



Cat Chat

Hardin-Houston Local School

February 2026



Superintendent's Message

As you will soon see, the majority of the February Chat Cat will be spent highlighting student and group accomplishments for the first half of this school year. Our students have dedicated numerous hours and days achieving individual and team successes through being involved in academic, music, and athletic activities. As we start planning for next school year a couple items come to mind. We are excited to meet our next group of Wildcats as kindergarten screening is March 12th & 13th. Additionally, the district has plans to renovate & repurpose various portions of the Media Center to address the every changing methods in which we educate our Wildcat students.

As always 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. Go Wildcats!

Ryan Maier, Superintendent

National Honor Society

The National Honor Society held their annual new member induction ceremony this past Fall. In November, they sponsored the 9th annual Thanksgiving Food Drive, collecting over 1,200 items from K-12 classes! The NHS would not be able to do this service project without the generous donations of our Wildcat students, parents, and staff! The NHS continues their service in March with the NHS Spring Blood Drive.



Top Row (L-R) Aubrey Bodenmiller, Heidi Jenkins, Bera Sliter, Konner Pleiman, Joseph Mohler, Luke Crim
Bottom Row (L-R) Kaia Kellersmith, Alexis West, Grant Cole, Peyton Mummey, Hailey McCorkle

More than just notes....

The band program at Houston High School offers students far more than musical instruction—it builds confidence, leadership, teamwork, and life skills. Through opportunities like Solo & Ensemble, students learn to refine their focus and grow as individual musicians, with one student sharing that it “better you as a player and builds your confidence,” adding that after four years, it has helped her notice “minor details more closely” and has made a positive impact on her (Alexis '27). Even newer members see rapid progress, as another student explained that although she started only a year ago, her “confidence in playing and interacting with her peers has improved a ton... it is wild” and daily practice is helping her prepare for a “positive future” (Elijah '31). Beyond musicianship, band shapes students as leaders and individuals—serving as section leaders and leadership team members teaches “leadership, how to communicate, support others, and lead by example,” while also instilling responsibility, teamwork, and accountability (Hailey '27). Band also creates a unique sense of unity, where “there is no bench and there is no one sitting out,” and every member contributes to the success of the ensemble, resulting in a true “family of people who care about each other” (Kaia '27). This shared commitment has led to exciting performances, creative opportunities like dancing in the homecoming show, and achievements such as winning Best Marching Band at the Wapakoneta parade. Supported by their director, Mr. Sheafer, who helps students “combine our unique musical talents into one band,” members describe the program as a fun, meaningful environment filled with unforgettable performances and memories, (Alexis '27).

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



Celebrating Student Success: A Strong Start to the 2025–2026 School Year at Houston High School
The first semester of the 2025–2026 school year has been one to celebrate for students at Houston High School and throughout the district. Throughout our building students have demonstrated commitment, resilience, and a drive to excel that reflects the strength of our school and community.

At the junior high level, our student success was clearly evident. Academic achievement remained a strong focus throughout the semester. During the first quarter, 60 junior high students earned honor roll status, followed by 49 junior high students during the second quarter. This semester also saw 21 students inducted into the Philip Abbott Junior Honor Society, recognizing the next group of leaders amongst our student body.

High School students also achieved impressive milestones during the first semester. Academic excellence was on full display as 170 high school students achieved honor roll status during the first quarter, and 144 students earned honor roll recognition in the second quarter. In addition, 11 students were inducted into the David L. Boogs National Honor Society, a prestigious recognition of excellence in scholarship, leadership, service, and character. These achievements show that our students consistently represented Houston High School with pride. The full list of Honor Roll students can be found on the District website under the High School tab.

These individual and collective achievements build on an important district-wide success. As a result of last year's state testing performance, the district earned a 5-star rating, the highest designation possible. This recognition reflects the hard work of students, the dedication of teachers and staff, and the continued support of families and the Houston community.

As we move into the second semester, we celebrate what has already been accomplished and look forward to even greater success ahead. The achievements of our junior high and high school students at Houston High School continue to set a strong foundation for the future and demonstrate that excellence is not just a goal—it's the Wildcat Way!

Visit our school website at <http://hardinhouston.org/> for updates on these and other items of interest. Please continue to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. I can be reached at 937-295-3010 ext. 2001 or jjudy@hardinhouston.org.

Mr. Judy

Principal Houston High School

Just Write

On January 31st, Houston took two high school teams to the Just Write regional writing competition held at Xenia HS. During this competition, there are three rounds where students are given a prompt and a genre and create a story based on that information. They have only 45 minutes to write a complete story and then 10 min before they repeat the process. It's a very challenging task. This year, our teams not only met this challenge, they left the competition in the dust!

Our Division 1 team (freshman and sophomores) not only placed 1st as a team, they had 5 of their 6 members receive medals by placing in the top 15:

14th - Kaelyn Richardson

11th - Claire Holscher

10th - Bentleigh Willingham

8th - Teagan Rauch

7th - Zane Hina

Our Division 2 team (juniors and seniors) also placed first as a team with the following writers receiving medals:

15th - Bera Sliter

9th - Lilly Detrick

5th - Malaiya Gross

This phenomenal teamwork won Houston their first ever overall championship at the regional level. Mrs. Tannyhill and Mrs. Van Luvender are quite proud of their writers and can't wait to take them to state in May!



