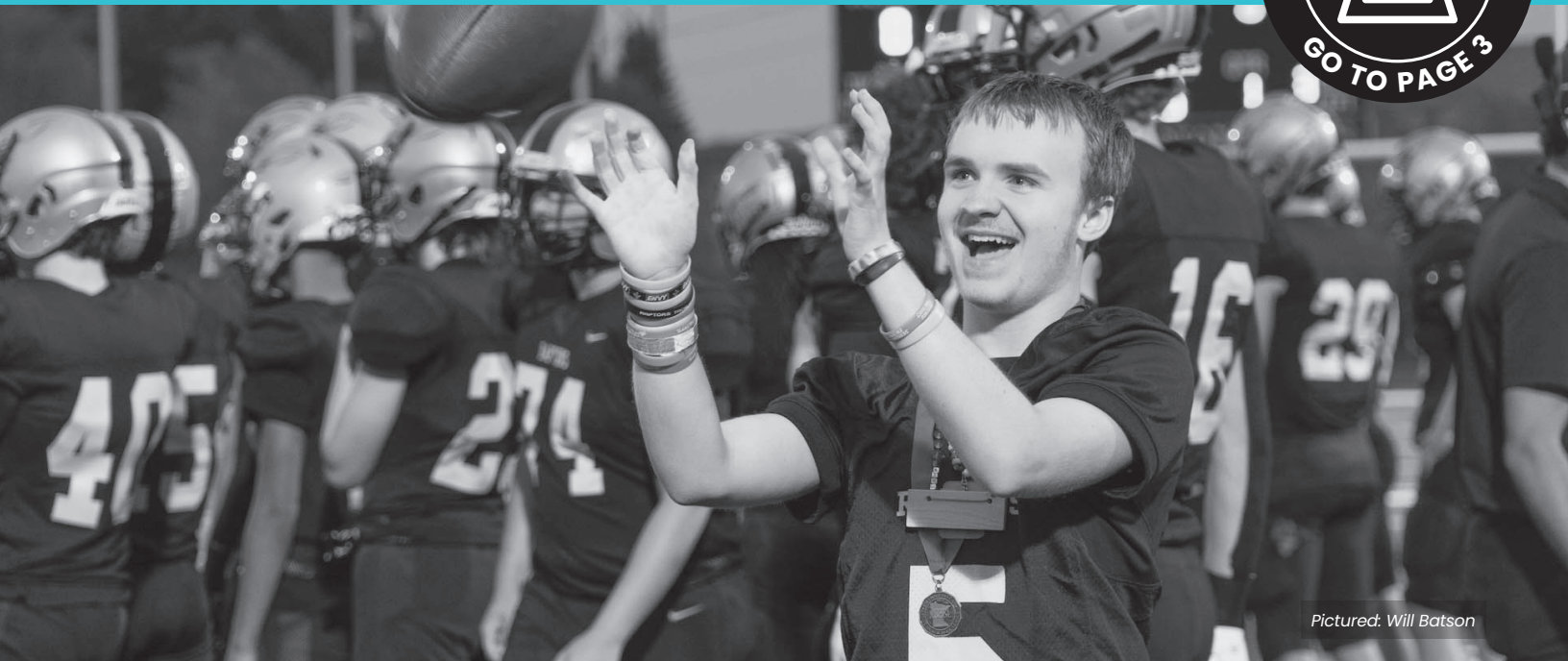


Sharing stories and information that connect our families, schools and communities.

Be seen. Be heard. Be bold.



Pictured: Will Batson

Inclusion on the Football Field

If you have attended an East Ridge High School (ERHS) football game the last couple of seasons you may have noticed one of the hardest-working members of the team, #5 Will Batson.

Will a sophomore at ERHS has served as the Raptors' ball-boy for the past three years. Will patrols the sidelines to throw back any lost balls to the officials. Will is autistic and is verbal, but had not been generally conversational until recently.

Through his role on the team, Will has begun to come out of his shell and broaden his horizons. Andrew Larson, a paraprofessional who works daily with Will, said "Being on the team has really widened his world. Just a year ago Will was much more closed off and shy at school. Now he is open to talking with his peers and new people."

