

Notable Milestones in the History of the Columbus Public Schools

- 1806 The first school in what is now Columbus was a log cabin built in Franklinton by Lucas Sullivant.
- 1827 A public night school opened in Columbus to combat adult illiteracy, but “all students must furnish their own light.”
- 1845 February 3, 1845, is the “official” date for the formation of the Columbus City School District, when the Ohio legislature entrusted the management of schools in Columbus to an elected Board of Education.
- 1846 Three new schools were financed by a levy that raised \$7,500 that passed on the second try.
- 1847 The Board selected Dr. Asa Lord as the district’s first superintendent. He became the first superintendent west of the Allegheny Mountains and the second in the United States. Lord was the first (and only) medical doctor to become superintendent and his wife taught in the district.
- 1847 The first African-American teacher, John Geddes, was hired.
- 1851 The first high school class graduated.
- 1858 Miss Caroline Frankenberg taught one of the first kindergarten classes in the United States in a private Columbus home. Some say her kindergarten was the first one in the nation.
- 1861 The first dedicated high school building opened. Called the High School of Commerce, and later, Central High School, it was located at the corner of Broad and Sixth Streets.
- 1862 A Board policy was enacted stating that students could not attend school if they were not immunized against smallpox.
- 1864 The oldest city school still standing – the original Third Street School in German Village, located at the corner of Third and Sycamore Streets – is begun. It is no longer owned by the district and operates as a hobby shop for the city’s senior citizens.
- 1867 The first scholarships awarded to Columbus graduates were given by the Bryan Business College in Columbus.
- 1870 The district was one of the first to employ women as principals and pay them equal salaries for equal services.

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- 1873 A vitriolic outburst by Board of Education members R. Wirth and Starling Loving at a public Board meeting startled the whole Columbus community.
- 1877 Everett J. Waring and Thomas G. Spencer were the first African-Americans to graduate from the Columbus High School.
- 1878 Mary E. Knight was the first African-American scholar to graduate from the Columbus High School “with distinction.”
- 1882 The Columbus Public Schools were integrated through Board policy, 72 years before the Supreme Court ruled segregation unconstitutional. However, much *de facto* segregation continued due to residential housing patterns and “red lining.”
- 1884 James Poindexter became the first African-American elected to the Columbus Board of Education. Thirty years after his death in 1907, Columbus’ first major public housing project, Poindexter Village on Champion Avenue, was dedicated to him.
- 1888 The first typewriter was installed in the Board Clerk’s office.
- 1896 The first districtwide retrenchment program was instituted: manual training and kindergarten were abolished and telephones were removed from all schools.
- 1904 Columbus was the only city in Ohio to employ African-American teachers for white children.
- 1905 The district’s first track meet was held, and Central defeated North 59 to 48.
- 1909 The first junior high school in America, Indianola Junior High School, opened to bridge the wide gap between elementary and high school education. At that time, only 48 percent of all students entering high school survived the first year and a mere seven percent graduated.
- 1912 The first Penny Lunch program, starting first in the Mound Street School, was operated jointly by the Columbus Board of Education and the Home and School Association.
- 1913 The first baby was born in a Columbus school – Dana Elementary School – when families were evacuated to buildings on higher ground during the 1913 flood. Twelve Columbus students lost their lives in the flood.
- 1913 Dora Sandoe Bachman, the first woman elected to the Board of Education, became president of the Board.
- 1913 Judge Black asserted that there was to be “no more joy riding among high school students in autos.”
- 1916 The first “Grandparents Day” was proclaimed to be the day before Thanksgiving in all district schools.

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- 1918 Columbus experienced its first major outbreak of influenza, closing district schools for two and one-half months.
- 1920 The first evening music festival took place, with 34 elementary students taking part one night and the intermediate high school orchestra entertaining the second night.
- 1920 Columbus High School was the first in Ohio to offer a course in journalism.
- 1921 The first PTA in the city was organized at North High School.
- 1922 East, South, Central, and West High Schools were renamed Joseph Sullivant, Abraham Lincoln, Washington Gladden, and Horace Mann High Schools, respectively. Public pressure caused the Board to change the names back the following year.
- 1923 Irene Linneer was hired as the district's first female bus driver.
- 1925 The first closed lunch period was begun at North High School, and other senior high schools followed suit. Merchants and grocers protested and boycotted advertising in the schools' newspapers and yearbooks.
- 1927 The first Safety Patrols were created to "regulate traffic" around schools.
- 1932 Eighteen married teachers were ousted from employment because their husbands were also teachers. Petitions bearing 3,200 signatures charged discrimination.
- 1932 From 1932 to 1942 school employees served under a salary reduction that in 1932 equaled 12-1/2 percent of their basic pay. Partial restoration began in 1938.
- 1934 School youngsters under age 16 made up approximately 39 percent of the total number of persons receiving public relief.
- 1940 Employees entering military or naval service were automatically granted an indefinite leave of absence and reinstatement upon their return to their former or an equivalent position.
- 1940 Former Governor James A. Rhodes resigned from the Board to enter politics.
- 1951 All Columbus graduates donned caps and gowns for the first time.
- 1953 All Columbus students heard the voice of Superintendent Novice Fawcett speaking to them on the radio for the first time.
- 1955 South High School established closed-circuit television broadcast capability.
- 1956 WCBE, the Board-owned radio station, went "on the air."

