TCAPS
Traverse City Area Public Schools
DISTRICT NEWS



TCAPS Afterschool Clubhouse and Multi-Purpose Fieldhouse Groundbreaking

Celebrating the Spirit of TCAPS

A Letter from Your Superintendent

Dear TCAPS Community,

As warm weather returns to the Traverse City area and the 2025-2026 school year draws to a close, I take some time to reflect on the incredible accomplishments of our school district. This is always a special and bittersweet time of year, filled with celebrations of our students engaging in a variety of year-end activities, recognitions, and milestones.

The sound of end of year concerts and outdoor festivities is already echoing throughout our district, bringing a close to the academic year. Our younger learners are immersed in exciting final projects, outdoor field trips, and hands-on explorations that showcase how much they have grown. A host of middle school and high school activities are taking place including prom, clubs, theater

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Dr. John VanWagoner, Superintendent

Letters from the Classroom

If These Halls Could Talk

Courtney Hanley, Teacher, Central Grade School

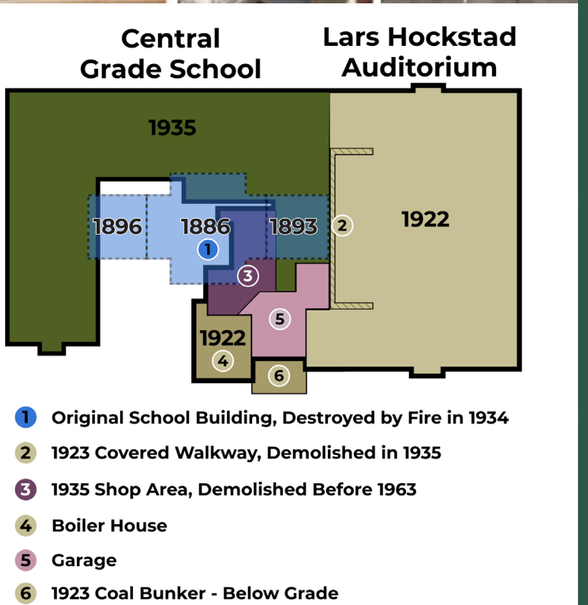
As we prepare for Central Grade School's renovations, I've been asked to reflect upon its legacy. As we look forward to much-needed updates and repairs to our school, I'd be remiss if I didn't celebrate the thousands of students who have graduated from Central or walked its halls.

Central is a link to TCAPS's past and present. Central's terrazzo and wavy wood floors have been worn smooth by over a century of footsteps: first leather button-up shoes, then saddle shoes, then Converse sneakers, and now Uggs and Crocs. The slate chalkboards remain behind whiteboards and projector screens, ever adapting to how our students show their thinking. Big brass clocks have been watched by eager students' eyes for decades. Millions of books have been checked out from Central's expansive library with its giant southern-exposure windows.

Our old school is no stranger to change. In 1877, the first wooden Central School was built. In 1886, a new brick Central School was built to replace the original structure that had burned. Growth continued in the new century as our three-story building opened in 1924. History shifted again in 1934 when a fire claimed the remaining 19th-century portion of the school. While plans were drafted for a new addition, students attended classes across the street at the Perry Hannah House. Ground broke on our beloved two-story wing on January 14, 1936, and since its completion in 1937, it has been our home for the last 89 years.

Our staff is eager for much-needed improvements and novelties, and looks forward to Central's next iteration. While we'll miss our school while we're down the road at Glenn Loomis, one thing is sure to stay the same, no matter where we are or what our building looks like: Central's heart. Central Grade Superstars will always be "Old School Cool."





A Student Finding Support

Email Duggar, Traverse City West Senior High School, Class of '26



My journey with TCAPS started later than most of the people I will be graduating with this year. I moved here in the 7th grade in the middle of lockdown. I remember sitting at my Chromebook on zoom, trying to memorize everyone's faces and names as best as I could so I could make friends when in person school started. I had moved schools in the past and I understood what it was like to be a new kid. Being an outcast, friendships already established, clubs and sports already full. To my surprise, when I arrived at my first day of in person school, everyone treated me like they had known me their entire lives. I made connections with teachers, coaches, and students in what felt like only a few weeks. I was welcomed with open arms into every room I walked, and this fact has stayed true over the past 5 years. Being someone who many people don't understand or like, I was so grateful that the TCAPS community had every resource available to make me feel as though I had a place to belong.

