

# Forest Area School District Newsletter

2025-2026 School Year

## A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT:

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Dear FASD Families and School Community Partners,

It is with great pleasure that I reintroduce myself to some of you and introduce myself to others. As of October 1, I officially begin my journey as the Superintendent of the Forest Area School District. After 29 years of experience in both private and public education, I am honored to serve Forest County and lead with purpose and pride.

Our commitment to you is to be continually focused on creating an environment where every student feels seen, supported, and safe, and where each child has what they need to achieve individualized academic growth and personal development. In addition, I commit to you that I will advocate for FASD at the local, state, and federal levels.

At Forest Area, everything we do academically, socially, and emotionally centers on building trust, respect, and meaningful relationships.

### We're committed to:

- Communicating clearly and consistently.
- Following policies and expectations that create fairness and safety.
- Assuming good intentions, seeking to understand, and responding with care.
- Creating space for every student to grow, take healthy risks, and develop confidence.
- Valuing you as a partner in your child's educational journey.

You know your child best, and we know how children learn and grow. Together, we can create the kind of learning environment every student deserves.

### Here's how you can help:

- Make sure your child comes to school rested and ready to learn.
- Reach out if your family needs support; we are here to help.
- Stay connected by reading updates and messages we send home.
- Speak positively about school and encourage your child to do the same.
- Be present at events, games, and concerts to support not only your child but the entire Forest Area community.

Behind every great school system is a network of caring parents, teachers, staff, and community members working together. When we share the same purpose, our students thrive.

Thank you for trusting us with your child's education. It is an honor to serve this community, and I look forward to a year filled with learning, growth, and shared success.

With pride and purpose,  
Mrs. Amy Beers  
Superintendent, Forest Area School District

FALL 2025

## Newsletter Highlights

### MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

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# LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

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## Honoring Retiree: Mrs. Amanda Hetrick

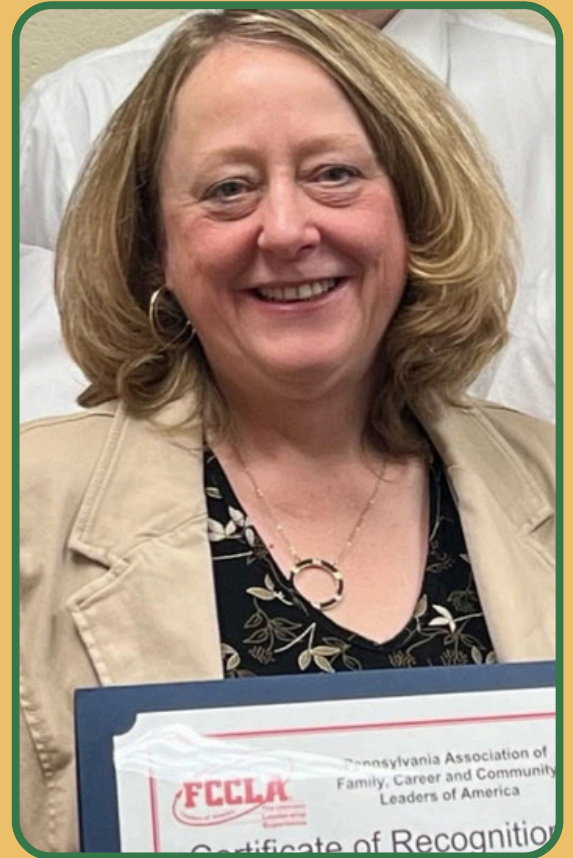
Mrs. Hetrick retired this year after 37 years in education. She began her career as an English teacher at Cambridge Springs High School in the Penncrest School District. Following that, she was employed in the Titusville Area School District as a principal at Titusville Area High School. She left public education briefly and served as the Dean of Education at a post-secondary proprietary school. She then rejoined public education as the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education at the Warren County School District and has spent the last 13 years as the Superintendent of Schools for Forest Area School District.

Under her leadership, Forest Area School District was honored with the Building Community Through Rural Education Award, a recognition that highlights a deep commitment to strengthening ties between schools and the communities they serve. The district has worked to meet the needs of our families, including offering dental and vision services, mental health outpatient services, and free breakfasts and lunches to all students in our communities.