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- 1958 The Board rented houses adjacent to schools to handle the district's booming enrollment.
- 1960 Columbus Public Schools became the first district in Ohio to classify and standardize non-teaching jobs.
- 1964 The familiar apple logo became the official symbol of the Columbus Public Schools.
- 1968 Donn Eisele, 1948 West High graduate, was chosen to be an astronaut.
- 1971 Superintendent Ellis effected transfer of 50 acres of the Fort Hayes campus to the Columbus Public Schools.
- 1979 The Columbus Public Schools were desegregated by court order. While the merits of busing are still a topic of much discussion today, Columbus set a national standard for peacefully accomplishing a major social change.
- 1988 THE I KNOW I CAN program, a nationally honored prototype for the nation, began matching eligible students with sources of financial aid for higher education and providing "last dollar" grants. It assures Columbus students and parents that every district child can pursue dreams of higher education.
- 1994 The district fulfilled its levy promise to provide full-day kindergarten at every school to help bridge the gap between school readiness and student achievement. Changes in textbooks and teaching methodology, combined with a multicultural emphasis that reflects the world today, helped to bring the curriculum into the 21st century and related it to real needs in the workplace.
- 1995 Larry Mixon, Ph.D., the 17th superintendent and a graduate of Eastmoor High School, brought Total Quality Management principles and processes to the district and created the district's first strategic plan. The district also received a five-year, \$15 million National Science Foundation Urban Systemic Initiative Grant to improve the teaching and learning of math and science.
- 1996 *Redbook* magazine's focus on outstanding American elementary and high schools included four Columbus schools in three years: Duxberry Park Elementary School, Fort Hayes Arts and Academic High School, Columbus Alternative High School and Northwest Career Center. Columbus teachers received a number of state and national awards for excellence, including the Disney teacher's award, the Ashland Oil Golden Apple award, and the Fannie Mae First-Year Teacher Award, among many others. Columbus voters passed an operating levy.

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- 1997 Superintendent Rosa A. Smith, Ph.D., focused the work of the district on three goals: increase academic achievement, operate the district efficiently and effectively, and raise hope, trust and confidence in the Columbus Public Schools. She launched a facilities improvement program that included the total renovation of Woodcrest Elementary School and the rebuilding of Linden Elementary School. Graduation requirements were increased to include participation in a meaningful internship and proficient use of technology to support lifelong learning.
- 2001 Dr. Gene T. Harris, the 19th superintendent of the district and graduate of Linden-McKinley High School, held the first convocation for all staff since 1986 and told them to “Step Up” and “Make [Academic Achievement] Happen” every day for every district student. Recruiting from the business community to put together her leadership team, Dr. Harris changed the budget process and set in motion the reconstitution of the district’s Human Resources, Management Information Services, Purchasing, Transportation, and Facilities areas. Every district school has welcoming activities the first week of class, and parents are encouraged to become actively involved in the work of their children’s schools.
- 2002 The first-ever Saturday Proficiency Institutes were held, and Extended Learning Opportunities, including free elementary-level summer school, were provided to Columbus students. The district met five state standards and showed improvement in meeting 21 of 22 standards on the state report card. Students demonstrated across-the-board gains in all subject areas of the Ohio Fourth- and Sixth-Grade Proficiency Tests, a first-ever achievement. The district’s first parent convocation at Veterans Memorial provided a successful kickoff to the school year. In November, Columbus voters passed Issue 3, a bond levy that funds Segments 1 and 2 of the district’s Facilities Master Plan. The state will provide 30 percent of funding that meets state guidelines and the levy 70 percent. In addition, the levy provides for a number of locally funded initiatives to retain smaller class sizes, to provide more space for special education and English as a Second Language classes, and to renovate a number of historic schools rather than rebuild them.