Now, as I am moving onto college, I owe so much of who I am to this school system. This wouldn't be a proper representation of who I have become unless I gave credit to those people and programs that have shaped me. First of all, the Traverse City West Color Guard has shown me what teamwork and leadership is really about. Every member of that team has inspired me to pursue a career in teaching with their endless support. Kate Walski and Holly Collison have both worked hard to make me the best version of myself and give me every opportunity possible to become a better person. I can also give a very high level of respect and gratitude to my teachers: Julie Keck, Kelly Rintala, Minda Nyquist, and Karlee Tenbusch as they all have cultivated me to be a hard working, creative, and confident individual. They taught me different subjects, sure, but their endless support and care has taught me so much more than any ELA or civics lesson. I strive to be just like them as I follow in their paths of teaching. Lastly, I couldn't possibly talk about my experience at TCAPS without discussing the student body. Every teenager who grew up and learned alongside me in the class of 2026 has affected my life in some way. Whether we were teammates, classmates, castmates, or just people who passed each other in the hallways. Sharing classes and homework answers, attending football games, theater productions, dances, and pep-rally's, a school isn't a school without its students.

In conclusion, I will say that it is them, the people, that makes me come to school on the days where it seems pointless. The TCAPS programs are great, that's undeniable, but it truly is the staff, teachers, and student body that set it so far above other institutions. The sports will always be amazing, the theater always extravagant, the arts always impressive, but it is the dedication of every person involved that creates the atmosphere of greatness.



TC West Band at the 2025 Thirlby Band Expo



Sun, Sand, and Skills:
Keeping Learning Alive This Summer

As we head into summer, it's a well-deserved time for rest, play, and family connection. It's also an opportunity to keep skills fresh in simple, yet meaningful ways. The good news is that maintaining academic skills doesn't require workbooks or long practice sessions. Leveraging small, consistent experiences can make a BIG difference.

For literacy, one of the most impactful things you can do is read with your child regularly. This might look like reading aloud together, listening to audiobooks on a road trip, or having your child read to you. Be sure to talk about what you're reading through, asking questions, making connections, and comparing/contrasting new stories with older or favorite stories previously read. Just as important, don't underestimate the power of everyday conversation. Oral language development is a key foundation for strong reading and writing, and simple back-and-forth conversations, such as at the dinner table, in the car, or outside playing, can help build vocabulary, comprehension, and the ability to express ideas clearly. Research in the Science of Reading reminds us that strong readers are built through both word recognition and language comprehension, so these experiences matter.

In math, look for opportunities to bring numbers into everyday life. Cooking, shopping, or measuring all provide natural ways to practice math skills. Ask your child to estimate, explain their thinking, or solve one-step or two-step problems. These conversations help build both understanding and confidence in foundational mathematical concepts.

Most importantly, keep it light and engaging. A few minutes each day, woven into real-life experiences, helps students return in the fall feeling confident, capable, and ready to learn.

From 1997 to the Final Bell



The year 1997 was an exciting time. The population of Traverse City High School was bursting at the seams; teachers and students occupied every available space with portable classrooms in use. The time had come to split the population into two high schools. The split at grades 7 through 9 had occurred five years earlier with the opening of East Junior High and West Senior High (WSH) was set to open that fall. At least, that was the plan.

When fall arrived, construction was still ongoing and we were unable to move. It would take a full semester before that building was ready. There was some anxiety regarding how we could run two separate high schools on the same campus. Many worried that housing rivals under the same roof would be a disaster, but it wasn't. Most of the students had known each other for years, and those friendships continued far beyond the new borders of East and West.

With the opening of a new high school, staff and students were charged with establishing a brand new culture. At that time, no one had roots as a Titan. We created the school standards that remain hanging in the Library Media Center to this day. While TCAPS already had schools with rich histories, we were proud to start our own traditions at WSH.

We have worked with amazing staff over the years. These colleagues have been willing to share their ideas, materials, and experiences with a spirit of true collaboration. We have constantly sought each other out across all content areas to problem solve, knowing that someone in the building had likely dealt with similar issues. We may not have adopted every idea verbatim because each teacher is as unique as each student, but we have utilized those shared practices to create our own solutions.

The staff we have worked alongside, and we mean every single staff member, helps to educate and mentor our students as well as each other. We have been fortunate to work in an environment that pushes each individual to be the best version of themselves through a deep and ever-present love. Sometimes that love was tough, but it was always there. We have been constantly awed by the brilliance, generosity, and caring spirit of this professional family.

As we end our careers with TCAPS, we do so with excitement and a bit of sorrow. We love you, WSH family. You have made us laugh until we could not breathe. We have shared weddings, births, adoptions, and graduations, as well as the difficult moments of heartbreak and loss. Thank you for making the moments we shared at WSH so memorable. Our roots as Titans now run deep. Go West!

