

The History of West Noble School Corporation

The West Noble School Corporation was formed in 1961. This incorporated the Wawaka, Perry, Cromwell, Ligonier, Kimmell and Washington Center Schools into a West Noble School Corporation. Included within the geographical boundaries of the school corporation are the Noble County towns of Ligonier, Cromwell, Wawaka, and Kimmell and the townships of Elkhart, Perry, Sparta, and Washington. This covers an approximate total of 132 square miles. The community is composed of business, industrial, agricultural, and professional people.

When the Corporation formed many students began the process of attending schools outside their particular town or township. Sparta and Washington township students in grades K-3 attended Kimmell School. For a few short years kindergarteners would attend class in the Cromwell Fire Department building. Later a portable was erected behind the Cromwell School for kindergarten students to attend. This building was used for kindergarten until 1983 when the elementary schools were consolidated. The fourth graders from these two townships attended Cromwell School. The 5th and 6th graders attended Washington Center School.

Ligonier K-6 students attended Ligonier School. Perry township K-6 students attended Perry School and North Elkhart School housed Elkhart Township students in grades K-6.

All four townships sent students in grades 7 and 8 to Cromwell School, all 9th graders to Wawaka School and all 10th, 11th, and 12th graders to Ligonier School.

The late 60s found deteriorating conditions of some buildings, continued growth of population in the city of Ligonier, and updated education requirements; the need for a new school was imminent. A decision was made to build a new high school 2 miles south of Ligonier. West Noble High School was completed in 1971. West Noble High School held its first commencement in May 1971 (although that class of seniors attended the Ligonier High School). The first class attending the West Noble High School was the 1972 class. Students graduating from Ligonier High School in 1969 & 1970 are considered West Noble graduates.

With West Noble High School now in place three schools (Kimmell, Washington Center and North Elkhart) would be closed. Sparta & Washington Townships students K-6 would now attend Cromwell Elementary School, Ligonier K-6 students would attend Ligonier Elementary School, Perry Township students K-6 would attend Perry Elementary, and Elkhart Township K-6 students would now attend Wawaka Elementary School. Students in the 7th & 8th grades from all 4 townships would attend Ligonier School, now called West Noble Junior High and 9th through 12th grade students would attend West Noble High School.

In 1972 consultants made a recommendation that the West Noble Junior High School, which was attached to Ligonier Elementary, be eliminated from further educational use as soon as it was possible to accommodate the students elsewhere. Consultants recommended the building be retired from educational use, razed and removed from the site. Although the exterior of the building appeared impressive the interior was such as to create highly undesirable educational and safety situations.

With recommendations from 1972, a plan of action was put into place. A new middle school would be built on the same campus as West Noble High School. This new school would house students in grades 6, 7, and 8. After the Junior High portion of the old school was demolished a new wing was added to Ligonier Elementary. This was to accommodate elementary students that were attending classes in the Junior High section of the old building. The new West Noble Middle School was completed and ready for occupancy the fall of 1976.

When the 1980's arrived, three of the four remaining elementary buildings were deteriorating. After much discussion it was decided to renovate Ligonier Elementary and build one new elementary on the West Noble Campus. This new building would house students in grades K-5 from Elkhart, Perry, Sparta and Washington Townships. Students from Ligonier would attend Ligonier Elementary. West Noble Elementary was completed and occupied in 1983.

Cromwell Elementary was sold to the town of Cromwell. The cafeteria/multi-purpose room, along with the gym was kept intact while the oldest portion was demolished. The Cromwell Community Center is still in use today.

Wawaka Elementary was razed and became a park.

Perry Elementary School was purchased by a local church and is still in use today.

The early 90's saw an influx of families to the area. An increase in students warranted an addition to the middle school. This addition enabled the moving of all 5th grade students in the corporation to the middle school. West Noble Middle School now houses students in grades 5-8. Ligonier and West Noble Elementary are now K-4.

With the additional influx of the Hispanic population in the late 90's and the expansion of full-day kindergarten classes in the early 2000's, the need for additional space become apparent. With the public's support the high school, middle school and West Noble Elementary saw major additions completed in 2008.

West Noble School Corporation has had only 5 Superintendents. Keith Carper served as the first Superintendent from 1961-1964. Glen Longenbaugh served as the second Superintendent from 1964-1980. Bruce Hippensteel served as the third Superintendent from 1980-2004. Twenty-four years as a Superintendent is a long time. Most people, who achieve the level of Superintendent, do so later in their careers. Mr. Hippensteel became Superintendent at a young age and quickly established himself as a very capable manager. Dave Speakman served from 2004-2009. Prior to becoming Superintendent, Mr. Speakman served as Assistant Superintendent at West Noble, under the tutelage of Mr. Hippensteel, for 18 years. Our present Superintendent, Dr. Dennis VanDuyne, has served in this capacity since 2009. Dr. VanDuyne served as Assistant Superintendent under Dave Speakman from 2006-2009.

West Noble High School, West Noble Middle School, and West Noble Elementary School are located on approximately 130 acres, two miles south of Ligonier on U. S. 33, at the State Road 5 junction. Ligonier Elementary School is located in Ligonier at 610 Grand Street.

The total student enrollment is approximately 2,626 for all grades Kindergarten through grade 12. The elementary schools, Ligonier Elementary and West Noble Elementary, include students in grades Kindergarten through grade 4. The West Noble Middle School includes grades 5 through 8, with West Noble High School including grades 9-12.

The West Noble School Corporation has a comprehensive curriculum offering at all grade levels. There are programs for the Gifted and Talented, for those needing special services in special education, for English as a New Language (ENL) students, and vocational programs at the high school level. West Noble also offers a varied and balanced extra-curricular and co-curricular program for students.

The Central Administrative offices for the West Noble School Corporation are located at the south end, just off Charger Avenue, of the West Noble High School facility. The Central Administrative office hours are 7:30 am - 4:30 pm Monday through Friday.

Superintendent: Dr. Dennis VanDuyne

School Board Members:

Dr. Greg Cox - President

J. Scott Pounds - Vice President

Mary Wysong - Secretary

Jim Kiester - Member

Jim Hosford - Member

Jeana Leamon – Member

Christine Mershman - Member

Sources:

- Ligonier, Indiana – Memories of the First 150 Years 1835 – 1985, Ligonier Sesquicentennial Book Commission
- A Consultant Study of the West Noble School Corporation, Ball State University 1972
- A Cooperative Study of School District Reorganization and School Building Needs, Studies in Education No. 2, 1957