



Cat Chat

Hardin-Houston Local School

August 2025



Superintendent's Message

Welcome back! This 2025 August Cat Chat will be filled with numerous informational items as we approach the start of the 2025-2026 school year. Our outstanding maintenance staff has been busy all summer cleaning and getting the building and campus ready for students and staff for the 15th year! One major project that is in motion at this time is the athletic complex parking lot and renovations to field #1. Both projects should be completed by mid-September and will provide the needed handicap accessible parking and drainage upgrades that will be used by several generations to come. The district also completed several preventative maintenance projects over the summer, one such is sealing all concrete surfaces and fixing a few sidewalks on campus. A second project was the replacement of our well pump and its associated electrical panel, which was near end-of-life capacity.

As a district we are once again pleased to announce that school supplies, excluding book bags and headphones, will be provided this school year. Please wait to purchase these headphones until you have talked to your child's teacher at open house, especially at the elementary grade levels. This change should alleviate stress and minimize the costs for parents at the beginning of the school year. Students and visitors to the building will see two new flatscreens for student recognition. This new initiative will illuminate past graduates and current student successes, in addition to upcoming events within the school district throughout the school year. Last, but not least, this year is the fourth and final phase of our district's one-one initiative. All students in grades 5-12 will be provided a school issued Chromebook!

If you have any questions or concerns throughout the school year, I can be reached at rmaier@hardinhouston.org or at 295-3010 ext. 3001. The district will continue to use our school website to communicate with our community, in addition to our two X accounts @hhlocalschool and @HHWildcats. I am looking forward to a great school year and hope you are as well.

As always- GO WILDCATS!

Ryan Maier, Superintendent

Hardin-Houston Open House

On Tuesday, August 12th from 5:00-7:00pm the school district will have its traditional open house for you and your child to meet their teachers and bus driver. The PTO will once again have the Big Susie's Ice Cream truck by the front entrance providing free ice cream for all H-H PS-6th grade students. The ice cream truck will also be open to any other family members wanting to purchase ice cream. In addition, on the way out of the building, stop and grab a free hotdog for the entire family.

Community Member Phone Bank

Have all your kids graduated from school? Are you a community member who wants updates regarding school happenings or events? Well, we have a new opportunity for you! Starting this school year, the district will be offering you the chance to receive calls from the school a couple times a month. These messages may detail upcoming events or fundraisers (Prom chicken dinner tickets as an example) or highlight successes of current students and graduates. Simply go to the school website under the District tab, then to District Notification, then to the "Weekly Community Updates" tab and fill out the provided information. This will include you in The Education Connection (TEC) bank. Thank You!



Substitute Bus Drivers/Substitute Cooks/Substitute Custodians/ Substitute Aides

Hardin-Houston Local School is actively looking for caring and dedicated individuals to fill substitute positions within the school system. There is an immediate need to fill positions, as well as a need to fill anticipated openings in the near future. Please call the superintendent's office for more information.



JH/HS Principal's Message - Mr. Jeff Judy

Dear Students and Parents,

Houston High School parents and students, welcome to the 2025–2026 school year! I hope you all had a restful and enjoyable summer. As we begin a new year filled with opportunity and promise, I want to express how excited we are to have our students back in our hallways, classrooms, and activities.

This year will again bring a continuation of a few initiatives and the introduction of some important changes. This school year will bring the final phase of our 1:1 Chromebook initiative. All students in grades 5-12 will be equipped with a Chromebook that will help enhance their educational experience.

This initiative has been successful thus far and I am excited to see how our students and staff will continue to use these devices in the classroom. Second, our district will again provide students with essential school supplies. This will again help students be equipped with items that will prepare them for the school year. Finally, the cell phone policy in the Student Handbook has been updated, and all students in the district will be required to have their cell phone turned off and stored in their locker during the school day. We believe that eliminating cell phone usage during the school day will have a positive impact on student learning, behavior, and well-being. This policy is designed to create a more focused, respectful, and connected school culture.

At Houston High School, we are committed to providing a safe, supportive, and challenging learning environment where every student can thrive. Whether you're returning or joining us for the first time, we look forward to working together to help each student reach their full potential-academically, socially, and personally.

Parents and families, your involvement is a vital part of our success. We value your partnership and encourage you to stay connected through communication, events, and opportunities to engage with our school community. The staff directory on our school website contains the email addresses of all staff members. Please reach out to them with questions or concerns. I can always be reached by phone (937-295-3010 Ext. 2001) or email (jjudy@hardinhouston.org) and will be more than happy to help in any way that I can. Finally, please access important information from our school website, X accounts, and the Education Connection system.