With an immense amount of gratitude and love,

Dan and Tamie Rosenburg

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Dedication Meets Achievement

ATHLETICS

Sam Tursman



Senior Sam Tursman is the definition of a well-rounded student-athlete, making a lasting impact across tennis, basketball, and lacrosse. As a member of the Student Athlete Leadership Organization, Sam is recognized for a “team-first” mentality and a “do-it-all” work ethic that prioritizes collective success over individual stats. Whether on the court or the field, he serves as a disciplined role model who leads with integrity and meticulous preparation.

His coaches across all three sports praise his high athletic IQ, selfless nature, and “contagious edge” in competition. Beyond his physical talent, Sam’s maturity and professional communication have earned him respect throughout the district. By consistently sacrificing personal recognition for the good of the program, he leaves behind a blueprint for what it means to lead with character.

Delaney Witkop



Senior Delaney Witkop is an All-Conference softball player recognized for her defensive consistency and offensive production. Beyond the stat sheet, she serves as a dedicated student leader, balancing her academic responsibilities with a vocal, high-energy presence in the hallways and on the diamond. She has built a reputation as a “team-first” player, combining a competitive drive with a positive attitude and a winning smile that keeps team morale high.

This fall, Delaney will continue her athletic and academic career at Cleary University. She looks forward to bringing her leadership, enthusiasm, and grit to the Cougars’ roster as she transitions to the collegiate level.

MUSIC

McKenna Gabourie



McKenna Gabourie, a senior clarinetist at Central High School, successfully balances a rigorous academic schedule within the NMC Early College program alongside a full musical course load at CHS.

At Central, McKenna performs in the Wind Ensemble, Jazz Band, and Musical Pit Orchestra. Her dedication has earned her top ratings at MSBOA District and State Solo and Ensemble festivals, and she was recently selected to perform in the Western Michigan University “High School All-Star Band” this past April.

This semester, as part of her Early College program, McKenna has also shared her talents by serving as a teaching assistant for middle school classes. She plans to complete her studies at NMC next year before transferring to a four-year university to pursue a degree in Music Education.

Marella Masts



Marella Mast, a junior at West Senior High School, has been an integral member of the TC West Philharmonic Orchestra since her freshman year, serving as a section leader and the current concertmaster. Her musical reach extends into the community as a first violinist with the Benzie Area Symphony Orchestra.

This past March, Marella was nominated as an MSBOA Outstanding Soloist and invited to perform with the Honors Chamber Ensemble at Oakland University this May. At the same festival, her performance in Franz Schubert’s *String Quartet No. 14* earned her quartet a nomination as an Outstanding Ensemble. Beyond these musical achievements, Marella has been a dedicated member of the WSH Varsity Tennis team since her freshman year. In her free time, she also enjoys reading, hiking, and cooking.



West Middle School Choir Addition



TCAPS Prepares for a Busy Summer

District Bond Projects and Budget Update

Christine Thomas-Hill, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations

Central Grade School: Renovation Update

The district has received feedback from parents, students, staff, and neighbors about the design for Central Grade School. As the team finalizes necessary documentation, next steps include the Board of Education approving bids on July 13 so contracts can be awarded and the hard work can begin.

Community members are invited to visit Central Grade before construction begins during a Community Walk-Through on May 20 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

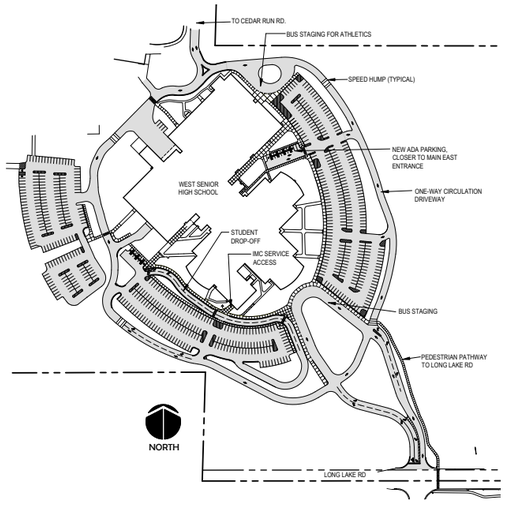
West Middle School: Music Addition & Media Center Renovations

Exciting changes are officially underway at West Middle School! Construction of the new choir room addition has begun. Most of the heavy lifting for the band and orchestra rooms will happen while the building is empty this summer, ensuring students return to refreshed acoustics and layouts. While the instrumentalists get their space on Day 1, the choir students will have a "grand finale" reveal just a couple of months later.

It's going to be a noisy summer, but the payoff for those performances in the fall will be well worth it.

West Senior High School: Circulation - Phase 2

Construction begins late May on the remaining parking lots, sidewalks, and traffic lanes.