Will was eager to talk about his role on the team. He expressed he enjoys

every part of being a ball-boy but he said what he likes most is "spending time with my friends."

The team has embraced Will as one of their own. Last year all of the players presented Will with his own team jersey. When the team competed in the state championship playoffs all the players were awarded medals including Will. He proudly wears his medal to school every day.

"He has absolutely become more outgoing. He gives players and coaches a fist bump every time he's around," Coach Dan Fritze said. "He receives loud cheers and applause. Our players love having him around."

Will's dad joins him on the field. The pair haven't missed a game in the last three years. "My dad is with me at all my games," Will said. Between plays, Will and his dad play catch to keep

Will nimble on his toes and ready to jump into action when needed.

"Being part of the Raptors football team is important to Will and integrates him into the school community which is fantastic for him and our family," said Kristin, Will's mom. "It's a time for him to spend time with other kids who are passionate about the sport of football and learn something new."

Will's journey with the Raptors not only enriches the team but also underscores the immense value of providing equal opportunities for all students. When space is created for everyone there is room for everyone to achieve their full potential. Embracing diversity allows us to create an environment where every student can flourish.



Park High School is Leading the Way in Player Safety

As the first team in the nation to wear Guardian Caps during football games, the Park High School football team has drawn a lot of attention. From local Kare 11 to the NFL, all eyes are on the Wolfpack to study their use of Guardian Caps in game action.

Guardian Caps are a protective padded shell worn over the helmet

used to increase player safety by lessening the effects of potential concussions. Currently, every Cottage Grove football player in grades 6 through 12 wears a Guardian Cap.

Varsity Coach Richard Fryklund is the man behind this movement. Fryklund had been pursuing the use of Guardian Caps since he started his position

as Varsity Coach five years ago. "As soon as I heard we were finally able to use and play games with these, I called up my assistant coach and said let's do this," said Fryklund.

Heidi Hegstrom, mom to two Park football players said "Anything we can do to protect their developing brains is worth it absolutely." After six games of use, the verdict is that there are no negatives thus far. "The Guardian Caps have had no difference in the way the kids play or the way they are coached," said Activities Director Phil Kuemmel. "I have zero regrets about the decision, I only see positives."

The CTE Center now watches recordings of Wolfpack games so researchers can study the use of Guardian Caps in gameplay. "I like that our decision to use these caps has brought up conversations that should be happening," Fryklund said. Innovation, dedication, and a commitment to our athletes can inspire meaningful change within others to make sports safer for everyone.

Securing Our Future. Supporting Our Students. Vote November 7.

Thank you to the SoWashCo Schools staff, families and community members that have engaged with us throughout the past year, prioritizing the needs in the district. We are weeks away from an important vote. On the Nov. 7 ballot, there will be three questions that SoWashCo Schools is asking voters in our community to consider. These three ballot questions address safety and growth in our school district.

In gathering feedback and input from our school community, we overwhelmingly heard about the importance of safety and security in our schools. Residents also shared that any increase in taxes should be kept to no more than \$9-\$11 per month on a median valued home. The information gathered throughout the past year, led to a 5-year facility plan with the district's needs being prioritized by our community.

The first bond question is SoWashCo Schools highest priority and addresses safety, security and space in our secondary schools. The second question is contingent on the first question

passing and addresses space at four of our elementary schools projected to exceed capacity in the next five years. It also allows for additional bathrooms to be added in our 1960s schools.

Our third question asks our community to revoke and replace our current technology projects levy. If passed, the levy would provide a dedicated source of funding for technology projects. These projects include ongoing updates to our infrastructure to protect us from cyber attacks, making sure that district systems interact with each other and provide protections for both staff and student information.

When we began the process of gathering feedback from the community to develop our new five-year facility plan, residents told us they felt uninformed about the district's unsuccessful bond request in August 2022. Taking this valuable feedback into account, we worked hard to increase community awareness about the upcoming referendum. We organized numerous feedback and input sessions and started publishing

quarterly print publications (similar to this one), to share news and updates about our schools.