Mrs. Hetrick introduced the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative, also known as the “Ice House” program, to the district, empowering students with real-world skills and a mindset that encouraged them to reframe problems in terms of opportunities. This program has enriched the curriculum and inspired students to think creatively and independently - traits that will serve them well in any path they choose.

By serving on the PA State Board of Education, Mrs. Hetrick also brought the voice of the district to the state level. This role allowed her to advocate for the needs of rural and underrepresented districts, ensuring that local voices helped shape statewide education policy. She also testified before legislators at various times regarding educational funding and other needs.

As she begins her retirement, Mrs. Hetrick plans to spend more time with her family. She will also do some traveling and volunteering in her church and community. She would like to thank the Forest Area Community for their kindness and support throughout her time in the Forest Area School District and wishes the best to all in future endeavors.



## New Superintendent: Mrs. Amy Beers

Mrs. Amy Beers brings a wealth of experience and dedication to her new role as Superintendent of the Forest Area School District. She holds a BSEd in Spanish K–12 from Clarion University, a MEd in Curriculum and Instruction from Gannon University, an Advanced Studies Principal Certification from Gannon University, and a Superintendent Letter of Eligibility from Edinboro University.

Her career in education began in 1996 as a Spanish teacher at DuBois Central Christian. She went on to teach Spanish and English as a Second Language in the Jamestown Public Schools from 1997–2009, while also serving as an adjunct Spanish instructor at Jamestown Community College in 2002.

In 2009, Mrs. Beers transitioned into educational leadership with the Warren County School District, where she spent 15 years as principal at Sheffield, Youngsville, and Eisenhower Middle/High Schools. In 2024, she joined the Forest Area School District as principal of West Forest Elementary/Secondary Schools and later became Assistant to the Superintendent. She now serves proudly as Superintendent.

Amy's leadership philosophy is grounded in the belief that small, rural schools can provide personalized, purposeful learning experiences that prepare students for success in both college and career pathways. She emphasizes the importance of:

- Building strong relationships
- Creating supportive school communities and partnerships with families
- Maintaining open communication
- Encouraging creativity and dedication in educators
- Advocating consistently for public education
- Providing early supports and interventions for students
- Expanding dual enrollment and school-to-work opportunities for high school students

With her deep commitment to rural education, Mrs. Beers looks forward to working alongside students, families, staff, and the community to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive.



## West Forest Principal: Mr. Luke Alex

Mr. Luke Alex began the 2025-2026 school year as the new principal of West Forest. A familiar face to many, Mr. Alex is a proud West Forest alumnus, bringing his deep-rooted connection to the community back to lead the school.

Mr. Alex's educational journey began at West Forest before he pursued a Bachelor of Science in Education with a focus on Secondary Mathematics from Mansfield University. He furthered his expertise by earning a Master of Education and his Principal Certification from California University.

With a career spanning 20 years in education, including 15 years as a head teacher, Mr. Alex has a wealth of experience in school leadership and classroom instruction. His extensive background makes him a natural fit to guide West Forest into its next chapter.

Mr. Alex is eager to connect with the students, staff, and families of West Forest and is committed to fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment for everyone.



# NEW FACES AT FOREST AREA

## Jason Wagner

Mr. Jason Wagner has joined the staff at West Forest as a School Police Officer. Mr. Wagner earned a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Gannon University. He has recently retired from the PA State Police after 26 years of service. Mr. Wagner is looking forward to working with the students, staff, and families of the Forest Area School District to promote a safe and positive educational environment.



## Steven Manns



Mr. Steven Manns joins East Forest as a School Police Officer. He graduated from the Lenape Vo-Tech Drafting and Design program. Mr. Manns has completed extensive Law Enforcement and security training, including Physical Security Professional (PSP) certification through ASIS International. Steve served the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a Trooper for 25 years. He served in a few roles, but most importantly as a physical security professional for the Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team.

Outside of work, Mr. Manns serves as a volunteer with Trail Life, helping young men enjoy and learn from outdoor activities.

## Kathy Watters

Ms. Kathy Watters joins the Forest Area School District as a School Police Officer. Kathy is a graduate of West Forest. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance from Clarion University. After obtaining her degree, Kathy went on to complete the PA State Police Academy and join the police force, where she served for over 25 years in a number of roles and retired as Corporal in April 2025. Kathy is looking forward to continuing service to the community.