Respect, success, and pride - that is the Wildcat Way!

Mr. Judy

High School Staff

Alex Clune will join our staff as a HS science teacher. Mr. Clune has spent the last 3 years teaching a variety of high school science courses at Trotwood-Madison High School. Mr. Clune has a true passion for science and will be an excellent addition to our staff.

Jessica Kepler will join our staff as an elementary, junior high, and high school math and science teacher. Ms. Kepler brings a wealth of experience to our staff. Her energy and enthusiasm is sure to have a positive impact on her students, and I am excited to see her continue to grow as an educator.

Hunter Sheafer is a recent graduate of Ohio University and will take over our band and music program. Mr. Sheafer has already been hard at work this summer and I look forward to seeing him take our program to new heights.

Tammy Vondenhuevel is not a new addition to our staff, but will be assuming a new role this school year. Mrs. Vondenhuevel will be moving from high school science to become our new physical education and health teacher. Her experience and dedication will serve her well as she takes on this new challenge.

I encourage all of our students and parents to come to open house to meet and greet our new teachers.

Junior Class Chicken Dinner Sales Coming Soon!



The Junior Class will once again be selling chicken dinners to raise money for Prom. Dinners will be available for pick up at the high school on Friday, October 31st. Juniors will begin selling presale tickets in early September. Dinner includes ½ chicken, chips, applesauce and a roll. Please see a Junior for tickets, or contact



Gina Maier, gmaier@hardinhouston.org or Tina Mertz tmertz@hardinhouston.org to reserve your tickets today! The Junior Class would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to Durnell Maier Law as a Premier Sponsor of Prom 2026 as well as Meyer's Garage & Drive Thru for sponsoring prom activities this year. Support from these businesses help make prom an enjoyable safe experience for our students. Contact information about chicken dinner sales will also be on the school website in early September. Thank you in advance for supporting the Junior class.



Elementary Principal's Message - Mrs. Sara Roseberry

Cat Chat

We are inching closer to the start of the 2025-2026 school year. I recently came across this quote from Bill Nye that made me think of the value of schools, "Everyone you will ever meet knows something you don't." I know this statement to be true because I experience it every day of my life. As an example, I belong to a bicycling club. The vast majority of its members are highly educated, intelligent people. We spend many hours together as we cycle long miles. I am always humbled by how much I can learn on just one ride as I share discussions with a variety of people. This is what children experience in their classrooms every day at school. They are often introduced to a topic by the teacher, and then get to hear the thoughts, opinions, and experiences of their classmates as they share in a discussion. How lucky they are! One of my favorite things to do during the school day is visit classrooms and listen to

some of these discussions. I get to learn about our students and from our students. It's one reason I am very blessed to be here.

We have two new teachers to introduce to you. Mrs. Tebbe will be teaching 4th grade math. She is a Houston grad who knows how to be a Wildcat. Mrs. Tebbe and her husband just had a baby girl and are spending their summer getting to know her. Ms. Kepler will be teaching 6th grade science and JH/HS math. Mrs. McClurg, librarian and JH teacher, will also be teaching 6th grade social studies. Stop by and welcome them during Open House.

There will be a 5th grade parent meeting in the auxiliary gym at 6:00PM the evening of Open House. Please plan to attend.

Enjoy the rest of your summer. We will see you soon!

First Day of School

August 14 ALL students in grades 1-12 & KDG (last name A-M only)

August 15 First Day for KDG (last name N-Z only)

Lunch Prices for 2025-2026

The Hardin-Houston School District modified lunch prices for the upcoming school year. K-6: \$2.00; 7-12: \$2.25; Reduced Lunch: \$0.40; Breakfast: \$1.25; Reduced Breakfast: \$0.30; Milk: \$0.35. As in the past, JH & HS students must use their online lunch account for Coffee Bar and ala Carte items. Free and reduced applications need to be filled out this year and are available in the Principal's Office. Children from families whose annual income is at or below the federal guidelines are eligible for free and reduced-price meals and school fee waivers.

Closings & Delays

In the event of inclement weather or other school emergencies, the district will use The Education Connection (TEC) and X (formerly Twitter) to notify parents and guardians of delays or closings.