Additionally, we reached out to, and met with, various community groups to conduct informational meetings about our ballot request. We also hosted several virtual and in-person community sessions. Our efforts were focused on ensuring that residents were well-informed about the three questions that would appear on the ballot. Now, we ask you to share this information with your friends, family and neighbors.

Should you have any questions about the three questions on the ballot, please email info@sowashco.org. You can read more about our bond and levy in this newsletter and at sowashco.org/facilityplanning.

We ask you to be informed and to be sure to vote on Tuesday, Nov. 7.

Julie Nielsen
Julie Nielsen,
Superintendent



Securing Our Future

Supporting Our Students.

South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools) is holding a special election on Nov. 7, 2023.

Taking staff and community feedback and input into consideration, the School Board approved a plan to present the district's new 5-year facility plan (Securing Our Future. Supporting Our Students.) to the community with two bond questions and a Technology Projects Levy question on the November ballot.

What's on the ballot?

Question 1: Safety and Security



Safety and security enhancements additions and renovations at secondary schools. (Approx. \$160 million)

- Construct secured entrances at Park and Woodbury high schools, and Cottage Grove, Lake and Woodbury middle schools
- Planned addition at East Ridge High School and renovations at Park and Woodbury high schools
- Planned addition at Oltman Middle School and renovations at Woodbury Middle School

Question 2: Elementary School Space



Addresses elementary school space at schools projected to exceed capacity; renovations for bathrooms at five elementary schools. (Approx. \$40 million)

- Elementary school additions at schools projected to exceed capacity (Bailey, Grey Cloud, Pine Hill and Red Rock elementary schools).
- Construction of additional bathrooms at schools only containing a single set/four stalls (Crestview, Hillside, Pine Hill, Pullman and Royal Oaks elementary schools).

Question 3: Technology Projects Levy



Technology enhancements to address infrastructure, safety and security relating to technology.

- Cybersecurity
- Instructional software
- Business software used by Student Information, Finance, Payroll, Human Resources, Transportation and Nutrition Services.
- Devices and repairs

A bond referendum gives voters the opportunity to authorize the district to raise construction funding through the sale of bonds. This is the only method to raise enough funds for new construction.

Tax Impact

Passage of the referendum will result in an increase in your property taxes. All properties are taxed based on their valuation, except agricultural property and seasonal recreational property. Residential seasonal recreational property and all but one acre and buildings of agriculture land are excluded from referendum market value tax. To see the tax impact for your property, scan the QR code or visit sowashco.org/vote-2023.



Estimated Property Value	Question 1: Safety and Security		Question 2: Elementary School Space		Question 3: Technology Projects Levy	
	Tax Increase		Tax Increase		Tax Increase	
	Monthly	Yearly	Monthly	Yearly	Monthly	Yearly
\$150,000	\$2	\$19	\$0	\$4	\$1	\$11
\$200,000	\$2	\$27	\$1	\$6	\$1	\$16
\$300,000	\$4	\$43	\$1	\$10	\$2	\$25
\$400,000	\$5	\$59	\$1	\$14	\$3	\$35
\$500,000	\$6	\$74	\$2	\$18	\$4	\$44
\$750,000	\$10	\$121	\$2	\$28	\$6	\$71
\$1,000,000	\$14	\$167	\$3	\$39	\$8	\$98

Shown: Tax Impact for residential property. To see the tax impact for commercial property and apartment property with four or more units, visit sowashco.org/vote-2023.

Learn more at sowashco.org | 3



Securing Our Future

Supporting Our Students.

Bond Details

Question 1: Safety and Security



Safety and security enhancements and expansions and renovations at secondary schools. Total: \$160 Million

Safety and Security:

- **Cottage Grove Middle School:** Secure front entry/office: \$3.8 million
- **Lake Middle School:** Secure front entry/office: \$3.8 million
- **Woodbury Middle School:** Construction of new secure entry and new bus road: \$4.8 million
- **Park High School:** Redesign of front office and student services for increased security: \$5.6 million
- **Woodbury High School:** New secure entry, student services area and parking lot and roads: \$6.7 million

