make learning both fun and meaningful.

A Family STEAM Night in October kicked off everything this year, featuring interactive demonstrations and live science performances. Families explored, laughed, and learned together to discover how creativity and innovation drive the world around us.



Leaders of Future Generations Inspire Change

Now in its fourth year at Ephrata Intermediate School, this program - run in partnership with Compass Mark – helps 5th and 6th graders build leadership, teamwork, and decision-making skills while making a positive impact on their community. The EIS Leaders of Future Generations have completed several meaningful projects, including collecting food for the Good Samaritan Shelter, hosting activities for residents at Ephrata Manor, and organizing a teacher appreciation social. They also visited WellSpan Ephrata Community Hospital with a heartfelt mission to brighten the day of discharged patients with handmade cards and cheerful potted plants—an effort inspired by their motto, "Growing Seeds of Hope." EIS Principal Dr. Kevin Deemer shared, ***"The kids are so excited to help others. The program shows students the power of collaboration – how working together can create something new and meaningful."***

A Perfect Score



Now a 9th grader at Ephrata High School, Cole McAnany continues to earn recognition for his remarkable achievement last spring earning a perfect score in the prestigious Mathematical Olympiad. Cole was one of only 201 students nationwide (top 2%) to achieve a perfect score among more than 84,000 participants. His teacher, Mr. Adam Zeni, called it "a rare occurrence," praising Cole's natural problem-solving ability and dedication to mathematics.



Young Writers, Big Achievements

Last school year, groups of EASD elementary and intermediate students took part in short writing contests with YoungWriters®, crafting themed stories and poems in 100 words or fewer. Out of hundreds – possibly thousands – of entries nationwide, 23 EASD students were selected as published authors! Their works appear in three YoungWriters® anthologies: *A Wander in the Woods, Ridiculous Writers*, and *Winter Wonderland Jingle Rhymes*.

A Hollywood Homecoming with Heart



Under the glow of marquee lights and surrounded by Hollywood-themed décor, the EHS cafeteria became a scene of joy and celebration for the 2025 Homecoming dance. Before all students were invited to attend, the EHS Student Council hosted an exclusive event for students in the life skills program to enjoy the music, dancing, and excitement in a comfortable, sensory-friendly environment. Student Council President Jocelyn Sweigart shared that it was a meaningful opportunity to give back to the community and provide a space where every student could feel included and celebrated.

Teachers and students alike expressed appreciation for the inclusive effort, with EHS teacher Mrs. Dianna Becker noting how meaningful it was to see others reach out to create such an opportunity. Students danced, took photos, and enjoyed snacks in a vibrant, welcoming atmosphere that made them feel like stars. Many students shared their excitement about attending, emphasizing how fun and memorable the experience was. After witnessing the joy it sparked, Student Council plans to make it an annual tradition to ensure every student can shine on Homecoming night.

ARTICLE & PHOTO BY EHS SENIOR SABRINA PHINITPAPHA



PA FFA Vice President

Recent EHS graduate Sally Bollinger has been selected to serve as the 2025–2026 Pennsylvania FFA State Vice President—the first Ephrata student to hold a state office since 2010 and the first female in 19 years! Chosen from 34 candidates after several interviews at Penn State, Sally is spending the year traveling across Pennsylvania to visit FFA chapters, lead workshops, and represent the state's agricultural community.

"I'm beyond thrilled to be serving as the PA FFA Vice President," Sally said. ***"We've started school visits and hope to reach 120 schools this year! Our first leadership conference in Altoona brought together 500 first-year members."*** She often reflects on the support from EASD for helping to inspire her success. ***"Visiting schools and talking to members across the state has made me increasingly more grateful for the opportunities I received at Ephrata and how they are devoted to so many different student pathways,"*** she said. Sally is taking a gap year before heading to Oklahoma State University next fall.