Top Row (L-R) Lilly Detrick, Bera Slitter, Cadence DeLong, Zane Hina, Lylah Kennedy, Malaiya Gross, Kayson Hines & Ryleigh Hughes

Bottom Row (L-R) Bentleigh Willingham, Kaelyn Richardson, Teagan Rauch & Claire Holscher

Elementary Principal's Message - Mrs. Sara Roseberry



The third quarter will be over before we know it, and spring flowers will be blooming. The thought of spring is very exciting! We have some important events coming up, and I want to make you aware of those dates.

The first event that is important is kindergarten screening. The dates for that are March 12 & 13. Please pass that information along to anyone you know who has a child who will turn 5 by the time school starts (August 20, 2026) next year so they can participate. Registration is available on our website under the Parents and Students tab. The information we gain when meeting our new students is invaluable to our program.

The next important event is Ohio State Testing. It is so important that students be in attendance on the dates that they are scheduled to test because their performance is much better than if they have to do a make-up test. Test dates will be posted on our website and will be sent out in Final Forms. Good performance on these tests reflects upon our school on the Local Report Card issued by the state of Ohio. We were a 5 star school (the highest rating) in 2023-24 and a 4 ½ star school in 2024-25. We are very proud of our students and staff for those achievements and want to continue to be a top-rated school.

The fourth quarter will begin on March 9 and will include many fun and rewarding activities for our students. Check out X each Wednesday to see our Wildcats of the Week who are chosen as individuals who exhibit respect, success, and pride. We have amazing students!



American Legion Flag Essay Contest

The 4th grade students at Hardin-Houston had an opportunity to take part in the American Legion Flag Essay Contest. A top boy and top girl were chosen after submitting a flag test and essay about what the American Flag meant to them. The boy winner was Levi Ashbrook. The girl winner was Rochelle Graham. Rochelle was also the overall winner against all other districts that participated!



Power of the Pen

The 7th and 8th grade Power of the Pen teams traveled to Tiffin, Ohio, for their District Competition on Saturday, February 7. The 7th grade team placed 4th overall, with Callie Crump earning a 10th place medal. Willow Smith and Paisley McDermit placed 11th and 10th, respectively for the 8th grade team. Our next competition will be in March at the Ohio State University, Lima Campus. Power of the Pen coaches are Mrs. Jenni Paulus and Mrs. Janet McClurg.



7th grade team members L - R: Laken Hina, Lexi Dershem, Callie Crump, Ivy Barnes, Ayla Lavins, and Avery Theis



8th grade team members L - R: Jack Walker, Willow Smith, Paisley McDermit and Cambrynn Rauch

Homecoming 2026

The Homecoming Band Show, Crowning Ceremony, and JV and Varsity Boys Basketball games were held on Friday, January 9. The Houston Wildcat Band performed a Country-themed trio of songs, including Life is a Highway, Old Town Road, and Boot Scootin' Boogie. The Crowning Ceremony followed. Congratulations to Homecoming King Luke Crim and Queen Olivia Burks!

The Homecoming Dance was then held on Saturday, January 10, with the theme of Beauty and the Beast. The dance was sponsored by the HHS Student Council.



(L-R) Senior Court members Kasen Craft, Shayna Bulcher, Joseph Mohler, Lylah Kennedy, King Luke Crim, Queen Olivia Burks, 2025 King and Queen Paul Samera and Makayla Pleiman, Junior Court Konner Pleiman and Alexis West, Sophomore Court Greyson Hamilton and Zoey Kinsella, Freshmen Court Alex Ginn and Rylinn Bruner, and Crown Bearers Gunner Rittenhouse and Brea Sherman

Houston FFA Happenings

The Houston FFA Chapter has been busy the first half of the year with several events and contests completed. Here are just a few of the highlights we've had so far this year.

- ❖ Competed in the district soils contest with the Ag Soils team placing in the top 30 teams with Hailey McCorkle as the high scorer on the team. In the Urban soils contest the team placed in the top 25 teams and Ava Mowery was the high scorer.
- ❖ The Fall Festival was able to happen this year and over 100 community members turned out for the event!
- ❖ Officers held an appreciation breakfast for the staff during American Education Week in November before school along with members delivering a special gift earlier in the week to show their appreciation.

As we make our way into the second semester of the school year the chapter has several activities and contests coming up. Below are just a few of the upcoming events.

- ❖ Secretary, Treasurer and Reporter worked hard to prepare their books for district evaluations and all three received gold ratings!

- ❖ Gracie Dershem and Kaia Kellersmith applied for their State FFA degrees and are waiting to hear if they passed at the state level. State evaluations are in mid-February.

- ❖ Spring Career Development Event contests are starting up and several students are making plans to participate in General Livestock, Equine, Poultry, Public Speaking, Ag Power Diagnostics, Vet Science and Floriculture to name a few.

- ❖ State FFA Convention and the annual chapter banquet will be held in May to recognize student and chapter accomplishments at the state and local levels.

