

## Westlake Schools 2015 Ohio Report Card

In January, the Ohio Department of Education released Part I of the 2015 Ohio School Report Card, which included the K-3 Literacy, Graduation Rate and Prepared for Success components.

Part II of the report card will be released on Feb. 25 and will include the remaining components-Achievement, Gap Closing and Progress, as well as information about gifted students and district financial expenditures. Part II also will include additional data on the indicators from Part I, which the district anticipates will improve several indicator grades.

The second part of the report card includes test results developed by the heavily-criticized Partnership for Assessment for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests. School districts are encouraged to maintain 100 percent participation in state testing each year. In 2014-2015, Westlake had more students opt out of state tests than many neighboring school districts. Because those scores are counted as zeroes on state indicators, preliminary data shows Westlake's Performance Index measure and Gap Closing component were significantly impacted. Low Gap Closing letter grades can impact how federal funds can be utilized by the Westlake Schools-and nonpublic schools within our boundaries receiving grant funding.

Westlake Schools is appealing the Prepared for Success data previously released on Jan. 14 in Part I of the report card. The state report card reported significantly fewer students participating in Advanced Placement (AP) courses than is reality, and lower passage rates for AP tests by those students. WHS has a robust AP

program with students taking six or more AP tests and earning a perfect score on each, but the Prepared for Success measure only reports one score per student, adding to its flawed measurement status.

Federal law mandates states to release scores and a report card, but this data is flawed and does not reflect the performance of Westlake's students.

New changes are coming to state testing this spring after the state hired a new testing vendor and solicited input from content experts from universities and Ohio educators. Westlake had three teachers invited to sit on test development committees.

Westlake Schools is proud of its staff in helping our students prepare for state tests. While state tests are just one data point in a year, they are important. State testing data helps each building recognize weaknesses and celebrate its successes. The district uses this information and other data to determine district and building-level goals to ensure every student is successful.

We will keep our community updated on these scores and any changes made following district appeals regarding previously reported data.



## Meet the Superintendent Finalists

The Westlake Board of Education narrowed down two finalists for the superintendent position from a slate of eight professionals. Scott Goggin, superintendent of Midview Local Schools, and Roxann Ramsey-Caserio, assistant superintendent of Lakewood City Schools, are Westlake's two superintendent finalist candidates.

The Board of Education invites the public

to two "Meet the Finalist" nights on Feb. 17 and Feb. 19 at 4:30 p.m. at Parkside, 24525 Hilliard Blvd. Ramsey-Caserio will present on Feb. 17, and Goggin will present on Feb. 19. After meeting with the community, both candidates will have a final interview with the Board of Education, which anticipates hiring a new superintendent before the end of February.

## Board, OAPSE Ratify 3-Year Contract

The Westlake Board of Education voted unanimously at a Jan. 28 special meeting to approve a new three-year contract for its classified staff members. The action follows a Jan. 26 vote by the Ohio Association of Public School Employees (OAPSE) Local 319 to ratify the contract.

The agreement, reached with the help of a federal mediator, provides the following:

- **Year One:** A one-time 1.5% payment of the employee's contracted salary for the 2015-2016 school year.

- **Year Two:** A 1.5% base wage increase, including any applicable step increase effective during the 2016-2017 school year.

Insurance Change: Effective July 1, all OAPSE members are subject to the spousal insurance mandate, meaning spouses who have access to insurance coverage through their employer are required to enroll in that coverage. These insurance concessions by employees help to offset the wage increases offered.

- **Year Three:** A 1.5% base wage increase effective for the 2017-2018 school year.

The new contract runs July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2018. OAPSE represents more than 200 employees in the school district, including aides, attendants, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, cleaners, custodians, maintenance, secretaries and cleaners.

## Board of Education Elects Leadership, Welcomes New Members

At its Jan. 11 organizational meeting, the Westlake Board of Education swore in new members Dr. Bob Stoll and Joe Kraft, as well as returning member Carol Winter. All three won seats in the November election.

The Board also voted in Winter as president. Barb Leszynski will serve as vice president. John Finucane also returns to the Board this year. The Board also voted on a tentative meeting calendar for 2016. For updated information on Board meetings, visit [www.wlake.org](http://www.wlake.org).



2016 Westlake Schools Board of Education members  
(l-r) Barb Leszynski, Bob Stoll, Carol Winter,  
Joe Kraft, and John Finucane

## Strategic planning process is underway

The Westlake Schools are working hard every day to prepare students for their futures, and a key component of that process involves understanding where the community and the global community is heading. Staying on top of global workforce and higher education changes is complicated, and the district subscribes to the notion that "it takes a village."

