



EASTERN CARVER COUNTY SCHOOLS **≡** MARCH 2022

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Lisa Sayles-Adams

Looking ahead to spring



It is hard to believe that spring is around the corner, and we are more than halfway through the school year. There is much to celebrate and be proud of — especially how our staff, parents,

and community continue to rally together to support our students. Even in times of challenge, we have been student-centered and committed to their growth, well-being, and learning.

Thanks to an all-hands-on-deck effort, we have been able to achieve our goal of keeping our students learning in-person throughout the year in virtually all of our schools. That was made possible by our teachers putting in extra time and effort to cover absences, working through prep periods and across grades and subject areas to keep the learning going. Our non-teaching staff pitched in, too, serving lunches, supervising recess, and more. Our families continued to demonstrate grace and patience as they worked to minimize the spread of COVID in our schools. I am grateful for each and every one of you.

As we put the winter behind us, we look with excitement to the rituals and rites of passage that come with spring. Next year's kindergarteners are enrolling and excited to start their school journeys. Our middle and high school students are registering for classes and exploring what their futures may hold. Our seniors are in the home stretch and working hard towards graduation. I cannot wait to celebrate with them and their parents in June.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN WILL LAY OUT A PATH THAT PREPARES OUR STUDENTS FOR LIFE AFTER EASTERN CARVER COUNTY SCHOOLS.

The spring will also bring a draft of our strategic roadmap, the result of over a year of strategic planning, to our community for feedback. Working in partnership we will lay out a path that prepares our students for life after Eastern Carver County Schools, wherever that may take them. Stay tuned for more information about how you can participate.

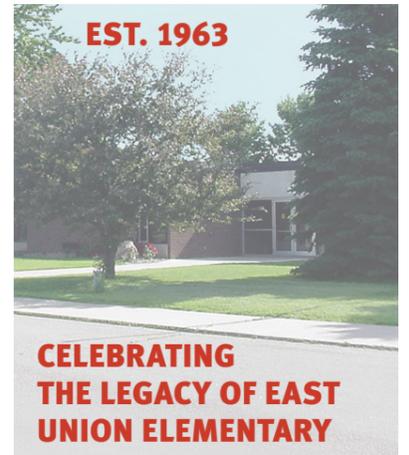
The work on that strategic plan highlights our district's commitment to excellence as a district of choice. I am fortunate to be able to see learning in action every day. Our buildings are bustling with activity, the sights and sounds of learners at work.

I invite you to see our students in action on the stage, on the court, and on the ball fields this spring. As a community, we have much to be proud of. I am excited to see what our future holds.

Changing the narrative for careers in trades and industry

There is a growing demand for skilled workers in the manufacturing and trades industry in Carver County. Eastern Carver County Schools was awarded a two-year Youth Skills Training Grant from the MN Department of Labor & Industry to help change the narrative about careers in these fields. New high school curriculum and learning experiences will increase enrollment in the district's advanced manufacturing programs, increase student exposure to manufacturing careers, and provide opportunities for students to explore and ultimately become gainfully employed in high-demand/high-wage careers.

Eastern Carver County Schools has established a Manufacturing & Trades Advisory Council and a Work-based Learning Council to advise on this important work. Work-based learning includes internships, mentoring, and apprenticeships. Chanhassen and Chaska High Schools recently offered Engineering, Manufacturing and Trades Career Fairs to connect students to local businesses. In addition, the district now partners with 12 local companies that will offer internships to senior students. For more information or to become a business partner in this important work, contact Lesley Wyman, ECCS Community Outreach Specialist, at WymanL@district112.org.



Save the date!

East Union Elementary Open House

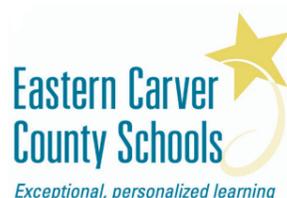
Friday, May 20
5:30-7:30 pm

East Union Elementary
1565 County Road 43, Carver

Community members and alumni are welcome!
See back page for more information.



A work-based learning seminar class taught by Chanhassen High School's CTE teacher, Mark Lacy, provides students with the opportunity to meet with local employers in trades and manufacturing. The class recently visited Roberts Automatic Products, a precision production machining company in Chanhassen, for an on-site tour.



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SHOUT OUT TO ECCS STAFF

We asked parents to share ways that teachers and other district staff have made a positive impact on their child or family. Here's a few of the many, many responses we received:

▶ “**Diamond Dave** transports my daughter on the activity bus each day. He always checks in with me if she is not on the bus and genuinely cares about her safety and wellbeing. Diamond David is a bright spot in her day!”

