

Message from the Superintendent

The Westlake City Schools is in the midst of a community-wide strategic planning process that will set the course for our schools for the next three to five years.

Our goal is to “Educate for Excellence.” To us, this means providing our students with the highest quality teaching and learning opportunities, effectively communicating with our community, maintaining stable school finances so we can provide our students with the resources they need to succeed, and operating safe, functional and affordable school facilities. When completed, our strategic plan will provide our schools with a clear understanding of where we are right now, what we need to do to remain competitive, and a road map of how to get there.

Our schools are important to our entire community, which is why we engaged a broad spectrum of Westlake residents in this process. We conducted more than 20 in-depth interviews with key Westlake residents, and facilitated listening session with school administrators, teachers, staff and residents. More importantly, we are not done yet.

We know Westlake residents have valuable thoughts and opinions about our schools. We also know that many of you keep hectic schedules that make participating

in our strategic planning process difficult. To that end, in the coming weeks we will continue to expand our process by publishing an easily accessible online survey. This tool will provide another opportunity for our residents to participate and will strengthen our plan by adding another layer of feedback and information.

For up-to-date news and information about our schools and our strategic planning process, find us on Facebook (facebook.com/WestlakeSchools), follow us on Twitter (@WestlakeSchools) and visit our website (www.wlake.org). In the meantime, if you have any questions or need more information, please don't hesitate to contact my office at (440) 871-7300.



Geoff Palmer

Regards,

Geoff Palmer
Superintendent

Some facts about teacher salaries

Over the past few years, there has been much discussion in our community about teacher salaries. It can be a complicated and oftentimes misunderstood topic. To help provide a better understanding, we wanted to take a moment to discuss three key areas that impact salaries, and how they relate to our teachers.

- **Regional Marketplace.** The competition for the best teachers is fierce, particularly in Cuyahoga County. Of the top 10 districts in Ohio with the highest average annual teacher salary, 7 of them are in Cuyahoga. They include Beachwood (#1), Orange (#2), Brecksville-Broadview Heights (#4), Solon (#5) and Mayfield (#7). Westlake City Schools is eighth on the list, with Shaker Heights (#9) right behind us. If we want to attract the best teachers to our district, we have to be competitive.
- **Years of Experience.** As years of teaching experience increase, so do salaries – much like any other occupation. Our teachers average 16 years' experience, which is more than nearly 80% of school districts in the state. Of the top 10 districts with the

highest salaries, only Mayfield averages more experience at 17 years. Our teacher salaries are competitive with some of the region's top districts, but our teachers have more experience.

- **Educational Attainment.** The more qualifications a teacher has, the greater salary they command. In our district, 83% of our teachers hold at least a Master's degree. This puts our teachers in the top 3% in Ohio. Of the top 10 districts with the highest average annual salary, only Solon has a higher percentage of teachers with at least a Master's degree (85%). Our pay is competitive, our teachers have years of experience and they are highly qualified.

We will always work tirelessly to "Educate for Excellence." A critical part of that is providing our students with the absolute best teachers we can. We have managed to keep highly qualified and highly experienced teachers while living within our means. Moving forward, we would like to keep it that way. If you have any questions about our teachers or would like to learn more, please feel free to contact our administration offices.

Phase I construction update

Our community made a significant investment in our new school buildings – Westlake High School and Lee Burneson Middle School – and we take the quality of the final product very seriously. Prior to the conclusion of the construction process, the district found cracks in some of the polished

concrete floors at the high school. While issues like these do occur with complex, large-scale construction projects, we are now working with our contractor to find the right solution without adding cost. We are optimistic the issue will be resolved in the coming months.

#NowYouKnow

- Westlake Schools earned 20 consecutive "Certificates of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting" from the Government Finance Officers Association.
- We have a bond rating among the very best of Ohio's public schools – a Moody's rating of AA1, and a Standard and Poor's rating of AA+ Stable Long Term.
- Lee Burneson Middle School earned an "Excellence in School Management Award" from the Harvard Business School Club of Northeast Ohio.