Middle School additions and renovations

- **Oltman Middle School:** Construction of classroom additions and cafeteria expansion: \$25.8 million
- **Woodbury Middle School:** Conversion of old pool area into educational space: \$4.4 million

High School additions and renovations

- **East Ridge High School:** Construction of new classroom addition, cafeteria expansion, expansion of Career and Technical Education (CTE), biomed and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) spaces: \$35.8 million
- **Park High School:** Construction of new cafeteria and kitchen, expansion and renovation of CTE, Robotics, STEM, biomed and learning spaces: \$33 million
- **Woodbury High School:** Construction of new cafeteria and kitchen, additional science classrooms, expansion and renovation of CTE, STEM, biomed and robotics spaces, and creation of multipurpose learning spaces: \$36 million

Question 2: Elementary School Space



Addresses elementary school space at schools projected to exceed capacity; renovations for bathrooms at five elementary schools. Total: \$40 Million

Additions and renovations of five elementary schools projected to exceed capacity

- **Bailey Elementary:** Construction of classroom addition and new cafeteria and kitchen: \$8.7 million
- **Grey Cloud Elementary:** Construction of classroom addition and new cafeteria and kitchen: \$9.4 million
- **Pine Hill Elementary:** New classroom additions, gym space addition and new bathrooms: \$10.9 million
- **Red Rock Elementary:** Construction of new classroom addition: \$4.3 million

Construction of new bathrooms at Crestview, Hillside, Pullman and Royal Oaks elementary schools: \$6.9 million



Pictured above:
Park High School
math class.



Pictured left:
Middleton Elementary
students at recess.



Potential Boundary Adjustments

If Bond Question 2 fails, attendance boundary changes would occur at the elementary level for the 2024-25 school year. In addition, middle school boundaries will be adjusted to keep elementary school cohorts together as much as possible. An estimated 427 students will be impacted.

To view the potential boundary adjustments, scan the QR code or visit sowashco.org/facilityplanning.





Securing Our Future

Supporting Our Students.

Levy Details

What is a Technology Projects Levy?

A technology projects levy provides a dedicated funding stream for technology-related expenses, including cybersecurity, instructional software, business software (for Finance, Human Resources, Accounts Payable, etc.), and technology repair.

- Supports nearly all facets of district operations, including: safety and security infrastructure, instructional and learning tools, networking and communications, and data management.
- Allows for clearly-defined planning of technology life-cycle expenses.

Question 3: Technology Projects Levy

The technology projects levy asks voters to revoke and renew the existing technology levy, increasing the annual funding from \$2.8 million to \$5 million for the next 10 years.

What is the Technology Projects Levy used for?

Infrastructure and security

- Network cabling, hardware and WiFi
- Cybersecurity systems, cameras and transportation tracking systems
- Building controls, including heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) and door access.
- Data privacy protections and data retention compliance
- Content filtering per Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
- Cyber awareness training and storage systems
- Business software

Teaching and Learning

- Classroom technology
- Technology support and repair services
- Educational and instructional software
- Student and teacher devices
- Digital and media literacy training

What is technology infrastructure?

Technology infrastructure is essential in supporting all facets of the districts' functionality.

Communications infrastructure encompasses all networking tools such as WiFi, fiber optics, crisis communication systems, telephones and physical cabling.

Security infrastructure includes cybersecurity systems, public address systems, security cameras, access control, intercoms and visitor management tools. Data infrastructure provides storage mechanisms that protect the privacy and integrity of databases.

Building automation infrastructure includes energy management, Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) controls, lighting controls and essential utilities.

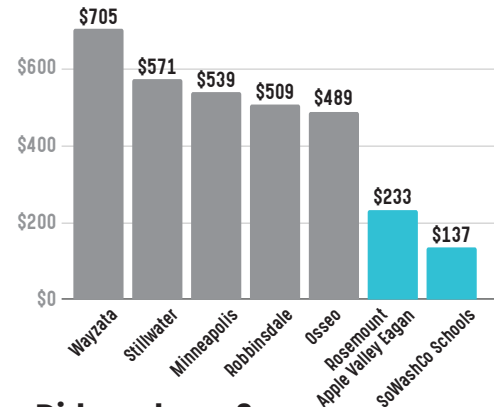


Watch the candidate forum [youtube.com/@swctc](https://www.youtube.com/@swctc).