## Lisa McMeekin

Ms. Lisa McMeekin grew up in Brockway, where she took her first foreign language class (French), which set her on the path to becoming a language teacher. After graduating from Brockway Area High School, she attended Penn State University, obtaining a Bachelor of Science in World Language Education in 2011, and then a Master's in Teaching French from Southern Oregon University in 2018.

Lisa began teaching as a long-term substitute in Johnsonburg before moving to Punxsutawney Area School District, where she taught for 11 years. While at Punxsutawney, Lisa also coached girls' soccer, advised Dramatics Club, Mock Trial Club, and, of course, Foreign Language Club. In her summers, Lisa works at the Brockway public library, leading their summer reading programs. Lisa also enjoys camping, playing cards and board games with family and friends, and birdwatching with her two cats.



## Shanay Jackson



Miss Shanay Jackson was raised and currently resides in Oil City, Pennsylvania. After graduating from Oil City High School in 2019, she continued her education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. In December of 2024, she received a BSEd in Music Education with a concentration in vocal studies. Shanay moved back to Oil City, where she substitute taught, including an extended substitute position with Oil City Junior High's bands. During Shanay's free time, she enjoys hiking, card making, singing with the Venango Choir, caring for her Axolotl (named Professor Fish), and spending time with her loved ones. Shanay is very excited to begin her first year of teaching at Forest Area School District. She is looking forward to making music with her students and sharing their talent with the Forest Area families and community!

## Dr. Jennifer Myler

Dr. Jennifer Myler is excited to join Forest Area School District as the new school counselor. Her career began as a middle school social studies teacher in the Warren County School District. Along the way, she earned her Master's degree in School Counseling and later a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from Penn State University. For the past 15 years, she has had the privilege of teaching and mentoring students at Penn State, and she is excited to bring what she's learned to serve the students and families of Forest Area.

Outside of school, Jennifer loves spending time with her family and their golden retriever, Charlie, as well as traveling to experience new places and cultures. She looks forward to listening, learning, and working alongside the students, staff, and families of Forest Area to support every student's growth, both in and out of the classroom.



## Debra Matthews



Mrs. Deb Matthews is the new English Language Arts and Family Consumer Science teacher at West Forest. Mrs. Matthews wanted to be a teacher since the 3rd grade. After 7 years as a business owner, she became a full-time homemaker in order to care for her young daughters. During this time, she also taught classes at her church, and she and her husband served as foster parents. Later, she volunteered with Keystone Smiles Americorps, teaching English Language Arts, where she found the confidence needed to go to college at 45 and follow her passion. Five years later, she graduated from Clarion University with a degree in secondary education in English and social studies. After doing long-term sub jobs around Clarion and Venango County, she landed at Cranberry Jr. Sr. High School, teaching English Language Arts to many wonderful students. Through that time, Deb earned her Master's of Education in the Teaching and Learning of English from Liberty University.

For fun, she loves to spend time on the river, kayaking, and swimming. She also loves to hike, explore state and national parks, and do research on Ancestry. Of course, much of her time is spent doing many of these things with her precious family. Deb is very, very excited about this new leg of her journey, looking forward to getting to know the staff, students, and parents of West Forest.

# COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIPS

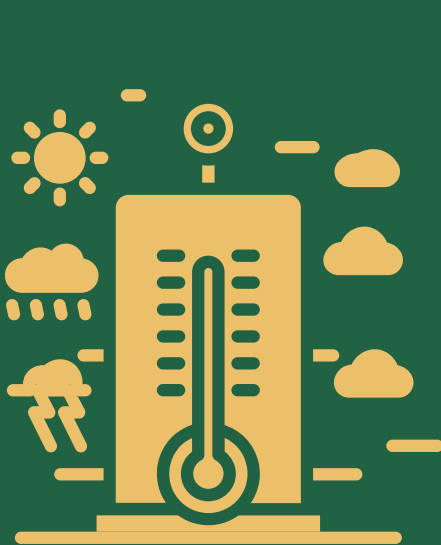
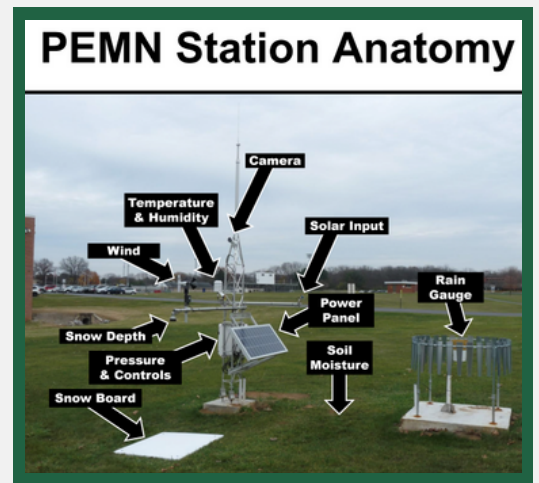
## Weather Stations