Westlake earns Auditor of State Award with Distinction

The Westlake City School District again earned the Auditor of State Award with Distinction for a clean audit. The accolade represents yet another perfect audit from the state.

To earn the distinction, the district had to meet the following criteria:

- File timely Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports with the Auditor of State's office.
- No finding for recovery, material citations, material weaknesses, significant deficiencies, findings or questioned costs.

CFO/Treasurer Mark C. Pepera credits the achievement to a concerted effort by his staff to enforce sound fiscal policies and the establishment of a high level of internal controls over the district's financial operations.



Mark Pepera

Westlake City Schools recognized for transparency efforts

Westlake Schools is a leader in government transparency. Westlake Schools CFO/Treasurer Mark C. Pepera was recognized recently by Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel for being among the initial 100 out of over 3,000 public entities to join the state's OhioCheckbook.com program. The project will provide the public greater access to

OHIOCHECKBOOK.com

expenditures made by state government entities. The web-based tool will allow citizens to better understand the prudent stewardship the school district is taking with taxpayer dollars.

A community of 21st Century learners

All four elementary schools in Westlake – Bassett, Dover, Hilliard and Holly Lane – achieved International Baccalaureate (IB) World School status this summer. This makes Westlake part of an elite group – in 2014-2015 there were only 21 Primary Years Programme World Schools in the entire state.

The IB Primary Years Programme supports learning in all academic areas. Through the IB program, students participate in activities that put an emphasis on the whole child. The process encourages students to choose, reflect and act not only in their academics, but in the school, community and beyond.

Earlier this year, Westlake High School was approved as an authorized IB World School, adopting the Diploma Programme curriculum through the IB Organization. The Diploma Programme is

for juniors and seniors and offers students the opportunity to graduate with an IB Diploma Certificate. These students also have the opportunity to enroll in IB courses that support their interests.



8 WHS seniors named in 2016 National Merit Program

Westlake High School has eight students named in the 2016 National Merit Program.

Senior Rachel Kim is a Semifinalist and will move on to compete for about 8,300 National Merit Scholarships worth more than \$34 million. She is among 1.5 million students from 22,000 high schools across the country who took the PSAT in their junior year. Less than 1 percent of high school seniors make it to the semifinal round. About 15,000 students are expected to move on to become National Merit Finalists, which should be announced in February.

WHS also has seven National Merit Commended students. They are among the 34,000 high scorers on the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship



2016 National Merit Scholars

Qualifying Test) who are recognized for their outstanding academic promise. Commended students are seniors Mingda Chen, Leah M. Franklin, Taeho Kim, Austin J. Kinney, Yan Kwok, Jackson T. Routhier and Ryan D. Zubricky.

Student scientists participate in Cleveland Clinic Science Intern Program

Three Westlake High School student researchers participated in Cleveland Clinic's Science Internship Program.

Through the program, students gain experiences in healthcare fields and careers, cultivate their 21st century skill set through hands-on learning opportunities, and find practical, real-world applications for their academic knowledge. The 2015 Science Internship Program included 64 high school juniors and seniors from 42 different high schools – including Westlake High School – across Northeast Ohio.

Science interns junior Christopher Slater, senior Maahi Mistry and 2015 graduate Laura McDiarmid participated in the Translational Medicine, Public Health and Creating Learning internships, respectively.

Maahi worked with the Cleveland Clinic Department of Government and Community Relations on the topic "Fostering Healthy Futures: An Evaluation of a Wellness Curriculum for Youth." Maahi performed an analysis to assess the effectiveness of a Cleveland Clinic school wellness program.

Christopher worked with the Cleveland Clinic



Laura McDiarmid



Maahi Mistry



Christopher Slater

Department of Neurological Surgery on the topic "Choroid Plexus Carcinoma (CPC): Model Development, Characterization, and Targeted Drug Therapies." His project successfully developed a CPC model, identified genetic and molecular differences, and provided potential drug targets for CPC brain tumors.

