



# WILDCAT CONNECTION

ISSUE 17 • SPRING EDITION • JUNE, 2025



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT DRIVES BOND PROJECT PROGRESS

A Project Update, Thanks to You!

We are pleased to provide the school community with an update on the significant progress being made across our various bond projects, highlighting our commitment to enhancing our learning environments. Work on campus traffic flow for the high school and middle school bus loop and parent pick-up/drop off includes considerable planning for the redesign of the traffic flow in and around the middle and high school buildings. Based on observation and feedback, we feel we have the best plan possible to address safety and flow concerns: Fully separate buses from carpool and staff traffic at both the middle and high schools; reconfiguration of carpool traffic routes at both the middle and high schools; additional parking in front of middle and high schools; Addition of a 'thru' drive east to west for bus traffic to move within our district, and an open Holler Lane to all traffic coming in or out of the campus allowing for efficient flow.

With regard to design for the middle and high school renovations, the design team has been collaborating with key staff to gather input on a variety of upcoming projects, including renovations of old middle and high school science rooms, renovation/expansion of existing high school weight room, and renovation of existing high school girls' and boys' locker rooms.



Significant work has transpired on athletic fields. The upcoming improvement project for the baseball and softball fields will focus on enhancing safety, accessibility, and overall field quality. The project includes the installation of new fencing and backstops for both fields to match the updated fencing planned for the football stadium. Emergency vehicle access points will also be added to both fields. Upgrades will include new irrigation systems and a modernized controller for better zone management. Since the bladder tanks were replaced two years ago, they will remain in place. On the baseball field, the infield will be re-sodded and the area between third base and home plate will be leveled. Both outfields are currently in good condition and do not require regrading or reseeding. Additional improvements include the installation of new foul line markers on both fields and cement pads in front of each dugout, extending from the dugout entrances to the safety fences.

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## CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2025 YOUR FUTURE AWAITS!



Mattawan Board of Education, Superintendent Fleenor [left], Assistant Superintendent Lerner [right]

## OUR MISSION

Partnering with our community and families, we provide the highest quality education for all students in a caring, safe, and inclusive learning environment.



Randy Fleenor, Superintendent

## BOND PROJECTS UNDERWAY

*Continued Cover Story*

Thanks to the generous support of our community through the 2024 School Construction Bond, much of the middle school and high school will be receiving brand-new student and staff furniture! The existing furniture is over 25 years old, and the new selections will usher in updated, modern environments for both students and staff, fostering a more comfortable and engaging learning experience. Staff and administration from the middle and high schools visited the VS America showroom in Grand Rapids, MI, to begin planning a fall furniture pilot. The visit offered an opportunity to explore flexible, modern furniture solutions that support student-centered learning environments. The team also met with representatives from Custer Office. VS America and Custer Furniture were selected as suppliers, with VS providing classroom furniture and Custer handling office furnishings. These visits represent an important step in selecting furniture that aligns with the district's instructional goals.

If you are in the area, you will see that much stadium work has transpired! The track grading has been fully completed and successfully passed all required testing, marking a key milestone. Work began on installing the storm drainage system around the field, with ongoing efforts to connect the storm line from the depression area to the field—currently paused at the intersection with existing fiber lines. The southern depression area itself is nearing completion, and crews have also started placing rebar and framing for the retaining wall, setting the stage for the next phase of construction. Other progress includes sending out Change Order 03 for the new scoreboard, pouring the bleacher foundations, starting the interior trench drain installation, closing two track sections, and installing fence panels and gravel for the Fire Chief. For next week, anticipated work includes continuing trench drain installation, pouring the concrete curb for it, grading all field event areas, preparing the north start area (excluding fiber work), installing fence posts, and removing the existing scoreboard. Additionally, fiber work and the installation of leaching basins, storm systems, and gravel are underway.

Work is underway for a substantial upgrade from our current board, which will be repurposed to the new multi-purpose field south of the stadium. The scoreboard will be moved to the North endzone, to make way for upcoming renovations to the southern entrance in a later bid package.