To that end, the district established a Strategic Planning Committee comprised of Westlake leaders, including business, civic, higher education and clergy, along with parents and school officials, to help set the course for the schools for the next three to five years.

The Strategic Planning Committee has been meeting to review academic and community research; discuss global and national employment and skill trends; analyze district facilities, finances and academics; and provide input and feedback. This group will

help determine next steps and work with the district to finalize an outline for a strategic plan. The details of the strategic plan will be provided by school district professionals, using the outline and priorities established by the Strategic Planning Committee.

"This group expands upon the work completed by the Vision 20/20 group," says Superintendent Geoff Palmer. "Some preliminary community research showed that our residents had a lot of questions and needed more opportunities to provide input and ask questions. We responded by expanding the group and expanding the scope. This is truly an exciting project and I'm proud to be a part of it."

The framework that will be developed through this process will ensure Westlake City Schools is staying on track and Educating for Excellence.

## WCSD earns Auditor of State Award with Distinction

A recent financial audit of the Westlake City School District by Auditor of State Dave Yost's office returned a clean audit report. The district's excellent record keeping has qualified it for the Auditor of State Award with Distinction.

The Auditor of State Award with Distinction is presented to local governments and school districts upon completion of a financial audit. Fewer than 10 percent of the 5,800 entities audited by the state earn the Award with Distinction. Entities that receive the award meet the following criteria of a "clean" audit report:

- File timely financial reports with the Auditor of State's office in the form of a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR)

- The audit report does not contain any findings for recovery, material citations, material weaknesses, significant deficiencies, single audit findings or questioned costs
- The management letter contains no comments related to:
  - Ethics referrals
  - Questioned costs less than \$10,000
  - Lack of timely report submission
  - Reconciliation
  - Failure to obtain a timely single audit
  - Findings for recovery less than \$100
  - Public meetings or public records
  - No other financial or other concerns exist

## State of the Schools 2016

All are invited to the Westlake City School District's State of the Schools event on Wednesday, March 16, 6:30pm at Parkside auditorium. Come and hear presentations

from Superintendent Geoff Palmer and CFO/Treasurer Mark C. Pepera on the academic, financial and operational perspectives of the school district.

## Top inventors to compete at Regional Invention Convention

Three Westlake fourth grade students will move on to the regional Invention Convention contest after winning the top three spots in the Westlake Schools Invention Convention Fair.

The following students from Westlake City School District were selected to participate in the Northeast Ohio Regional Invention Convention:

1st Place: **Andrew Arkwright**, grade 4, Hilliard Elementary School: The Root Seeker

2nd Place: **T.J. Rintamaki**, grade 4, Bassett Elementary School: The Lego Vacuum Cleaner

3rd Place: **Tiana Nimylowycz**, grade 4, Dover Elementary School: The Yarn Master

Several students also took home Honorable Mention awards:

1st Grade: **Mia Barone**, Dover Elementary: MT's Cup Box

2nd Grade: **Carsten Kralovic**, Holly Lane: The Cereal Box Pourer

3rd Grade: **Summer Spreen**, Bassett Elementary: Kick in Comfort Shin Guards

4th Grade: **Sophia Jacono**, Holly Lane: The Feel Safe Sleeper

5th Grade: **Aya Alramahi**, Dover Intermediate School: Life Jacket Safety Leash

6th Grade: **Johnny Kilroy**, Dover Intermediate: The Bandolier

8th Grade: **Frankie Ricaurte**, Lee Burneson Middle School: The Flavored Envelope

Local judges selected the top student inventors to advance to the regional contest at Cuyahoga Valley Career Center in Brecksville on April 30. These student inventors from across the region will compete for the \$2,500 grand prize.

## WHS Team Takes 1<sup>st</sup> Place in Student Model Home Design Contest

The Westlake High School senior team of **Elise Kennedy, Anna Renkel** and **Sean Freeman** took first place and the overall \$1,000 scholarship grand prize in the 19th annual Student Model Home Design Contest. The team also won the Architectural Design Award of Merit, Best Model and Best CAD/3D Drawings categories.

WHS teams also won:

2nd Place and the \$300 award went to the WHS junior team of **Sneha Ramachandran, Mark Sargent, John Anitas, David Epele** and **Jackson Liang**. They also won the Best Presentation category.

The \$100 award and 4th place went to the WHS team of **Gabi Kosakowski, Steve Brewer** and **Yu-Hui Wu**.