Laura participated in the Creative Learning internship track to design, develop and execute strategies for sharing groundbreaking medical research and important health information with the community at large. Laura was in the "Science Investigations: Fact or Fiction?" and "Science Investigations: Bioethics" programs. Her work involved "Color-Coding Helps You Remember" and "Biotech Ethics: Is Manipulating Genes & Cells A Slippery Slope?"

Beyond the Bench

Holly Lane Elementary School launched the Beyond the Bench program recently to teach students compassion and conflict management skills.

The program ties in with the Buddy Bench – a bench on the playground designed to eliminate loneliness and foster friendship on the playground by providing children with a tool to identify those who need a peer to play with and to encourage those already engaged in play to invite others to join in the fun.

Beyond the Bench is a training program from Connecting for Kids that develops improved conflict resolution skills among students, celebrate students who act with compassion and remove the stigma of asking for help. The Connecting for Kids Beyond the Bench training program was designed by a pediatric psychologist and provides a school-wide training to teach students and staff the reasons to use a Buddy Bench.

Holly Lane Principal Mimi Verdone said the Buddy Bench and Beyond the Bench program ties in with the school district's Continuous Improvement Plan, which calls for providing an "all-inclusive environment," as well as the



Connecting for Kids Beyond the Bench program in action

school's International Baccalaureate and Positive Behavior Intervention Support initiative.

Through the Beyond the Bench partnership, Connecting for Kids will provide parents with ongoing education and support.

Hilliard Elementary School, which already has a Buddy Bench, will go through the same Beyond the Bench training program later this fall.

To read more about Buddy Bench and Beyond the Bench, and to see a slideshow from the school's unveiling of the bench, visit www.wlake.org.

Westlake releases Quality Profile report

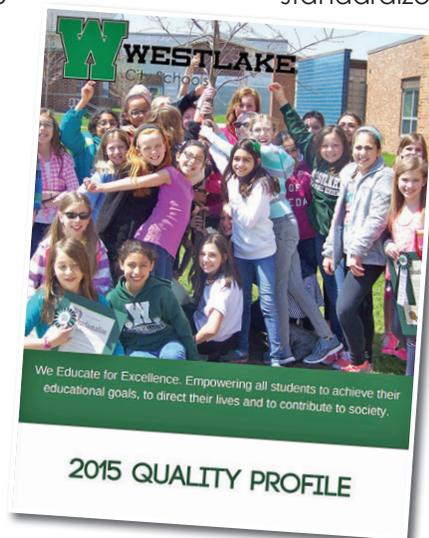
Westlake City School District is one of more than 60 school districts throughout Ohio that released for the second consecutive year, a more comprehensive companion to the state's district report card.

The "Quality Profile" report includes additional accountability measures that define a high quality education and are not captured by the state report card. Since the state's release date has been moved to later in the year because of changes made to the state testing program, the profile will provide communities with their first look at current information to assist them

in assessing district progress.

This Quality Profile helps to evaluate the effectiveness of a school district beyond standardized testing measures. The content is based on six categories: academics, arts, student leadership and activities, fiscal stewardship, parent and community involvement, and student services. You can find the report online at www.wlake.org.

Participating districts initially surveyed residents to determine factors they value in their child's education that are not being measured by the state, resulting in a more comprehensive profile that measures those education components that the community considers most important.





Students meeting Guiding Eyes for the Blind canine trainees

Mazy & Mylo Treats

Erin Blahnik's special education students at Lee Burneson Middle School are learning real-world skills and changing lives through a dog biscuit business venture – Mazy & Mylo Treats.

Through sales of their homemade dog biscuits to family, friends, staff and community members, the students will support Guiding Eyes for the Blind, which provides professionally trained dogs for the blind and visually impaired, as well as children with autism.

Students work together to put ingredients together to make the dog biscuits, then wrap them in individual bags with a Mazy & Mylo Treats sticker. Once a week the students hand-deliver orders at the middle school.

Startup costs were completely covered by the LBMS PTA and n2y, a Hudson-based company that develops special education curriculum, which is used in Westlake.

Anyone who wants to place an order for Mazy & Mylo Treats can fill out an order form – found online at www.wlake.org – and email it to blahnik@wlake.org. Cash only is accepted. Treats cost \$3 per dozen and flavors may change weekly.