The Candidate Forum was sponsored by the Woodbury Cottage Grove League of Women Voters and is available on the South Washington County Telecommunications Commission (SWCTC) YouTube Channel. All candidates were given equal opportunity to participate.

How We Compare

State average is \$493 per pupil unit



Did you know?

The state of Minnesota does not provide school districts with categorical funding for technology; most districts rely on capital projects levies for technology project funding.

School Board Candidates

Eleven candidates are running for three open seats on the South Washington County School Board.

- **Fekadu Kassa Ayichew**
fkdu2003@gmail.com
- **Chad Borseth**
iLikeChad.com
- **Ryan Clarke**
ryancfordisctict833.com
- **Priscilla Kathryn Dimbo**
Priscillafor833@gmail.com
- **Melinda Dols**
dolsforschoolboard.com
- **Randall J Johnson**
RandallJohnson210@gmail.com
- **Jaime Kokaisel**
jaimekokaisel.com
- **Anthony Mahmood**
anthonyfor833schoolboard.com
- **Satonia Moore**
satoniaforstudents.com
- **Simi Patnaik**
votesimi833.com
- **Molly Schaefer**
mollyforsowash.com

Review Emergency Procedures Before Winter

Throughout the school year, SoWashCo Schools may enter into an emergency closure due to bad weather or other situations in which school cannot be held in person.

An emergency closure may be caused by a rare storm or situation that requires all learning activities,

including Community Education activities, to be canceled and for district buildings to be closed.

In anticipation of the winter season, please review all of the emergency procedure information at sowashco.org/emergency.



Pictured: SoWashCo Community Education painting class.

Winter Activities are Coming Soon

SoWashCo Community Education's winter catalog will arrive in mailboxes in early December. Discover a wide-variety of classes, camps and activities for youth and adults.

Browse the latest classes and register online at sowashco.ce.eleyo.com.

Learn more about Community Education at commed.sowashco.org.

Donations Needed for SoWashCo CARES Winter Clothing Drive

Cold weather is just around the corner. To help keep children warm this winter, SoWashCo Community Education is partnering with SoWashCo CARES Education Foundation to help match students in need with new, winter coats, snow pants, boots and waterproof gloves.

Give Help

Community members and organizations are invited to donate new winter clothing or financial contributions. To sign up, visit the 'Give Help' section at sowashcocares.org.

Get Help

Donated winter clothing will be available for families in need of assistance at pop-up shopping events in Nov. or through your school's social worker. For more information, visit the 'Get Help' section at sowashcocares.org.



About SoWashCo CARES

SoWashCo CARES Education Foundation is a community-led nonprofit that supports the students, families and staff of South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools). The goal of SoWashCo CARES is to build a community that cares by meeting student needs, providing access to opportunities, showing appreciation to school staff, and hosting community-building events. The foundation operates independently from the SoWashCo Schools district and is governed by its own board of directors. It serves all or parts of the communities of Afton, Cottage Grove, Denmark, Grey Cloud Island, Newport, St. Paul Park and Woodbury.

SoWashCo SCHOOLS

Looking for a fun, fast-paced job?

SoWashCo Schools Department of Nutrition Services has Immediate Openings.

- Monday - Friday
- Starts at \$16.50/hr
- Flexible schedules
- No experience needed

Apply today to work with Nutrition Services!



View all job listings and apply at sowashco.org/careers

SoWashCo Voices

Recognizing the Diverse Cultures within Our Community



Student Voices
Listen to our Student
Voices Playlist on the
SoWashCo Schools
YouTube Channel.

Pictured left to right: SoWashCo high school students share their perspectives on what Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month means to them (May 2023); Native American student Makenzie Hopkins with Student Council members recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day during the flag blessing ceremony at East Ridge High School (Oct. 2023); SoWashCo high school students share their perspectives about what Black History Month means to them (Feb. 2023); Indigenous Roots performer celebrates at Hispanic Heritage night (Oct. 2023); 12th grade Woodbury High School American Sign Language (ASL) students teach SoWashCo elementary schools students some basic ASL (May 2023).