The \$100 award and 6th place went to the team of **Wyatt Solecki, Max Karabinus, Jacob Brewer** and **Nick Morales**.

8th place went to the team of **Erik Hoke, Cole Price, Adam Goyetche** and **Chris Bringman**.

All of the top 10 winning entries were



displayed at The Great Big Home & Garden Show, Feb. 5-14, at the I-X Center.

Future architects, engineers, designers, contractors and artisans were challenged to design a house around the theme "The Great Right Sized House." Students had to design a functional and aesthetically pleasing full-time primary residence. The 2,200-square-foot house was to be designed for the purpose of accommodating a young couple and their two children. Other requirements were building on a minimal footprint, and incorporating green and smart technology.

## 5 Winners in Cleveland Clinic eXpressions Program

Westlake High School had five winners in the Cleveland Clinic eXpressions Writing Program this year.

Senior **Samantha Surber** won a Blue Ribbon for "Matthew's Heartbeat."

Sophomores **Julia Phan** and **Rachel Zinram** won

Red Ribbons for "The Game" and "In Need," respectively. Sophomore **Adam Goyetche** won a White Ribbon for "Fatigued." Sophomore **Alyssa Palumbo** won an Honorable Mention for "Incurable."

There were over 1,600 projects submitted to the program regionally. Wining students will have their award-winning projects featured in the Cleveland Clinic eXpressions catalogue and on the eXpression website, and their work will be displayed in the 2016 eXpressions Art, Language and Math eXhibition at the Global Center for Health Innovation.

The eXpressions program is an award-winning educational initiative that utilizes creative expression to engage high school students in the exploration of science and medicine. Through project-based, peer-to-peer learning, students translate research



Samantha Surber



Julia Phan



Rachel Zinram



Adam Goyetche



Alyssa Palumbo

studies conducted by Cleveland Clinic high school interns, producing artistic, literary and mathematical interpretations of the science. eXpressions gives students and their teachers the chance to earn awards, exhibition opportunities, and even college credit.

## Westlake Schools Central Office has moved

Over winter break, the district's central office operations moved to Parkside, 24525 Hilliard Blvd. The Board of Education also is now based at Parkside. Offices housed at Parkside include the superintendent,

treasurer, human resources, business administration, pupil services, academic services, technology, Project Link and communications. All phone numbers remain the same.

## WHS team wins Best in Region in App Challenge

The Westlake High School team of juniors Sneha Ramachandran and Jordan Sherwin, and seniors Nick Erwin, Steve Columbro and Jack Bogart, continue to gain recognition for their PING app in the Verizon Innovative App Challenge.

After winning the Best in State Award, the team also is one of the 2016 Best in Region winners. Their app concept, PING, was selected as state champion among more than 1,200 app concept submissions. PING is an anonymous picture sharing app utilizing a map-based interface intended to raise awareness of the social issues in the local community. By framing the same type of issues experienced on a global scale, it can bring attention to these problems and help with improving other cultures and countries around the world.

As a Best in State team they earned:

- A \$5,000 award for the WHS Technology/Engineering program



WHS PING App Challenge Team

- A 16G LG G Padx8.3 for each team member
- Eligibility to compete for the title of Best in Nation
- Eligibility to compete for the App Challenge Fan Favorite award. The team that wins this award receives all the same prizes as the Best in the Nation winning team.

You can view the WHS team PING app presentation on YouTube at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL8sBj\\_Lk5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL8sBj_Lk5c).

## WHS Artists Recognized in Scholastic Art Competition

Fourteen Westlake High School art students earned 18 awards in the 2016 Cuyahoga County Region Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

The competition recognizes creative achievement of seventh to 12th grade students throughout Cuyahoga County. The young artists compete for cash prizes, medals and scholarship awards. A panel of local professional artists, art educators, writers and writing educators jury the exhibit of nearly 3,000 entries in 29 categories and select the awarded pieces. Students who receive Portfolio Awards and Gold Key Awards continue to the national competition this spring in New York City.

Westlake's Gold Key winners are seniors **Jessica Hook** for her painting "Rusted Post," **Jared Wolfert** for his mixed media "Beats by Blaine" and **Katerina Packis**, who won two Gold Key awards for her paintings "Mental Illness" and "Fish."

Silver Key winners are senior **Filomena Kolesar** for her painting "Pig," junior **Mary Defeo** for her drawing and illustration "Disappointment," junior **Katie Lowe** for her ceramics & glass "Nut House" and senior **Cass Penegor** for her drawing and illustration "Gender Discrimination and Homelessness of Transgender Youth."