▶ “**Ms. Petersen** makes her high school language arts class a fun and interactive experience. My daughter looks forward to it and appreciates the structured and safe environment for learning that Ms. Peterson creates for her students.”

▶ “**Ms. Leu** keeps learning fun for her Clover Ridge Elementary students. She builds great relationships and isn't afraid to try something different to make sure each child is as successful as they can be. We are so grateful to have her as our child's teacher.”

▶ “My children love their Personal Wellness class with **Ms. Williams**. She is fun, zealous and creative and brings joy to my children's lives by making the class engaging. They love it when she dresses up in funny outfits which has inspired my children to join in the fun!”

▶ “When we moved to the district in the middle of the pandemic, I was worried about sending my 3-year-old to a new preschool program. **Ms. Ana** immediately made our son feel safe and comfortable at his new school and has continued to be an important part of his life. She goes above and beyond to make sure he is successful at school and has given me tremendous confidence in the district's preschool program as a whole.”

▶ “**Ms. Vilendrer** at STAR helped my son get hired at a local business in Chaska. She helped facilitate the details for him to work over the summer and checks in to make sure my son is doing well or if we need anything. She is a caring person who works hard for children.”

▶ “**Ms. Porthan** provides such a loving and caring classroom for kindergarteners. She takes the time to make all of her students at Victoria Elementary feel special and supported.”

Addressing district's enrollment growth and building capacity

Eastern Carver County Schools continues to experience growth as new housing developments are being built across all four cities. New home construction is on the rise, particularly on the west side of the district and in parts of Chanhassen.

The district has been planning for this growth for some time. In fact, a 2019 referendum would have provided funding to build a new elementary school in Chaska. After the failure of the referendum, the district began the process of implementing proposed budget reductions to maintain a healthy fund balance and took steps to address growth in the Carver Elementary attendance area.

■ Building addition to Carver Elementary

In February, 2020, the Board approved a recommendation from district administration to build an addition to Carver Elementary using their lease levy authority to address the overcapacity conditions from the extensive new housing developments. Slated to open this fall, the 19,000 square foot building addition will accommodate new growth in the Carver Elementary attendance area.

■ Closure of East Union Elementary

As one of the oldest buildings in our district, East Union Elementary needs more than \$5.7 million in deferred maintenance; the district's annual budget for deferred maintenance on all schools is approximately \$8 million. Additionally, because of the small size of the facility—107 students currently attend East Union—the annual operational cost per student is much higher at this school. Because of these factors, and as part of the budget reduction process following the failure of the 2019 operating referendum, the School Board approved the closure of East Union Elementary at the end of the 2021/2022 school year.

■ Task Force recommendations

Last fall, the district convened an Attendance Area Task Force to examine capacity issues broadly across the district



and specifically to identify where East Union Elementary students would go when the building closes after this school year.

A number of guiding principles directed the work of the task force, including keeping East Union students intact as a community and not splitting them up. The task force also worked hard to minimize impacts to current students in other buildings as much as possible.

The final task force recommendations were presented to the School Board and approved in December 2021. They are:

- Move current East Union Elementary attendance area to Clover Ridge Elementary.
- Move the district's preschool program currently housed at Victoria Elementary to Bluff Creek Elementary. This will free up necessary space at Victoria Elementary for expected enrollment growth in that attendance area in grades K-5. (Note: StormHawks Preschool will be offered at Bluff Creek Elementary beginning this fall.)
- Move the district's center-based AIM program from Carver Elementary to Chanhassen Elementary.

As housing growth continues in our communities, district administration will monitor the impacts to enrollment and capacity at all of our buildings and will continue to communicate future needs to our stakeholders.

New program begins this fall!