Progress on the high school fire alarm project includes the completion of high-ceiling work in the gym and the installation of new booster

panels, with all wiring pulled and connected. The P-Link connections between panels are now complete, and the remaining devices for the building have been successfully delivered. Installation of SLC loops on the first floor, pulling wire into new boxes in the auditorium for new devices, and installing new horn and strobe devices in second-floor classrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria. Work also began on installing horns and strobes in first-floor classrooms.

Stay tuned for our bond progress. Promises made, promises kept!

## THE FOUNDATION AWARDS LIFE-CHANGING SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDENTS



On Wednesday, May 7, the Mattawan Public Education Foundation presented scholarships to 20 outstanding graduating seniors. Selecting the applications is a time-consuming process, but so rewarding as Foundation board members and community volunteers learn about all of the hard work, perseverance, and public service these students do to improve themselves and the Mattawan community as a whole. These scholarships are a wonderful way to honor loved ones, inspire passion in the next generation and recognize students on their many varied accomplishments. Since 1993, The Foundation has awarded scholarships over \$400,000 in scholarship money, and this year the award amount totaled \$32,750. Congratulations to these deserving seniors and to the entire graduating class of 2025!



**REGISTER TO RUN & WALK FOR WILDCATS!**

<https://runsignup.com/Race/MI/Mattawan/WILDCATRoadandTrail5K>

The arrival of summer brings the arrival of several fun events for the Foundation! The Charity Golf Classic is Thursday, June 19, and the Mattawan Wildcat Road & Trail 5K is Saturday, August 2, 2025. This is a family friendly community event! Runners and walkers of all ages and abilities are welcome. You can sign up as an individual or as a team. Proceeds from the race are generously donated to the Foundation to support Brainstrong grants, so sign up today!

# Y 5's EARLY childhood

## Early Childhood Field Day Physical Education Fun for Everyone

Celebrating a Year of Growth and Grit



Field Day is an opportunity for our Young 5s students to show all they have learned in gym class. Throughout the school year, students work on particular gross motor skills through games and activities that enhance their physical well-being, while advancing their confidence, teamwork, and direction following skills. During field day, Mrs. Fisher set up 8 different stations to show off the growth students have made this year in gym class. Activities ranged from soccer and baseball to relays and bubbles. It was a perfect weather day, and the crowd of parents were excellent supporters as they cheered on the little athletes. All the students showed their best efforts and had a blast! I think we have some future Wildcat athletes in the making!



### Smooth Sailing to Kindergarten

#### YOUNG FIVE'S TAKE TRANSITION TRIP TO ELEMENTARY

To help our Young 5's students make the transition to the Early Elementary School, we took a little visit to the "Big School". Students were invited in by warm smiles from students and staff. The students felt right at home in their new school with the help of their older friends, and they had the opportunity to get a feel for Kindergarten by reading books, coloring, playing, and exploring their future school. It was the perfect way for students to get excited about their move to Kindergarten. We went to the playground, and students were so excited by the structures and activities. That was the final selling point for students to make the move into their future. We know our students are ready, and we wish them the best as they continue to grow and learn.



### YOUNG 5's EXPLORE NATURE

#### A Trip to Kalamazoo Nature Center



What could be more exciting than getting out in nature and exploring the beauty of West Michigan. The Young 5s students did exactly that and ventured to the Kalamazoo Nature Center to explore the great outdoors. There were trails to hike, animals to view, presentations to watch, and so much to learn. It was the perfect day to be outdoors and be one with nature. The adventure connected to our work at school focused on nature, life cycles, weather, and of course being curious. Everyone (including the adults) had a wonderful day! If you are interested, the Kalamazoo Nature Center is open to the public. Information can be found at <https://naturecenter.org/>. It is a great opportunity to continue to work on literacy, math, science, and social studies skill in a fun and exciting way.

### Discover the Perfect Start for Your Child | PreK for All & Tuition-Based Programs

Our MCS Preschools ended the school year with smiles all around, the students have come so far in their time at the ECEC. Students learned skills including math, reading, writing, social, and emotional skills that will help students as they progress into their early elementary school years. Some of our preschool students even grew several inches! The preschool staff at the ECEC are so proud of the work students have done this school year. It has been a joy to watch the students blossom into "big" kids. All the students are ready for their next adventure.