Special Observances and Holidays

Below are some of the special observances and holidays that represent the diverse cultures within the SoWashCo Schools community. To learn more about these special days, weeks and months view the Special Days calendar at sowashco.org/calendar. Click on the title of the observance or holiday to read a short description.

SEPTEMBER	DECEMBER	APRIL
4 Labor Day	7-15 Hanukkah (Festival of Lights)	World Autism Month
6 Krishna Janmashtami	25 Christmas	8 Celebrations of Buddha's Birthday
15 Hispanic Heritage Month begins	26 Kwanzaa begins	10 Eid-al-Fitr
15-17 Rosh Hashanah		10 Ramadan concludes
24-25 Yom Kippur		13-14 Baiskhi
29 Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) begins		22-30 Passover (Pesach)
OCTOBER	JANUARY	MAY
Czech Heritage Month	1 New Year's Day	Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
Italian Heritage Month	1 Kwanzaa concludes	Jewish American Heritage Month
Polish American Heritage Month	15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	5 Cinco de Mayo
6 German American Day		5-6 Holocaust Remembrance Day
6 Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) concludes		14 Hmong Special Guerrilla Unit Remembrance Day
6-7 Shemini Atzert		23 Declaration of the Bab
7-8 Simchat Torah		27 Memorial Day
9 Indigenous People's Day		29 Ascension of the Baha'u'llah
15 Hispanic Heritage Month concludes		
16 Birth of the Báb (Bahá'í)		
NOVEMBER	FEBRUARY	JUNE
National Native American Heritage Month	National African American History Month	LGBT+ Pride Month
1-2 Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)	8 Chinese New Year	National Caribbean American Heritage Month
12 Diwali	14 Ash Wednesday	11-13 Shavout (Festival of Weeks)
23 Thanksgiving Day	19 Presidents' Day	17 Eid-al-Adha
		19 Juneteenth
	MARCH	
	Irish American Heritage Month	
	Women's History Month	
	8 International Women's Day	
	11 Ramadan begins	
	20 Bahá'í New Year's Day (Naw-Rúz)	
	23-24 Purim	
	29 Good Friday	
	31 Easter	

Learn more at sowashco.org | 7



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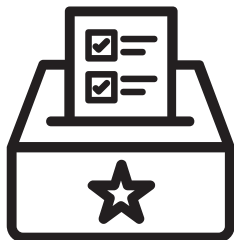
Sign up for our
e-newsletter at
sowashco.org/news

For more information visit sowashco.org

Vote Early Through Monday, Nov. 6

Vote Early In Person

In-Person Early Voting Hours	Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monday–Friday, Sept. 22–Nov. 6, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.Saturday, Nov. 4, 8 a.m.–3 p.m.Monday, Nov. 6, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.	Washington County Government Center 14949 62nd Street N. Stillwater, MN 55082
	Cottage Grove Service Center 13000 Ravine Pkwy. Cottage Grove, MN 55016
	R.H. Stafford Library (Lower Level) 8595 Central Park Place Woodbury, MN 55125
	Headwaters Service Center 19955 Forest Road N. Forest Lake, MN 55025



Vote Early by Mail

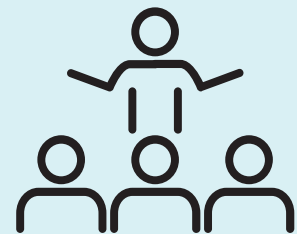
Early voting by mail-in ballot is available via mnvotes.org or by calling 651-430-6790.

Join Us

In-Person Community Information Session

Wednesday, Nov. 1 at 6 p.m.

Board Room
District Service Center
7362 East Point Douglas Road S.
Cottage Grove, MN 55016



South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools) is hosting an in-person community information session about the bond and levy questions on the November ballot.

ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, Nov. 7, 2023

Polling locations are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 7.

Find your polling location at mnvotes.org.

Eligible voters residing in the school district may vote at the polling place or combined polling place designated for the precinct in which they reside. An unregistered individual may register to vote at the polling place or combined polling place on election day. Polling places for school district elections may have changed from previous years.