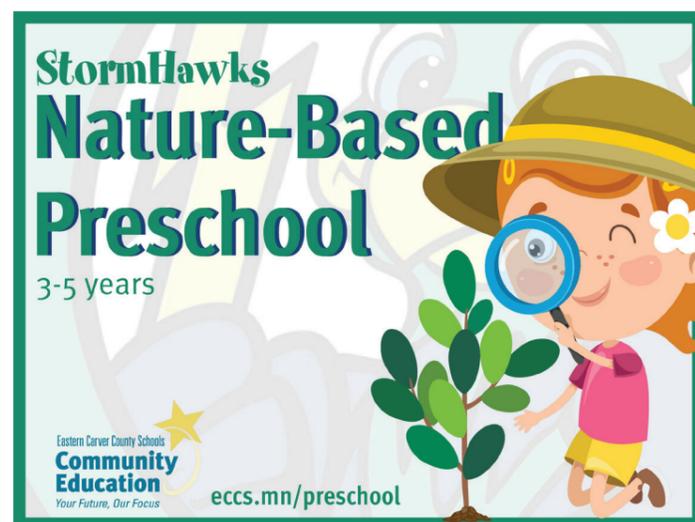
Half-day preschool program takes learning outside

Children are innately curious about the world around them and love to play outside. Some innovative and creative planning around these two ideas has resulted in a new half-day preschool offering this fall for the district's youngest learners.

StormHawks Nature-Based Preschool is designed for students who want to learn through exploration and who are comfortable in an outside environment for extended periods of time.

This half-day daily class will use the district's early childhood education *Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies Gold* assessment but will focus on the Science Standards. This class includes 31 field days at Campfire MN-Tanadoona and regular planning/consultation between the naturalist and Miss Patti, one of the district's long-time preschool teachers.

The benefits of outdoor experiences for children are well documented. When children spend time outside they explore science topics using curiosity, creativity and wondering, becoming better problem solvers and critical thinkers. When children are outside, they take turns, talk to each other about what they see and interact with their peers in cooperative ways. Being outside leads to more time being physically active and developing small and large motor skills.



StormHawks Nature-Based Preschool will meet Monday through Thursday at the Family Learning Center in Chaska. On Fridays, the class will meet at Campfire MN-Tanadoona for field days.

For more details and to enroll, visit the Community Education website at eccs.mn/preschool.

District recognized for excellence in financial reporting

For the fifth year in a row, Eastern Carver County Schools' Finance Department received the **Meritorious Budget Award** from the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO). The award recognizes easy-to-read and accurate budget documents that clearly communicate the district's goals and objectives and build credibility and trust with the community. The Finance Department also received the **Certificate of Excellence in Finance Reporting** for the 11th consecutive year for their high quality Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. These honors reflect the district's commitment to transparency and accuracy in budgeting and accounting.

In addition, Eastern Carver County Schools' commitment to transparency and being good stewards of taxpayer funds was recognized yet again at the December 2021 School Board

meeting. As has been the case for many years, CliftonLarsonAllen, who conducted the audit, gave the district a "clean" opinion, with no compliance issues. This is the highest standard a school district can achieve as a result of an audit. The CliftonLarsonAllen team complimented the district's finance staff on their responsiveness and conscientiousness throughout the process and for the high level of financial information made available to the public.

The agency also performed an audit of the district's use of federal COVID funding. Given the uniqueness of the funding, it is not uncommon for an auditor to identify minor issues but ECCS was given a clean audit for its use of these funds as well. District financial information is always available on the district's Finance website at eccs.mn/finance.

SHOUT OUT TO ECCS STAFF

► "Mr. Buetow is the custodian at my school and literally always has a smile on his face. He greets and sparks conversation with every teacher and student, and if you ask him for assistance with something, he does it right away with a smile."

► "Whether it's teaching in the classroom, on the court as a coach, or advisor of the FCA Club, Mr. Schafer shares his kindness, positive and encouraging attitude and overall support with students in many ways at Chanhassen High School."

► "Ms. Halvorson is a counselor at Chaska High School and has met with my son on several occasions when he has needed emotional support while in school. It's a great comfort to know she is there if he needs someone to talk with."

► "Nurse Tompkins has gone above and beyond to ensure the kids at Pioneer Ridge have had a place to feel connected during the pandemic. During distance learning, she helped create and facilitate virtual meetings where students could connect online in a safe and constructive way. She is kind and cares about all the kids in her school."

► "Ms. Baumann is a speech teacher who worked with my oldest son online and in-person through the pandemic. She makes speech time a learning experience mixed with real-world applications in their daily lives. She is amazing!"

► "We have been lucky enough to have Ms. Stodolka as the teacher for our third grader at Carver Elementary. She creates unique, fun and challenging ways to encourage her learners to succeed."

► "Mr. Gomez is a great teacher, mentor and motivator for his middle school students. He has a passion for what he does and always goes above and beyond to make sure his students are successful."

Thank you to the parents and families who shared these responses and thank you to the awesome Eastern Carver County Schools teachers and staff members.

