



# BEAR'S BULLETIN

GO SUCCEED GO BEARS GO ACHIEVE  
GO EXPLORE GO GRADUATE GO  
GO SUCCEED GO BEARS GO ACHIEVE  
GO EXPLORE GO GRADUATE GO



WELCOME TO THE WINTER 2023-24 EDITION

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/isd624

FOLLOW WHITE BEAR LAKE AREA SCHOOLS

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

*Important, exciting work*

For more than four years, we have been discussing, dreaming, and planning a transformation in high school education. With hundreds of people engaged in our Strategic Planning process and Facilities Master Planning over the last decade, we set out to rethink our spaces to inspire transformational student learning.

Today, we are finished with most of the updates that are happening throughout the district, with every building benefitting from the community's support of the bond referendum. And after four decades of being a community with a unique two-campus high school, we are only nine months away from the grand opening of our White Bear Lake Area High School that will serve students in grades 9 through 12. We are in the final year of planning, and the excitement is palpable.

This fall, a group of district leaders and I had the opportunity to meet with our local Chamber of Commerce and provide an update. We reviewed our District's Strategic Plan, the Foundations of Success for every student and graduate, the importance of partnerships, and our progress toward our goals. I was also honored to introduce Principal Russ Reetz, who will serve as the WBLAHS principal beginning in the fall of 2024.

*Continued on page VI*

### TRANSLATIONS

Para Español por favor  
llame al 651-407-7625

Xav tau ntawv Hmoob  
hu rau 651-407-7623

FLIP TO SEE  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICES &  
RECREATION  
CATALOG



# STUDENT GROWTH & PROFICIENCY

## Early Childhood

All of the District’s preschools have a Parent Aware rating of four stars, the highest possible rating. Teachers assess the growth of children and take appropriate measures to ensure they are kindergarten-ready.

## Elementary

Students in our elementary programs are assessed by teachers using a range of grade-appropriate assessments in reading, math and science to measure progress toward local and state standards. Student proficiency is measured using MCA assessments. Instructional support is personalized so students who test below grade level receive extra intervention and support, and students who already exceed standards are challenged through our comprehensive Gifted and Talented program.

## Middle School

Our middle school students take the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA). Teachers and counselors use these assessments along with other data to help students select courses. Instruction is tailored to the learner based on ongoing assessment.

## High School

High school teachers assess students through common assessments in each subject. Nationally-normed assessments include the PreACT, PSAT and ACT offered to students at different times throughout their high school experience. Counselors and teachers use these data, along with an understanding of student motivation and goals, to help students select from more than 250 course offerings, including 53 college-level courses and seven career pathways areas.



## In addition to MCA data,

White Bear Lake Area Schools has utilized local academic measures that include data such as academic and social-emotional screeners, PreACT and ACT, academic grades and credits.

## MINNESOTA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENTS (MCA)

Student proficiency is measured by the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) tests, Minnesota’s state requirement for testing under the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Overall, K-8 White Bear Lake Area Schools scores remain above statewide proficiency levels in reading, math and science.

### 2022-23 WBLAS MCA COMPARISON TO STATE AVERAGES

	State	WBLAS	WBLAS above state
Reading	50.3%	52.3%	+2% pt
Mathematics	45.8%	49.1%	+3.3% pt
Science	39.2%	40.4%	+1.2% pt

Source: Minnesota Department of Education’s “Minnesota Report Card”

## EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

In order for the district to be at the forefront of educational excellence, we are focused on redesigning learning and inspiring students to create their success. An example of this redesign is the unification process currently underway at White Bear Lake Area High School. Another example of redesigned learning is a collaborative approach our elementary educators’ have taken by participating in rigorous literacy training. The focused work teachers have implemented during the last couple of years has helped our elementary students build a strong foundation in language development, which will continue to benefit them throughout their lives. Work at the middle school level also continues to focus on teachers collaborating and having high expectations for students learning grade-level standards.