New automated weather stations have been installed at both East Forest and West Forest as part of the Pennsylvania Environmental Monitoring Network (PEMN)—a statewide initiative led by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) in partnership with Penn State University, the National Weather Service, and other agencies.

These installations are part of the Integrated Flood Observation and Warning System (IFLOWS 2.0) project, which is expanding Pennsylvania’s network of high-quality weather monitoring sites. The PEMN includes 50 automated weather stations across the Commonwealth that collect real-time data on temperature, precipitation, wind, humidity, and other weather conditions. This data is shared with emergency managers, meteorologists, and educators to improve the accuracy and timeliness of weather information across Pennsylvania.

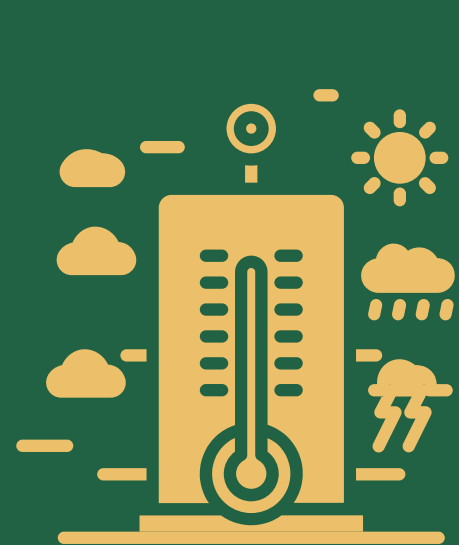
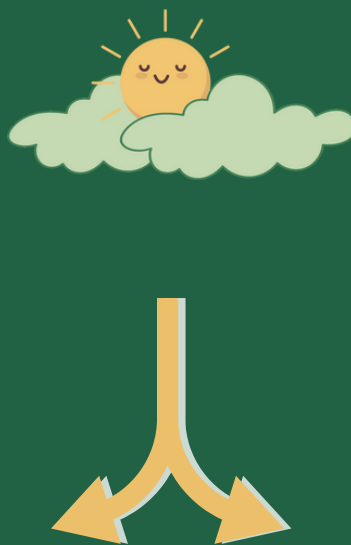
In addition to enhancing the state’s weather observation capabilities, the new stations provide exciting educational opportunities for students. Students will have the opportunity to use real data from the network to support hands-on learning in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Students will be able to access the same data used by professional forecasters, allowing them to explore how weather affects their community and environment.

The district is proud to be part of this forward-looking initiative that combines public service, scientific research, and education. The addition of the weather station not only benefits local learning but also contributes valuable data to a statewide effort that supports communities across Pennsylvania.



[East Forest Weather Station](#)

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[West Forest Weather Station](#)

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## Local Partnerships Provide Valuable Work Experience for FA Students

Forest Area students continue to gain valuable hands-on experience through local business partnerships that offer real-world learning opportunities. This year, students have been placed at UPMC Northwest, Mealy Excavating and Construction, CNB Bank, and Wagner Enterprises Inc.

Over the years, Forest Area has built strong relationships with a wide range of local employers. Past placements have included Lesko Contracting, Forest Scientific, Subway, The Hills, Pizza Joe's, UPMC Northwest, The Derrick, Allegheny Landscaping, RTI, Forest Area School District, Kronospan, and Kingsley Kreek Tree Service.

Students have also had opportunities to work in healthcare, hospitality, and retail settings such as Snyder Memorial Health Care Center, Clarion River Lodge, MJ Inn and Suites, Dollar Tree, and KAIS Contracting.