A snapshot of hands-on learning at ECCS

Whether it's learning their alphabet in preschool or tackling advanced placement courses in high school, Eastern Carver County Schools prepares students for life beyond the classroom. Teachers lead instruction and facilitate personalized learning for each student. The goal is to prepare students for success beyond high school, wherever that may take them. Here's a snapshot of what "hands-on-learning" looks like in a few of the district's classrooms. To learn more about what Eastern Carver County Schools has to offer, visit district112.org.

PRESCHOOL The StormHawks Preschool program uses the core elements of early childhood *Creative Curriculum* that features exploration, inquiry and discovery to guide learning. The district's youngest learners combine playtime with learning in Miss Amanda's classroom at the Family Learning Center. Preschool is offered in four sites across the district.



ELEMENTARY Fifth graders at Jonathan Elementary started their *Mission: Destination Mars* unit with an experiment. This S.T.E.M. lesson focused on applying observations of materials to define the meaning of *hydrophobic* and *hydrophilic*. This S.T.E.M. curriculum has been graciously donated through the *STARBASE Minnesota* program.



MIDDLE SCHOOL Seventh grade science students at Chaska Middle School West learned about DNA analysis and used it to solve a staged crime. They cracked the "case of the stolen skeleton" by analyzing evidence such as DNA fingerprints, macromolecule food testing data, blood types, fingerprints, handwriting samples, hair analysis and footprints.



HIGH SCHOOL High school students cultivate their school's herb garden as part of the Horticulture Arts program at the Integrated Arts Academy. These herbs are used by students in the school's Culinary Arts program. The unique horticulture curriculum integrates environmental education, ecology, soil science, plant identification and business skills.

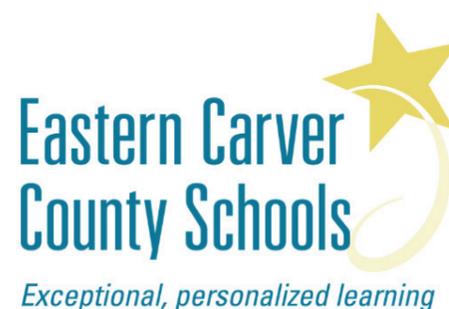


REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN FOR THE 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR

We would love to welcome your elementary, middle, and high school students into the Eastern Carver County Schools Community.

SMALL SCHOOLS, BIG OPPORTUNITIES

Visit district112.org to learn more about our schools.

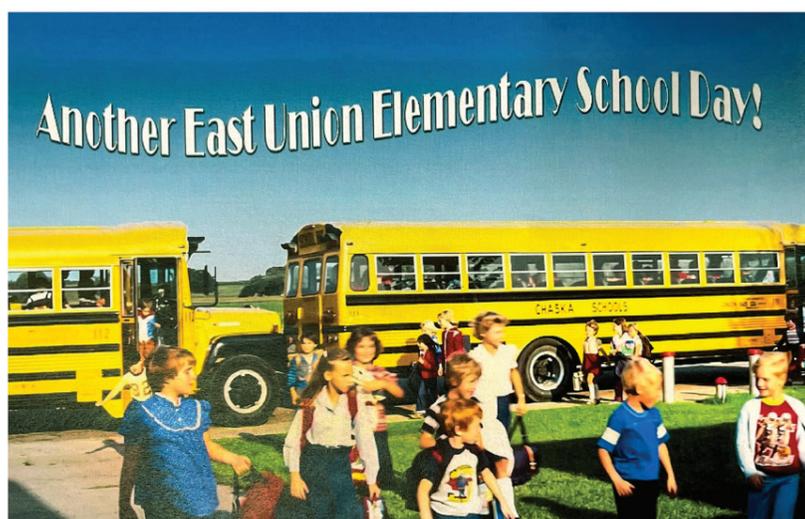


Each Tribute purchased in the name of an Educator or Staff member is a THANK YOU that gives back.



District 112 Foundation will deliver a chocolate star to your Honorees with a personal note from you. Deliveries will be made in May.

Visit our website to write your tribute today.
www.district112foundation.org/tributes-for-teachers



A trip down memory lane – East Union Elementary opened its doors in 1963. East Union Elementary, the smallest school in the district, will close at the end of the school year. Celebrate the 59-year legacy at an open house, Friday, May 20. Learn more about how you can share any photos or documents from the school's history at eccs.mn/euelegacy.

SCHOOL REPORT

Published by the Eastern Carver County Schools' Community Relations Department.

We welcome questions or comments

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