- ❖ National FFA Week is in February with the officers having awesome dress up days and a few new activities to add to the line up planned for the week.

- ❖ Greenhouse Sales are coming - it will be open Thursday through Saturday at the end of April and start of May. Back again are the mulch sales and 'design your own' pot/hanging basket.



(L-R) Gracie Dershem, Hailey McCorkle & Madison Garrett

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



With the culmination of the fall sports, I would like to take time to recognize and celebrate the outstanding achievements of our Wildcat athletes. This fall brought memorable moments, record-breaking performances, and a great deal of success across multiple programs.

The volleyball program enjoyed a tremendous season, finishing as the Southwest District VI Runner-Up, a reflection of the team's dedication, and strong chemistry. Along the way, several athletes delivered performances that will stand in the record books. Makenna Vondenhuevel set a new single-season aces record with 42. Lauren Crim established a new season assists record with an impressive 647 assists. Olivia Burks capped off a remarkable career by breaking the season kills record with 306 and the career kills record with 721. Her outstanding play also earned her First Team All-League SCAL honors.

The cross country season also saw notable success, as Ava Mowery earned First Team All-League SCAL honors. In addition, she qualified for the Regional Cross-Country Meet, competing among the area's top runners and proudly representing the Wildcats at the next level of competition.

On the links, Laney White put together an excellent postseason run in golf. She earned the title of Southwest District II Sectional Champion and followed that achievement with a strong fifth-place finish at the Southwest District II Tournament, closing out an impressive fall campaign.

As we reflect on a successful fall season, we wish the Wildcat boys and girls basketball teams the best of luck as they wrap up regular-season play and prepare for their upcoming tournaments. Looking ahead, excitement is already building for the spring season. We are excited to see what our softball, baseball, and track programs can accomplish this upcoming season.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of our Wildcat athletes and shift our focus from fall and winter seasons to spring activities, it is also important to look ahead to a critical academic period for our students. Just as consistent practice and preparation matter in athletics, attendance becomes especially crucial in the weeks leading up to the state assessments. Research shows that students who miss as few as three days in the month before a major test score significantly lower than their peers with perfect attendance during that same window.

The final 60 days before testing, February through the end of March, are a time of intensive instruction, review, and mastery of grade-level standards. When students are absent during this window, it not only affects their own learning, but also forces teachers to slow their instructional pace to reteach material, impacting the entire classroom. Just as we emphasize being present and prepared for games and practices, we encourage families to prioritize attendance during this important academic stretch to help ensure every Houston Wildcat is positioned for success both in the classroom and beyond.

8th Grade Washington D.C. Trip

During the week of October 20th, eighth grade students and chaperones traveled to our nation's capital as well as made stops in Pennsylvania to learn more about the history of our nation as well as visit monuments and memorials honoring people and events from U.S. history. Students traveling with K & K tours made their first stop at Shanksville, Pennsylvania to visit the Tower of Voices and the 9/11 Memorial there. Following the stop in Pennsylvania the students spent the next three days in Washington D.C. visiting the sites such as the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, World War II memorial, and the Vietnam Wall. Despite the government being shut down, Houston students were treated to a private tour of the Capitol Building by Ohio's 15th District Representative Mike Carey. Students were also surprised with the opportunity to step out onto the Speaker of the House's private balcony overlooking the city before making other stops at the White House, FDR Memorial and the Jefferson Memorial. On the return trip to Ohio, students made one final stop to tour the battlefields at Gettysburg and take in the Cyclorama. The tired travelers were excited to return home late Friday night, but enjoyed beautiful fall weather while on their trip.



Hardin-Houston Local School

5300 Houston Rd.
Houston, OH 45333
937-295-3010
www.hardinhouston.org

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Hardin-Houston Local School
5300 Houston Rd.
Houston, OH 45333

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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:

Feb 27 & 28	Spring Play
Mar 12 & 13	Kindergarten Screening
Apr 3-6	Spring Break
Apr 11	Prom at the Oaks Club
Apr 21	JH/HS Art Show & Band Concert
May 14	Last student day
May 17	Graduation- 2:00PM

HS Plays

Mark your calendars! February 27th and 28th, there will be two plays performed for your enjoyment.

Ghosts in the Machine follows a group of seven high school students as they try to figure out who is sending them mysterious texts. This play stars Ryleigh Hughes, Kaia Kellersmith, Bera Sliter, and Bentleigh Willingham and debuts Alexis West, Kayson Hines, and Teagan Rauch.

Wake-up Call follows Jim as he struggles to write a final paper only to get a strange request from his girlfriend of eight months. Can he figure out what is real and what is imagined before it's too late? This play stars Mikey Snow, Danika Evans, Ellie Harris and Ryleigh Hughes, and debuts Tara Haverfield, Teagan Rauch and Alexis West.

On the technical front, Jacob Huber is trying his hand at designing the set for both productions. Marlaynna Steinbacher is helping design costumes and Tara Haverfield is helping with props and make-up as well!

Come check out their amazing work. Shows begin at 7:00 pm both days. Tickets are only \$5. We hope to see you there!