Busing Information

As in past years, transportation information can be obtained at the Open House on Tuesday, August 12th in the Commons. To help alleviate some first day jitters, parents and students are invited to the back bus parking lot to meet their child's bus driver and walk through their bus. Please call the transportation office if you are new to the area or if you have had a change of address over the summer. We would be happy to assist you!

Becky Heitman

Secretary to the Superintendent

Transportation Coordinator

937-295-3010 ext. 3000



New playground equipment provided by the school district with some financial assistance from the Hardin-Houston PTO.

FCCLA National Leadership Conference

Over the summer, two members of the Houston Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) chapter, along with adviser, Mrs. Abby Pleiman, had the opportunity to attend and compete in various competitive events, known as STAR Events, at the FCCLA National Conference held in Orlando, Florida .

Tara Haverfield and Kayson Hines competed in Entrepreneurship. This event recognizes participants who develop a plan for a small business using Family and Consumer Sciences skills and sound business practices. The business must relate to an area of Family and Consumer Sciences education or related occupations. They created the business, Fetch, a pet sitting business. They competed at the regional level earning a silver rating and also qualified for the state competition. At state, they received a gold rating and 2nd place, which qualified them to the FCCLA National Conference. At the National Conference, Tara and Kayson received another gold rating and were recognized as a Top 10 National Finalist!



Houston FFA Happenings

Houston FFA ended the school year with great success! Students attended the State FFA Convention where the chapter was recognized for their charitable donations of \$500 or more along with the 24-25 chapter secretary, treasurer and reporter being recognized for their gold rated officers books. Six students participated in the State FFA Band and Chorus for the first time and are looking forward to participating again next year.

Coming back from convention, students conducted our annual recognition banquet with highlights from the night being Steve Mowery awarded the Honorary Chapter Degree, our senior awards being presented to Mekayla Pleiman for Attitude, Dylan Shaffer for Teamwork and Lilli McClenen for Leadership and the 2025-2026 officers being installed into their respective positions.

Field day was the last event of the year for freshmen through seniors with classes cheering on their classmates as they competed in various events. The winning class wins bragging rights for a whole year. The winning class this year was the seniors!

Our new officer team worked together to mulch the Houston Church as a bonding/teamwork activity. And in June, this team of young adults came together to begin planning for the upcoming school year with some new events planned along with keeping several of our current activities such as movie night and Fall Fest. Make sure to mark your calendars for our annual Fall Fest set for Friday, September 26th!

If you have any questions about Houston FFA, events that we host or would like to help support some of our various activities, feel free to reach out to any Houston FFA member, officer, or our advisor, Karri Sherman, at ksherman@hardinhouston.org.



Fee Pay Day/ 7th & 9th grade orientation

Houston High School will again host a Fee Pay Day on August 7th from 7am - 7pm. We look forward to seeing you. Also on August 7th, Mrs. Merickel and Mr. Judy will host 7th grade and freshman orientation in the Commons. Freshman orientation will begin at 6:00pm followed by 7th grade orientation at 6:30pm.





Athletic Director / Asst. K-12 Principal - Mr. Craig Knouff

As summer winds down and preparations for a new school year begin, we extend a warm welcome back to all Houston students and families. We hope everyone enjoyed a relaxing and refreshing break. With the 2025–26 school year just around the corner, there's plenty to look forward to—and important information to share.

Fall sports officially kick off on August 1, and anticipation is building for another competitive season. Before student-athletes can participate, several requirements must be met. Both students and parents must complete the OHSAA preseason materials through FinalForms. Additionally, OHSAA mandates that both the athlete and a parent attend one in-person meeting per year. This year's fall meetings will be held at 6:00 PM on both Monday, July 28 and Monday, August 4.

Attending one of these sessions will fulfill the requirement for the entire school year, regardless of

which sport or season the student participates in. While additional meetings will be available for winter and spring sports, attending this fall is strongly encouraged.

As we prepare for the start of school, we also invite all families to join us for our annual Open House on August 12. This event provides an opportunity to meet teachers, explore classrooms, and set a positive tone for the year. We look forward to reconnecting with returning families and welcoming new faces into the Wildcat community.

To support school spirit and simplify event entry, Houston is offering student t-shirts and athletic passes. Student t-shirts are available for \$25 each, and with its purchase, students wearing any Houston shirt can attend any home athletic event for just \$1. In addition, athletic passes are available for students at \$50 and adults at \$100. Senior passes are free for Houston residents aged 65 or older, and any senior pass issued last year remains valid for the upcoming year with no renewal required.

