

WOODSTOCK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Christopher Roche, Superintendent

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WPS Families,

Welcome Back and Happy New Year!

I hope you and your families enjoyed a restful break. As we begin the next phase of the school year, thank you for your continued partnership and support. I look forward to the important work ahead as we move forward together on behalf of our students.

Effective tomorrow, **January 13, 2026**, I will serve as Interim Principal at WES while continuing my responsibilities as Superintendent. **Given that we are entering the most critical period of the budget cycle, I will prioritize this work while assuming as many principal duties as possible and until Principal Demers returns.** As has been the case, Stacey Terwilliger and Lori Wolpert will continue to provide stellar leadership any time I am called away or must attend a meeting when other parties cannot meet in the evening.

Our Business Manager and I will be in constant communication to ensure we complete the first budget draft by the end of the month. This draft will reflect our core values, guiding beliefs, district and school improvement plans, and feedback from the staff and families at WES, WMS, and community surveys sent through the Town of Woodstock. You will see a budget proposal aligned to this input at the first BOE meeting in February.

Key Dates

- **Thursday, 1/15/26:** WMS Concert at the Loos Center
- **Monday, 1/19/26:** No school (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
- **Tuesday, 1/20/26:** Students off; Staff Professional Development Day

Cost Savings and Proactive Budgeting

Our Business Manager, Deana Chrzan, and I remain committed to maximizing resources through strong relationships and strategic decision-making. Rather than hiring costly consultants, we are partnering with highly respected leaders and educators, many of whom are providing support **at little to no cost. (With verifiable results to substantiate their credibility and expertise rather than fancy titles.)**

We have also secured **The Speed of Trust** professional learning, a program typically valued at over \$20,000, **at no cost to the district.** This PD will be offered to regional superintendents, leadership teams, informal leaders, and BOE members over the summer. I attended this PD and it is one of the top 3 leadership trainings I have ever attended!

Additionally, we are close to securing a **\$126,000 grant** to support the Leader in Me Program. If awarded, this world-class student leadership program will cost the district between **\$0 and \$10,000 annually.** Take a look at what we may be about to embark upon!

[Leader in Me Intermediate - Middle School Example](#)

“Glenwood Intermediate faced nearly 1,000 discipline referrals a year, stagnant test scores, and students without a clear vision for their future. Everything changed when they implemented Leader in Me. Watch how students discovered their voice, took ownership of their school, and stepped into leadership roles that reshaped the culture—from leading fundraisers and improving their campus to setting personal goals that skyrocketed academic results. Discipline rates plummeted. Test scores jumped from 18% to 53% in just one year. Students now describe their school as a place of encouragement, leadership, and courage. This is more than an education story, it’s a story of hope, empowerment, and preparing young people to lead their own lives with confidence and purpose.” **From their Leader in Me YouTube Channel**

We continue to pursue cost-efficient operational practices. Through diligent oversight, we reduced electricity projections for the coming year and saved **\$27,000** in heating oil costs in 2025–26. Savings from last year also allowed us to complete several capital projects, including fencing repairs, film replacement, and updated fire-code compliant locking mechanisms.

We addressed overdue maintenance by clearing soot from chimneys and conducting air-quality testing. Deana also secured grant funding for required radon testing, resulting in **no cost** to the district. We transitioned from Rediker to PowerSchool for our Student Information System, spreading implementation costs over two fiscal years to reduce the budget impact.

Weather Delays and Cancellations

As a reminder and to avoid confusion, you will only receive notifications when there is a delay or cancellation. PowerSchool alerts, news broadcasts, and WINY radio updates will ensure families are well informed. (I will not send, “school is in session today.”)

Recognizing Excellence: ABCD Awards

At the January 8, 2026 BOE meeting, we honored staff members who exemplify exceptional dedication and professionalism through our Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Awards. \ Congratulations to our inaugural recipients:

- **Elizabeth Costa**
- **Carole Ekholm**
- **Kathy Cabrera**
- **Stacey Terwilliger**

These awards will be presented monthly. Parents are encouraged to submit nominations.

Student Representatives to the BOE

Thank you to Kellan and Leah for their outstanding first reports as student representatives. Their communication skills and perspectives will strengthen the work of the Board.

Leader in Me Program Update

We continue exploring districtwide implementation of the Leader in Me Program, focusing on student leadership, responsibility, collaboration, and voice. Over the break, I met with program leadership and grant writers to identify opportunities to reduce long-term costs while ensuring strong implementation.

School Safety

Student and staff safety remains a top priority. District leadership met with Woodstock first responders and the Connecticut State Police to strengthen safety planning and

communication. This work will culminate in comprehensive safety training led by the State Police in August 2026, provided at **no cost** to the district.

Scott Driscoll Internet Safety Presentation

Thank you to the Woodstock Education Foundation, WPS PTO, and the Judy Nilan Foundation for sponsoring Scott Driscoll's student and parent presentations. His sessions highlighted the realities and risks associated with today's technology use and will support important family conversations. Mr. Driscoll also commended our students for their exceptional behavior during the assembly.

Budget Planning

As we develop next year's budget, we remain focused on protecting classroom instruction, meeting essential students' needs, and ensuring every investment directly supports improved student outcomes. Responsible stewardship of community resources remains central to our work.

Community Communication

Beginning this month, I will appear on WINY Radio on the **fourth Friday of each month** to provide district updates and support transparent communication, especially during budget season.

Academic Focus

Thank you for your strong participation in the recent budget survey. My guiding question remains: *How can we most effectively improve student academic outcomes in the most cost-effective manner?* Recommendations will continue to be grounded in evidence, impact, and return on academic investment, including program enhancements and extracurricular opportunities.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support. Together, we are building the systems, optimism, and vision needed to continue strengthening Woodstock Public Schools.