At Mattawan Early Education Center, we believe every child deserves a strong foundation. That's why we're proud to offer two exceptional pathways to early learning: PreK for All & Tuition-Based Programs. **If you are interested in any of our preschool programs at the ECEC, please reach out to our office at 269-668-3361 EXT1885. Spots are filling up fast for all of our programs including MCS Tuition Based Preschool and Preschool for All (GSRP). Please contact our office as soon as possible if you would like to be part of the preschool class of 2025-2026.**



# EARLY ELEMENTARY

BUDDIES & BOOKS:

## Courtyard Chronicles & Connection



The courtyards of EES were filled with laughter, storytelling, and the warm presence of special guests as students celebrated the annual Books with Buddies event. This cherished tradition invites students to bring a special guest—whether a family member, neighbor, or friend—to join them in the simple yet powerful act of reading together.

Lawn chairs and cozy blankets across the school yard were transformed into mini reading nooks, where young readers and their buddies bonded over new stories and old favorites. Smiles were everywhere as students proudly shared their reading skills and discovered new books to love.

Adding to the excitement, each student received a bright, book-filled bag and a tasty treat of kettle corn, generously provided by MEEPA.

Events like Books with Buddies highlight the importance of literacy, connection, and the joy of shared experiences. A heartfelt thank you goes out to MEEPA, the staff, volunteers, and all the wonderful buddies who made this day so special. We can't wait to do it all again next year!

## A CHAMPION'S FAREWELL:

Honoring Julie Cartier, A Lifetime Dedicated to Children



This spring, EES bids farewell to an extraordinary social worker and champion for children, Julie Cartier, as she steps into retirement. Julie's dedication, warmth, and unwavering belief in the power of connection have touched every corner of our school community. While we are sad to see her go, we are honored to carry forward her legacy in a way that is both joyful and deeply meaningful: through the gift of peer-led play. Julie has long been a believer in the importance of play—not just as a break from academics, but as a vital part of learning, growing, and building community. Inspired by her vision and tireless work, the staff at EES have come together to develop a structured support system that will nurture peer-led play throughout the next school year and beyond.

Drawing on the monthly themes from Capturing Kids' Hearts, we've transformed each one into an opportunity for students to lead, support, and grow together through play. These themes—such as empathy, respect, courage, and responsibility—will guide monthly initiatives where adults will model, encourage, and facilitate play experiences that reinforce these values. Whether it's older students mentoring younger ones in cooperative games, or staff supporting students in navigating social challenges on the playground, the message is clear: every child has the power to lead, to include, and to make our school a joyful, connected place to be. This initiative isn't just a program—it's a promise. A promise to keep Julie's spirit alive in the daily rhythms of our school. A promise to create space for laughter, kindness, and belonging. And a promise to believe in the strength of children to lift each other up.

Julie may be retiring from her role, but her heart, her hope, and her impact will continue to echo in the hallways, classrooms, and playgrounds of EES. We are grateful for all she's given us—and proud to give back a legacy rooted in connection, compassion, and play.



## ACCADIENCE READING

Immediate and Significant Impact

This year, our school implemented Acadience Reading, and its impact has been immediate and significant. As an assessment tool designed specifically for students in kindergarten through fifth grade, Acadience has enabled us to take a more critical and data-informed look at early literacy development. Its insights have helped us refine instruction, tailor interventions, and ensure that no child falls through the cracks during these crucial early years. In short, it helps us intervene before small issues become larger obstacles to academic success. One of the most valuable aspects of implementing Acadience has been its ability to guide instructional next steps. The data collected has helped teachers identify specific skill gaps and adjust their instruction accordingly. It's not just about identifying students who are behind—it's about knowing how to help them catch up and where to focus our efforts. The clarity and consistency of the data have contributed to shaping our building-wide model for intervention. Acadience has not only helped in identifying students who need support but has also united our staff around a shared understanding of student needs and instructional priorities.