For those unable to attend games in person, Houston athletics will continue streaming home events held in the high school and auxiliary gyms via Hudl TV. Fans can subscribe annually for \$80, monthly for \$25, or purchase access to individual games for \$7. The full schedule and viewing options are available at <https://fan.hudl.com/usa/oh/houston/organization/65309/houston-high-school>.

The Athletic Department is also preparing a new display for the hallway in the high school gym, where we will honor all Houston athletes who have qualified for state competition in golf, track & field or cross country. If you know someone who has qualified, please send their name, sport, and year(s) of qualification to Craig Knouff at cknouff@hardinhouston.org.

The 2024–25 spring sports season was one for the record books! Makenna Vondenhuevel had an outstanding softball season, breaking the school's single-season strikeout record with 262 and earning the title of SCAL Player of the Year.

On the track, Autumn Ritter shattered the school's 200-meter dash record with a time of 25.47 seconds and set a new SCAL record in the 100-meter dash at 12.25 seconds. Her speed earned her a trip to the state meet in both events. Meanwhile, Emilee Earl rewrote the record books in girls track and field. She broke school records in discus with a throw of 137 feet 8 inches, pole vault with a height of 11 feet 8 inches, and shot put with a throw of 43 feet 9.5 inches. She also set SCAL meet records in both the pole vault and shot put. Emilee's dominant season earned her SCAL Player of the Year honors, and she qualified for the state meet in all three events. At the state meet, she earned state runner-up titles in both shot put and discus, and she finished 5th in state in pole vault. Alongside her teammates Autumn Ritter, Lexi Hartings, and Olivia Burks, Emilee helped set a new school record in the 4x100 meter relay with a time of 50.98 seconds.

These accomplishments reflect the hard work and dedication of our athletes, coaches, and supporters, and they serve as inspiration as we look forward to the year ahead.

As we step into a new academic and athletic year, the excitement is building. From the classroom to the competition field, the Houston Wildcats are ready to make the 2025–26 school year one to remember - Go Cats!

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

According to the Every Student Succeeds Act, districts having Title 1 programs must annually notify parents of their right to request information regarding professionals and paraprofessional qualifications in the building. Parents may request professional and paraprofessional qualifications of Hardin Houston Elementary School personnel criteria for your child's grade level and subject area being taught including:

- If the teacher has met state qualifications and licensing criteria for the grade level and subject areas in which they are teaching
- If the teacher is teaching under emergency or temporary status in which Ohio qualifications or licensing criteria are currently waived
- The teacher's baccalaureate degree major, graduate certification, and field of discipline
- Whether the student is provided services by a paraprofessional, and if so, his/her qualifications

Hardin-Houston Local School

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ECRWSS

The CAT CHAT is published and distributed two times a year by Hardin-Houston School for the purpose of keeping district residents informed.

Neola 9160 Handicap Access Disclaimer

This notice is available for anyone who is interested in attending a Hardin-Houston Event who may require one or more accommodations. In accordance with State and Federal Law, the District will provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities who wish to attend and/or participate in school events. Such individuals should notify the principal/athletic director if they require a reasonable accommodation.

*The Hardin-Houston Local School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, color, religion, national origin, handicap, or age in its education, activities, admissions, or employment policies as required by Title IX of Education Amendments of 1972, Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Executive Order 11244 and all its amendments.

Any violations of this policy should be referred to the Civil Rights Officer for Hardin-Houston Local School District, Superintendent Ryan Maier, (937) 295-3010 ext. 3001.

RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

Important Dates:

- Aug 7** Fee Pay Day- 7:00AM-7:00PM;
9th grade orientation-6:00PM Commons;
7th grade orientation- 6:30PM Commons
- Aug 12** Open House- 5:00-7:00PM
- Aug 14** First student day grades 1-12 & KDG (last name A-M only)
- Aug 15** First day for KDG (last name N-Z only)
- Aug 18** First day for all KDG
- Aug 29** Student/Staff Safety Training Day (2 hr. early dismissal)
- Sep 1** No school- Labor Day
- Oct 17** No school- professional development for staff
- Nov 10** JH/HS Band Concert
- Nov 14** Meet the Team Night
- Dec 23** Start of Christmas Break
- Jan 5** First day back!
- Jan 9** Homecoming Festivities/Game