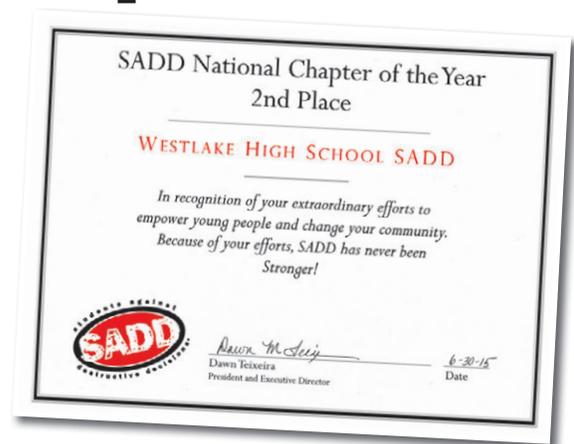
WHS S.A.D.D. named Chapter of the Year

Westlake High School's Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) chapter earned the 2nd Place SADD National Chapter of the Year award.

The award recognizes the group's efforts to empower young people and change the community. The WHS chapter will be recognized in October at the Ohio SADD conference.

The WHS SADD chapter sponsors a variety of events and activities throughout the school year, including:

- Planned and executed the regional SADD seminar at Quicken Loans Arena
- Pharming Effects presentation on prescription drug abuse
- Generation Rx program on preventing the misuse of prescription drugs
- Participation in National Drug Facts Week and Red Ribbon Week
- Mock Car Crash
- Click It or Ticket event



SADD highlights prevention of many destructive behaviors and attitudes that are harmful to young people, including underage drinking, substance abuse, risky and impaired driving, and teen violence and suicide. The WHS SADD chapter is advised by WHS Prevention Coordinator Kathy McGinty.

WHS achieves LEED Silver certification

Westlake High School achieved LEED Silver certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification identifies WHS as a showcase example of sustainable design. The WHS project earned LEED Silver certification by scoring 54 points from the key areas measured:

- Sustainable sites
- Water efficiency
- Energy and atmosphere
- Materials and resources
- Indoor environmental quality
- Innovation in design
- Regional priority

This designation reaffirms the school district's commitment to provide ongoing sustainability through engineering and design projects. Energy efficient utility systems and environmentally friendly building products were used in all phases of the construction



Westlake High School

project. The new WHS opened to students and staff for the 2013-2014 school year.

Asbestos re-inspection finds no negative findings

In accordance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), the Westlake City Schools began performing asbestos inspections of each of our school buildings beginning in 1988 and every three years after that. During our most recent re-inspection in September and October, an accredited inspector and management planner found no significant negative findings. All asbestos materials are in

good condition and managed in accordance with all federal and state regulations. We will continue to manage them in place as recommended by the management planner.

The results of each inspection are on file, along with the management plans, in each school office and are available for review during normal school hours. For any questions related to asbestos in our school buildings contact the Business Office at 440.835.6319.

#NowYouKnow

- Westlake's Gifted & Talented program is ranked #1 in the state.
- 35% of Westlake's high school seniors sit for AP exams in one of 21 different subjects.
- 97% of WHS graduates go on to attend college.
- Westlake students continue to score significantly higher than state averages on the ACT tests (English, Mathematics, Reading, Science) while increasing the numbers of students taking the tests.

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

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CLEVELAND, OHIO
PERMIT NO. 3411

Postal Customer

Commentary

www.wlake.org

Board of Education

President: Tony Falcone
Vice President: Barb Leszynski
Carol Winter
John Finucane
Tom Mays
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
Westlake Schools visit www.wlake.org

You can also follow us:

- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/WestlakeSchools>
- **Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/WestlakeSchools>
- **Superintendent Geoff Palmer on Twitter:**
<https://twitter.com/WestlakeGPalmer>
- **Lee Burneson Middle School:**
https://twitter.com/LBMS_Westlake

Westlake Athletics

- **Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/DemonAthletics>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Westlake-Demon-Athletics/174430056059737>

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 – 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.