**CONTINENTAL MATH LEAGUE VICTORY  
ELEMENTARY MATHLETES CONQUER CML**



Congratulations to these 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders who were awarded Continental Math League medals for their scores on the 2024-2025 CML competition. Continental Math League is a nationwide mathematics problem solving competition designed for students in grades 2 through 12. It aims to enhance students' problem-solving skills and provide a challenging and engaging math experience.

The CML is not just a contest; it's a program aimed at fostering mathematical exploration and promoting a love for math. It provides a platform for students to practice and improve their problem-solving abilities through challenging word problems. Thank you to our staff who help coordinate CML. Well done, Wildcats!

**Thank You! Our Parent Association in Action  
MLEAP TURNS DREAMS INTO STUDENT REALITIES**



Fifth graders at Mattawan Later Elementary received some special attention as they wrap up their time in elementary school. This year, the Mattawan Later Elementary Association of Parents (MLEAP) devoted their time, energy, and skills to help coordinate two special experiences for students. The 5th grade carnival is always a special day of fun. It's a day when students, staff, and parents/guardians can spend the day having fun together. Students were able to enjoy many different activities, including Twister, Football Throw, a race car experience, cotton candy, face painting, a photo booth, oversized Jenga, karaoke, and much more!

Finally, students were able to visit the Griffin Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. What an experience! Students visited many exhibits, learning about plastics pollution, a WWII submarine, human body systems, city structures, cars and bicycles, and much more! We had a wonderful group of parent volunteers that made the day even better.

The community's support of our Walk-A-Thon event in the fall is what makes experiences like this happen for our kids. We are so appreciative of the continued support of our students and staff!

**LATER  
ELEMENTARY**

3  
-  
5

**GAME ON!**

Sunshine, Smiles, and Super Sports



Mattawan Later Elementary School Field Day was a huge success! Thanks to Mr. Lutz's planning, the support of our amazing teachers and other staff, and the help of many enthusiastic parent volunteers, students enjoyed a fun-filled day of activities and smiles. Third, fourth, and fifth grade students enjoyed running, catching footballs, bouncing, spinning, and even getting a little wet! The weather was perfect, and although we couldn't use the stadium due to construction, everyone made the most of our alternate location. The energy was high, the laughter was loud, and the memories made will last well beyond the day. We are grateful to our parent organization and volunteers for making Field Day fun for kids. Thank you to our school community for your commitment to providing an amazing school experience for kids here at Mattawan LES! We are so fortunate!

**From Lab to Library**

**Mattawan High School AP Bio Students Turn Authors, Captivate Young Readers**



High school AP Biology students celebrated the culmination of a long-term project today as they read their self-authored and illustrated books to 4th and 5th grade students at Mattawan Later Elementary. These creative works covered a range of biology topics, from enzymes and the study of bees to photosynthesis, cells, the immune system, and chromosomes. As the AP Biology students turned the pages, it was clear they had a truly captive audience hanging on every word! Looking up to the older Wildcats, 4th and 5th grade students listened attentively and asked great questions about each topic. It was a wonderful opportunity for the older students to mentor and connect with younger learners, sharing their knowledge in a truly engaging way. A special thank you to AP Biology teacher Ms. Ponicki and our Later Elementary team of teachers for coordinating this inspiring event!

# MIDDLE SCHOOL NEWSFLASH

## 9th Annual MMS Hometown Hero Ceremony MATTAWAN'S YOUTH SALUTES ITS HEROES

In May, the atmosphere in the James Weeldreyer Auditorium was charged with authentic inspiration and admiration as the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students of MMS gathered to honor the unsung heroes of their community. This year marked the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual MMS Hometown Hero Ceremony, a heartfelt tradition where we recognize two outstanding individuals whose everyday actions make a positive impact on the lives around them. This year our final winners were Andy Anderson, honored by Team 8-1 eighth grader Olivia Wagner, and Brandi Smith, honored by Team 8-2 eighth grader Bradley Clark.