These partnerships not only provide students with valuable job skills but also strengthen the connection between Forest Area School District and the local community.



## ATHLETICS SPOTLIGHT

### Fall Athletics: A Season of Growth and Achievement

Forest Area students had a strong fall season across all levels, with programs in soccer, golf, and volleyball at the high school and junior high levels, as well as elementary soccer for students in grades 1–3 and 4–6. These programs provide valuable opportunities for students to build skills, learn teamwork, and develop healthy habits that carry into later competition.

The golf team had an excellent season. Jonah and Jacob Glass represented Forest Area at districts on September 29, while Macalie Hoffmann and Alison McLaughlin competed on October 6. Their performances reflected the team's steady improvement and commitment throughout the season.

The girls' soccer team also turned in a strong showing, finishing with a 10–6 record and positioning themselves for a District IX playoff appearance. Their success is a credit to their hard work and collaboration on the field.

The volleyball team continued to focus on skill development and team cohesion, setting a solid foundation for future seasons.

As fall sports conclude, students are preparing for winter athletics, with mandatory practices for basketball and cheerleading beginning on **November 14th**.

Across all programs, Forest Area athletes continue to demonstrate dedication, sportsmanship, and pride in representing their schools and community.



## Building Skills Through Intramural Athletics

Forest Area's Intramural Athletics Program gives 5th and 6th-grade students the chance to build their skills and confidence in a variety of sports before they reach high school competition. Throughout the school year, students can participate in intramural sessions during recess, with each sport running for about four weeks. Offerings include soccer, golf, basketball, volleyball, and baseball.

The goal of the intramural program is to provide students with more in-depth instruction and plenty of opportunities for practice and repetition. Whether students are trying a new sport or refining their skills in one they already enjoy, intramurals help them grow as athletes and teammates. As with any skill, the more time and effort students invest, the more they develop - and intramurals give them a fun, supportive environment to do just that.



East Forest ↪



West Forest ↪

## LEARNING IN ACTION

### Exploring Language and Culture in Elementary World Language

This year, Forest Area's 5th and 6th grade students are expanding their horizons through the World Language program, which introduces them to new languages and cultures in creative and engaging ways.

The year began with a focus on Spanish, and students will explore French during the second half of the year. To help students connect with language in meaningful ways, lessons are centered around storybooks, art, and cultural themes rather than memorization or drills.

So far, students have read two bilingual stories — *Tomás and the Library Lady* by Pat Mora, based on the real-life Tomás Rivera, and *Isabella and Her Colores Go to School* by Alexandra Alessandri. Both books are told mostly in English with Spanish words and phrases woven throughout. After each story, students build vocabulary lists from the new words they encounter and explore related themes from the stories.

In their most recent unit, students listened to *Isabella and Her Colores Go to School* read aloud entirely in Spanish by the author herself. Inspired by the main character Isabel, who experiences language through color and art, students created their own artwork reflecting how the sounds of Spanish made them feel.

The result was a colorful blend of language, creativity, and cultural understanding - a wonderful start to the year and growing Forest Area's World Language program.



East Forest



West Forest

## Innovation in Action: Exploring STEAM at the Elementary Level

Forest Area's STEAM program (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) gives students hands-on opportunities to explore, create, and solve problems. The program blends science, technology, engineering, and art in ways that make learning meaningful and fun.

Students begin with the Engineering Design Process, learning to plan, build, test, and improve their ideas through challenges like the Bridge Challenge, which fosters teamwork and creative problem-solving.