West Senior High School Circulation Phase 2

TCAPS Administration Building

We are excited to announce that our Business Office and Human Resources teams have successfully moved into the renovated TCAPS Administration building, located at 2075 Cass Road. Staff are settling into new workspaces and look forward to serving the district from this central location. We look forward to completing our transition in the coming months as the remaining administrative departments join us at the new location.

Board Finance and Operations Committee

The Board Finance and Operations Committee holds monthly discussions on upcoming district purchases with updates, including pictures of projects underway. These meetings are available to view on the TCAPS **website** under 2026 updates.

Celebrating the Spirit of TCAPS

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productions, sports, and academic showcases which provide valuable opportunities for our students that always enrich their overall end of year experience.

Even as our classrooms quiet down, our district will remain hard at work preparing for the future. This summer marks the beginning of several exciting construction and improvement projects across TCAPS. We are thrilled to officially begin the much-anticipated renovation of the historic Central Grade School, ensuring this beloved landmark is updated to meet the needs of modern learners while preserving its rich architectural legacy.

Alongside these renovations, TCAPS recently broke ground on the Afterschool Clubhouse and Multi-Purpose Fieldhouse. These state-of-the-art facilities will significantly enhance our student offerings, providing a dedicated space for them to connect, train, and thrive both during and beyond the traditional school day.

As your Superintendent, I am aware that the anticipation of sunny beach days and time spent on the water is already being discussed. I am always amazed when I see the first boat docks installed in April! It is also fun to see the excitement building as our students (and staff) look forward to time honored Northern Michigan summer traditions. Before we transition to that well-deserved break, I want to extend a special and heartfelt thank you to all our TCAPS graduates. We are immensely proud of your resilience, your achievements, and the legacy you leave behind. To our families, thank you for your unwavering partnership and support throughout your students' academic journey.

None of this would be possible without our outstanding TCAPS staff. I am incredibly proud of our educators, administrators, and support staff, whose tireless dedication inspires all of our learners every single day. Our focus remains steadfast on providing a world-class education for every one of our TCAPS students, and our staff are at the heart of that mission. I hope everyone in our community enjoys a safe, restful, and rejuvenating break.

As always, thank you for your continued support of our students and staff.

Sincerely,

Dr. John VanWagoner
Superintendent

TCAPS
Student Support Network

Celebrating Student Resilience, Community Commitment, and Summer Connections

"Thank you all so much for everything you have done for my family. I truly appreciate the Student Support Network and will never forget your kindness." — TCAPS Parent

This year, the Student Support Network (SSN) has witnessed remarkable determination, resilience, and growth among our students, especially those navigating challenges beyond the classroom. From overcoming housing instability to balancing family responsibilities, these students have shown incredible strength and perseverance in pursuing their education.

We are also deeply grateful for our community's support. Your volunteers, material donations, and financial contributions make this work possible. Together, we celebrate the progress made and remain dedicated to walking alongside our students every step of the way. Celebrating Graduation Triumphs!

Over 75 graduating students accessed SSN services this year. These graduates are a powerful reminder of what is possible when students are supported. Many of our seniors overcame housing instability, family transitions, and unexpected obstacles to cross the graduation stage with pride. These achievements are shared victories made possible through strong partnerships between students, families, school staff, and community partners.

Summer Connections

Our team remains deeply committed to ensuring every student has access to the resources they need to succeed. This commitment extends beyond the school day and the academic year, as we provide consistent, year-round support. Summer initiatives include:

- The Sunshine Bus
- The SSN Back-to-School Pop-Up
- Continued support for children and youth experiencing homelessness

For more information about our summer outreach, please visit **www.tcaps.net/ssn**.

Get Involved or Get Support

If you or someone you know may benefit from SSN services, please contact the SSN Coordinator and McKinney-Vento Liaison directly at 231.933.1789 or complete the Student Support Network Request Form. Support is confidential, compassionate, and always focused on student success.

To learn more about the SSN or to make a donation, please visit the TCAPS Student Support Network web page.

Congratulations to the Class of 2026! Thank you to our families, staff, and community partners for another year of teamwork, resilience, and hope.



A Heartfelt FAREWELL



As the school year closes, we celebrate 43 dedicated individuals embarking on their next chapter. These staff members have been the heart of our district, and their impact on our students will be felt for years to come.

Our retirees represent every corner of our schools. This includes the teachers in our classrooms as well as the support staff, bus drivers, and administrators who keep our facilities running smoothly. We are deeply grateful for their collective years of expertise, service, and care.

To our 43 retirees: Thank you for your tireless commitment to our community. We wish you a wonderful and well-earned retirement!



TCAPS
Traverse City Area Public Schools
FOUNDATION

CHANGING FUTURES
ONE GIFT AT A TIME

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