EPHRATA EARLY LEARNING



The District offers a wide variety of early learning opportunities for children, from birth to kindergarten-age, including play dates, learning sessions, and much more. **AND, IT IS ALL FREE!**

SUPPORTED BY THE EPHRATA AREA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Learn more:
www.easdpa.org/EarlyLearning
EarlyLearning@easdpa.org

**Children must reside within the Ephrata Area School District.*

Mountaineer Athletics Shine

Whether on the field, in the stands, or behind the scenes, there's a place for everyone in our programs. EASD Athletics stands on a strong foundation built by student-athletes who lead with heart. Recent graduates and team captains recently reflected on the four pillars that define us as Mountaineers.
Scan the QR code to learn more.



PHOTO CREDIT: MIKE YOUNG

Additionally, our students—both individually and as teams—have earned an impressive number of state-level athletic honors in baseball, cross country, golf, softball, swimming, tennis, track, and wrestling.

A special shout-out to to Sophia Rivera, who became a double state champion in both discus and shot put last spring.

EVA EPHRATA VIRTUAL ACADEMY

EVA offers instruction identical to cyber charter programs with many added options and benefits all designed to support students' success.

- Flexibility for work, health, or personal reasons
- EASD connectedness and support
- Non-traditional pathways to graduation
- Classes aligned to students' post-secondary goals
- Plus, enrolling in EVA saves taxpayers approximately $8,500 per student.

"Students who find a home at EVA are encouraged to set goals and put in the work to achieve them, knowing they have our full support every step of the way," shared Sara Johns, Supervisor of Virtual Learning. ***"We love celebrating their success — not only when they cross the finish line, but often when they reach it ahead of schedule. Many of our students complete their studies earlier than expected, giving them a head start in applying for jobs and planning their futures."***

Learn more at www.easdpa.org/EVA

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WE ARE HIRING



This school year, the Foundation is providing the District **over $150,000** for innovative educational materials, Signature Programs, and Venture Grants, including the Coding Contest, STEAM Days, EHS Investment Club, Mountaineer Robotics, MakerBus, Ephrata Early Learning, and more.





Calling all EHS Alumni! Stay connected with your alma mater – update your contact information to receive the latest alumni news and event updates. Plus, come see what's new at Ephrata High School! Reunion tours are now being scheduled. Visit **EphrataEducationFoundation.org/Alumni** to join the alumni network today.

Learn more, get involved, or schedule a reunion tour by contacting Executive Director Crystal Smeltzer at Crystal_Smeltzer@easdpa.org or EphrataEducationFoundation.org.

UPCOMING EAEF EVENTS

Saturday, March 7 | Purple & Gold Gala, Eden Resort & Suites
Movie Night at LCBC Ephrata – *Stay Tuned!*
Golf Tournament – *Date Coming Soon!*



Mountaineer Store

Shop for EASD gear anytime on the District website or scan the QR code.

HOMESTEAD/FARMSTEAD APPLICATIONS

Act I of 2006 – Property Tax Relief Act requires school boards to notify, by first class mail, the owner of an eligible parcel of residential property of the existence of the homestead/farmstead exclusion program and the need to file an application for approval with the County Assessment Office.

If you have filed an application for a homestead/farmstead exclusion for your primary residence and were eligible for a tax reduction under Act 1, there is no need to reapply every year. For those who have not previously filed, or a property transfer was reported to the Lancaster County Recorder of Deeds, a new form will be sent to you on or before December 31, 2025. You must complete and return the application on or before March 1, 2026 to the Lancaster County Assessment Office to be eligible and approved for a tax reduction.

Applications are also available at the District Office and on www.co.lancaster.pa.us.

ANNUAL LEGAL NOTICES

The following legal notices are available in the District Information section of www.easdpa.org or copies can be picked up at any District building.

- Asbestos Management Plan
- Child Find and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
- Notice of Discrimination under Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, Age Discrimination Act, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- School Board Policy 200: Enrollment of Students
- School Board Policy 236.1: Threat Assessment
- School Board Policy 246: School Wellness
- School Board Policy 251: Students Experiencing Homelessness, Foster Care and Other Educational Instability
- School Board Policy 810.1: School Transportation – Video/Audio Monitoring
- School Board Policy 906: Public Complaint Procedures
- Security Camera Notification