The ceremony was the culmination of a profound journey for the students, who embarked on a project to identify and celebrate true heroes within their community. Each student selected someone who embodied the essence of heroism—someone who selflessly contributes to the well-being of others. Through this project, students wrote essays providing three compelling reasons why their chosen person deserved the title of Hometown Hero. They drafted thoughtful interview questions, arranged meetings, and captured their subjects' stories to create moving video documentaries out of their original essays.

This project was more than an academic exercise; it was an authentic experience that opened students' eyes to the countless ways they could embody heroism in their everyday lives. It encouraged them to look beyond traditional notions of heroism and recognize the quiet, yet profound, impact of those around them. The students learned to view their family members, friends, neighbors, and community members through a new lens, understanding that heroism can be moments of monumental courage, but it also lies in small acts of kindness and unwavering support.

Almost 280 individuals were nominated, each with their own unique story of courage and compassion. As students shared their video documentaries, it was evident that while the definitions of a hero may vary, the core values remain the same. Heroes are those who put others before themselves, offer a helping hand when needed, and strive to do their best in all endeavors. Every single class was inspired by one another and the documentaries they created. Students voted on the most inspirational documentary, and those projects became our finalists. They then watched the finalists and voted for one hero that spoke to their hearts the most. For Team 8-1 that was Andy Anderson (project by Olivia Wagner), a firefighter who went through heartbreaking adversity, but that experience inspired him to continually find ways to help others. For Team 8-2, the winner was Brandi Smith (project by Bradley Clark), a local mom who lost her eldest son, Tucker (one of this eighth grade class' own classmates), to childhood cancer. That heart-wrenching experience drove Brandi to fight for other kids battling, raising funds for research, and to find ways to support our youth as a coach. She takes Tucker with her everywhere, drawing from his loving and kind spirit to propel her to make this world a better place.

As the ceremony concluded, it was evident that the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class had emerged with a renewed perspective. They now understood the profound impact of recognizing and celebrating the everyday heroes among us, and they were inspired to carry this spirit of heroism forward in their own lives. Neither one of the heroes thought they were deserving of any recognition, but that in and of itself speaks of their selflessness. The MMS Hometown Hero Ceremony was not just an event; it was a celebration of the power of community and the extraordinary potential within each of us to make a difference. Thank you, Andy and Brandi, for reminding us what is most important in this life. What makes us the most alive is not what we get, but all that we give.

## Mattawan Science Olympiad Team Qualifies for State



This spring, 27 students represented Mattawan Middle School at the Science Olympiad Regional Competition at Western Michigan University. Competing against 22 neighboring schools, our students showcased their scientific skills and teamwork — and their efforts paid off. Mattawan placed 6<sup>th</sup> overall, earning a coveted spot at the State Tournament! Two of our event teams earned the title of Regional Champions: Fossils: Kinley Kopta (8<sup>th</sup> grade) and Shane O'Donnell (6<sup>th</sup> grade), and Tower: Logan Kroth (8<sup>th</sup> grade) and Agam Manhiani (7<sup>th</sup> grade.)

At the State Tournament at Michigan State University, 19 Mattawan students again competed at a high level. While the competition was tough, our team finished the season strong and with a sense of accomplishment. Congratulations to all Science Olympiad participants for a successful and rewarding season! Their hard work, curiosity, and collaboration embody the spirit of Science Olympiad.

### Members of the 2025 Middle School Science Olympiad team:

Ellie Bentz, Judah Carr, Caitlyn Chamberlain, Isaac Dunning, Henry Forester, Callie Foy, Elijah Gerrits, Everley Guidone-Liu, Michael Hinkley, Cohen Hoffman, Carys Hull, Kinley Kopta, Logan Kroth, Daphne Leffler, Agam Manhiani, Torrin Merwin, Olivia Morgan, Emerson Moss, Shane O'Donnell, Audrey Rohr, Danielle Ruple, Hendrik Vlietstra, Lucy Walters, Kathryn Walton, Natalie Walton, Grant Winters, Logan Wright. They are coached by Mrs. Shani Walton.