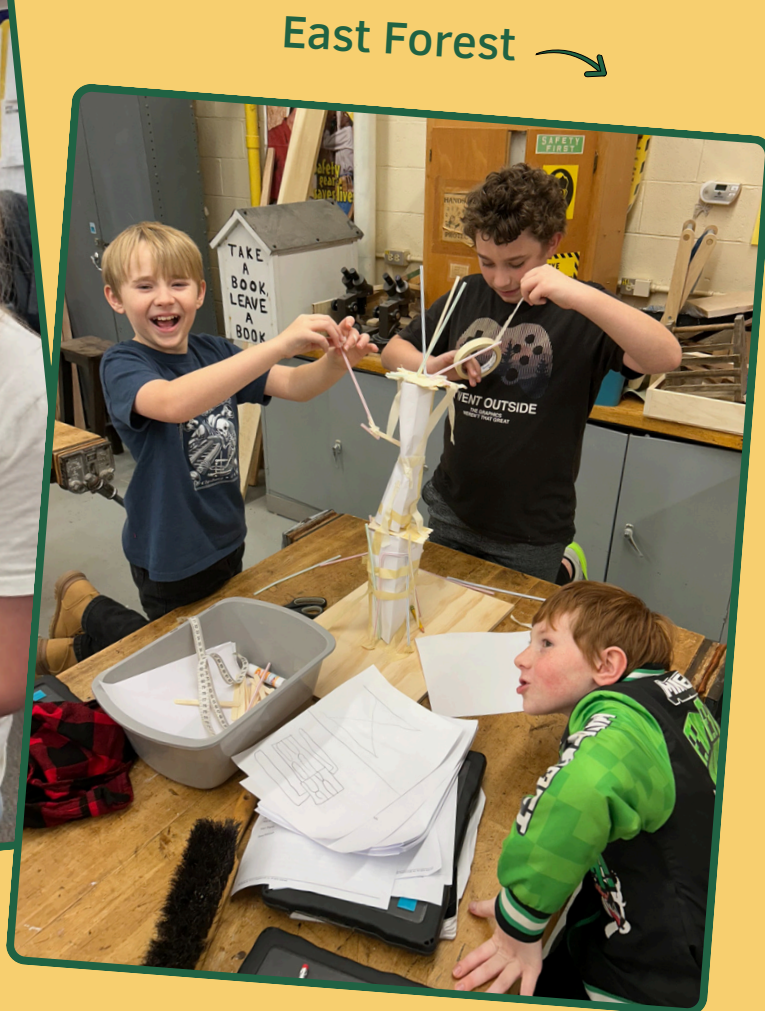
In the EF class, students are exploring community gardens, building "shoebox" gardens from donated wood and other materials. They apply engineering and artistic thinking to make each garden both functional and creative.

The WF class is focusing on engineering and design, creating "robotic" hand models from cardboard, string, straws, and plastic rings. These projects, inspired by reading curriculum passages, teach students how design, structure, and problem-solving work together.

Through every project, students discover that innovation takes patience, persistence, and creativity - and that every great idea begins with a question.



West Forest →



East Forest →

## Finding Our Rhythm: Music Class at Forest Area Elementary Schools

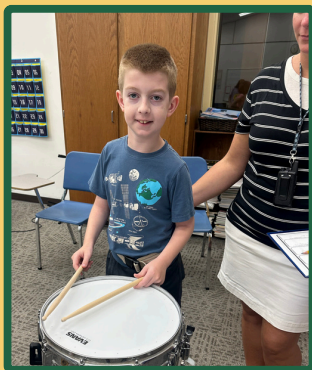


Music is alive and well at Forest Area's elementary schools! The students are discovering the excitement of rhythm, melody, and creative expression. The elementary music program provides students with the opportunity to explore and experience music through singing, movement, and instrumental activities.

The elementary students were excited and enthusiastic during our Instrument Petting Zoo Unit. During this unit, students explored the instrument families. They learned about all the different instruments and how they are played! Miss Jackson gave live demonstrations, as well as provided the opportunity for the elementary students to participate in playing some of the instruments. Across all grades, a particular favorite was the percussion family! Giving every student the chance to explore music-making builds the foundation for future participation in band and chorus!

Throughout the year, our goal is to introduce students to different styles of music, composers, and music from around the world. Our program values creativity, participation, and allowing every student to express themselves through music!

Although the leaves are just starting to change, the students at Forest Area Schools are preparing for our Holiday Concerts! These community events will include the Forest Area Senior High Choir, the 5th & 6th grade choirs, the elementary holiday musical (The Littlest Christmas Tree), and instrumentalists of all ages. Join us at **East Forest** for the **Elementary** Holiday Music Program on **December 4th**. You are also welcome to join us at **West Forest** for the Holiday Concert featuring the **Forest Area Senior High Choir** and **West Forest Elementary** on **December 8th**. Both of the events will begin at **5:30 pm!** We hope to see you there!





# Opportunities Await! Apply Now!



## Now Hiring

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