Westlake has nine Honorable Mentions: sophomore **Liv Adkins**, senior **Kaylee Carson**,



Jessica Hook's "Rusted Post" and Jared Wolfert's "Beats by Blaine" won Gold Key awards, along with Katerina Packis' "Mental Illness" and "Fish"



senior **Victoria Cohen**, **Cass Penegor** for drawing and illustration, senior **Haley Quinlan** for digital art, junior **Sneha Ramachandran** for photography and senior **Sarah Melaragno**, who won three awards for digital art, painting and photography. In addition, Westlake junior **Jueun Lee**, who is enrolled in the West Shore Interactive Media program, earned an Honorable Mention in film and animation.

## OneSchool, OneBook

Hilliard and Holly Lane Elementary Schools are looking to create a partnership with child-friendly Westlake businesses for our upcoming school-wide literacy program, **OneSchool, OneBook** (OSOB). During this program, all Hilliard and Holly Lane students (PreK-4) will read the same book at the same time with their families. There will also be planned activities at each school, a Porter Library read-aloud on March 5, and a Barnes and Noble Book Fair and T.G.I.Friday's Fundraiser on March 10.

This partnership is an opportunity for Westlake businesses to create a unique connection with the younger segment

of their customer base and bring new families into their business. Between Feb. 29 and March 19, businesses would need to provide a place in the front window to put a poster, notifying students that a picture of a character, specific to our book, will be hidden inside their business. Students would find the picture, notify a staff member, and receive a ticket for a raffle at school.

If you would like to partner with us in our **OneSchool, OneBook** Literacy Program, and creatively engage in this program with young families, email Hilliard Principal Kim Tucker at [tucker@wlake.org](mailto:tucker@wlake.org) (please write OSOB in the subject line) or call 440.835.6343.

## Senior Appreciation Dinner 2016



Westlake High School show choir performs during the 2015 Senior Appreciation Dinner.

The Westlake City Schools, in partnership with Westlake Porter Public Library, Westlake Kiwanis Club and the City of Westlake, will once again host a Senior Appreciation Dinner. This year's dinner will be held **Wednesday, May 4, 5-6:30 p.m.** at Westlake High School.

We'd like to invite our senior residents into our community schools for an evening of dinner

and entertainment by our high school Show Choir and Jazz Band to show our appreciation. Tickets will be available beginning in April at Parkside, 24525 Hilliard Blvd.; Porter Public Library, 27333 Center Ridge Road; and the Westlake Community Services Department, 29694 Center Ridge Road. For more information contact [bonvissuto@wlake.org](mailto:bonvissuto@wlake.org).

## Seeking preschool peers

The Westlake City School District is seeking potential peers to be screened on March 11 to serve as typical peer role-models for next school year at the district's center-based preschool at Hilliard Elementary School. Potential peers need to be at least age 3 by Aug. 1 and have

strong communication, social interaction and play skills. Peer spots are tuition-based – tuition is currently \$825. Interested parents should contact Robin Allen at 440-835-6309 for more details or to add their child's name to the list of potential peers to be screened.

**Westlake City School District**  
**27200 Hilliard Blvd.**  
**Westlake, OH 44145**

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# Commentary

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Vice President: Barb Leszynski  
John Finucane  
Joseph Kraft  
Robert Stoll  
Superintendent Geoff Palmer  
CFO/Treasurer Mark C. Pepera

## Westlake High School

Principal: Timothy Freeman  
27830 Hilliard Blvd.  
Westlake, OH 44145  
440.835.6352

## Lee Burneson Middle School

Principal: Paul Wilson  
2260 Dover Center Road  
440.835.6340

## Dover Intermediate School

Principal: Dave Schindler  
2240 Dover Center Road  
440.835.5494

## Bassett Elementary School

Principal: Jim Sanfilippo  
2155 Bassett Road  
440.835.6330

## Dover Elementary School

Principal: Tim Barrett  
2300 Dover Center Road  
440.835.6322

## Hilliard Elementary School

Principal: Kim Tucker  
24356 Hilliard Blvd.  
440.835.6343

## Holly Lane Elementary School

Principal: Mimi Verdone  
3057 Holly Lane  
440.835.6332

## Stay Connected

For more information on the  
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- **Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/DemonAthletics>
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## Your Questions Answered

We're hearing questions and comments about Westlake City Schools in the community and we want to be certain everyone has the facts. Check out the Westlake Schools website – [www.wlake.org](http://www.wlake.org) – for a “Your Questions Answered” button. You can ask a question, check out what’s already been asked and sign up for periodic email updates.