# 9 - 12 HIGH SCHOOL HEADLINES



## COMMENCEMENT 2025 Celebrating a Strong Finish

Congratulations to the graduating class of 2025! The Mattawan High School graduating class held their commencement ceremony at Miller Auditorium on May 21, 2025. As Wildcats cross the stage, this milestone honors the culmination of their hard work, the guidance of their educators, and the profound, enduring support from the families who walked with them every step of their K-12 path. The ceremony included amazing performances by members of the MHS band, choir, and student speakers. A special thank you to graduates Logan Lippert, Annika Barnas, and Jenna Zaidan for their inspiring words and incredible speeches!

## Seas the Night SENIOR PROM GOES 'UNDER THE SEA'



The Mattawan High School student government planned an amazing Prom experience with the theme of "Under the Sea"! Students showed up in style at the Radisson Hotel in downtown Kalamazoo. We had a record number of students attend Prom this year! Students were met by administrators, high school staff, and parents as they made their way down the escalator to the themed ball room. Inside the ball room, students had the opportunity to dance, take pictures in a photo booth, eat great food, and enjoy an incredible atmosphere.

Thank you to the MHS student government, staff, and parents who made this opportunity possible for our students!



## NO LIMITS Breaking barriers and building bridges through sports

The Mattawan High School No Limits basketball program put on a show for a packed house as they competed in an intersquad scrimmage at MHS. We celebrate the power of inclusion and the lasting impact it creates for our students, families, and community. These student-athletes worked extremely hard in practices leading up to the big game and they did NOT disappoint with their performance!! Thank you to our incredible coaches, students-athletes, and the Mattawan community for their participation in this spectacular event. Together, we're redefining what it means to be a team!

# GO WILDCATS

## MHS SPORTS SPRING 2025

- Boys Volleyball competed in their first ever season and did well!
- Girls Lacrosse won a playoff game for the first time in more than a decade.
- Boys Lacrosse won a regional championship for the first time since 2003 and made a run to the final four!
- Boys Baseball is still competing in the state playoffs and competed in regional final at Cornerstone University.
- The track team roughed it this year with the track under construction and made the most of practicing in the parking lot and at Paw Paw.
- Boys golf team competed well at regionals under new coach Jonathon Hop! One golfer had a hole in one this year!
- Girls Tennis made an appearance at the state championship where each flight competed well!
- Girls Soccer won their district championship!
- Girls Softball played great and finished the season as the runner up in the district tournament!

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF OUR STUDENT ATHLETES! WELL DONE!**



Mattawan Consolidated School  
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Mattawan, MI 49071



# WILDCAT CONNECTION

## 2025.2026 DISTRICT CALENDAR

### AUGUST 2025

- 25 First Day of School for All Students  
Half-Day for Y5-12<sup>th</sup>
- 29 No School - Labor Day Observed

### SEPTEMBER

- 1 No School - Labor Day Observed
- 2 Classes Resume
- 17 ½ Day - Teacher PD

### OCTOBER

- 9 ½ Day - Teacher PD
- 30 ½ Day
- 31 No School - Teacher PD

### NOVEMBER

- 13-14 ½ Day - Teacher PD
- 24-28 Thanksgiving Recess

### DECEMBER

- 22 Winter Break Begins

### JANUARY 2026

- 5 No School - Teacher PD
- 6 Classes Resume
- 14-15 Final exams - ½ days for **6-12 students only**
- 16 ½ Day

### FEBRUARY 2026

- 10 ½ Day - Teacher PD
- 16-17 No School Students & Staff

### MARCH 2026

- 6 ½ Day
- 12-13 ½ Day
- 16 No School - Teacher PD
- 27 No School - Spring Break Begins

### APRIL 2026

- 6 Classes Resume
- 15 ½ Day - Teacher PD

### MAY 2026

- 21 ½ Day - Teacher PD
- 25 No School - Memorial Day

### JUNE 2026

- 2-3 Final exams - ½ days for **6-12 students only**
- 4 ½ Day Students - Last Day of School

### BOARD OF EDUCATION

2025.2026

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