## HIGH EXPECTATIONS & ENRICHMENT

*WBLAS continues to be a recognized leader for developing Career Pathways aligned to workforce needs.*

Launched in 2015, our pathway programs allow students to take one or two courses, or a series of courses. They also allow students opportunities for college credit, industry certifications, job shadowing and industry site visits. Almost 300 students received industry credentials or college credit during 2022-23.

### CAREER PATHWAYS CURRENTLY OFFERED AT ISD624

Automotive	Business
Construction Skilled Trades	Education
Healthcare & Wellness	Information Technology
Manufacturing & Engineering	

*In 2024-25, two additional career pathways will be added: Communication Technology and Family & Consumer Science.*



*The 4-year graduation rate for the White Bear Lake Area High School - South Campus Class of 2022 was 95.7%, 12.1 percentage points above the state average. Graduation rate calculations follow one year behind the current graduating year.*

### STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

We have high expectations for all students and offer a continuum of specialized instruction for students with special needs. Our programs are individualized and comprehensive.

### AVID

Our middle school and high school students have the opportunity to participate in the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program. AVID offers rigorous instruction to students in the academic middle who have the individual determination to prepare for a four year college. Lakeaires Elementary is an AVID school and utilizes Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading (WICOR) strategies for students.

### BARR

Building Assets, Reducing Risk (BARR) programming is used in six of our buildings, with a focus on building relationships and early intervention.

### INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

Matoska International has been an elementary IB World School option for all families since 2010.

**53 COLLEGE LEVEL COURSES OFFERED AT WBLAHS DURING 2022-23**  
 20 Advanced Placement (AP) classes, 29 concurrent enrollment courses (CIS/CitHS) courses, and 4 Project Lead the Way (PLTW) courses. Students also took advantage of Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) and Northeast Metro 916 Career and Technical Center offerings.

PLTW	75 students earned 186 credits
CIS/CitHS	444 students earned 1353 credits
AP	538 students earned 1356 credits
PSEO	80 students earned 1215 credits



*All tuition calculations except concurrent enrollment based on U of MN tuition rate of \$538.70 per credit. Concurrent enrollment based on Century College tuition rate of \$203.59. PLTW grade cutoff B-, all others C-. Students may be counted more than once if they participated in more than one program. AP credit calculations based on U of MN score acceptance.*

**NATIONAL HONORS**

- 1 student received College Board National African American Recognition Award
- 2 students received National Merit Letter of Commendation
- 1 student received National Merit Semifinalist

**92 ADVANCED PLACEMENT SCHOLARS**  
 43 AP Scholars  
 21 AP Scholars with Honors  
 28 AP Scholars with Distinction

# FINANCE

## Financial Management

To help the District meet its educational goals, White Bear Lake Area Schools remain committed to fiscal responsibility to ensure that maximum resources reach our classrooms.

## Stewardship

The district continues to demonstrate strong stewardship to our communities.

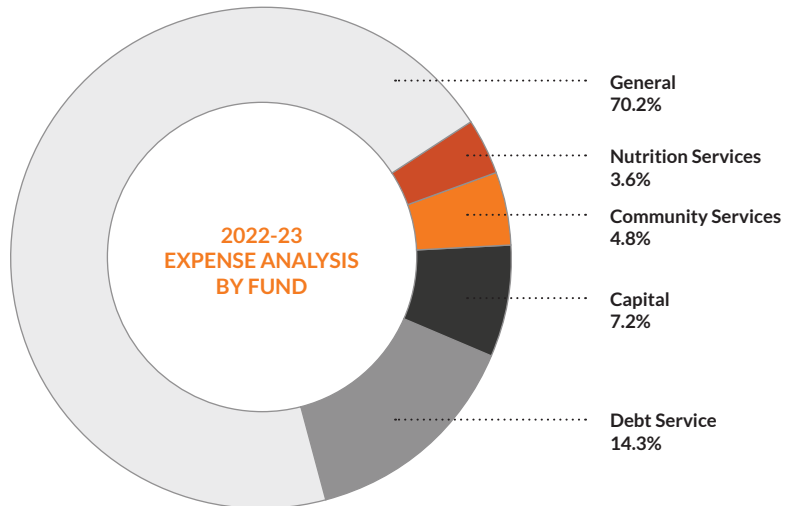
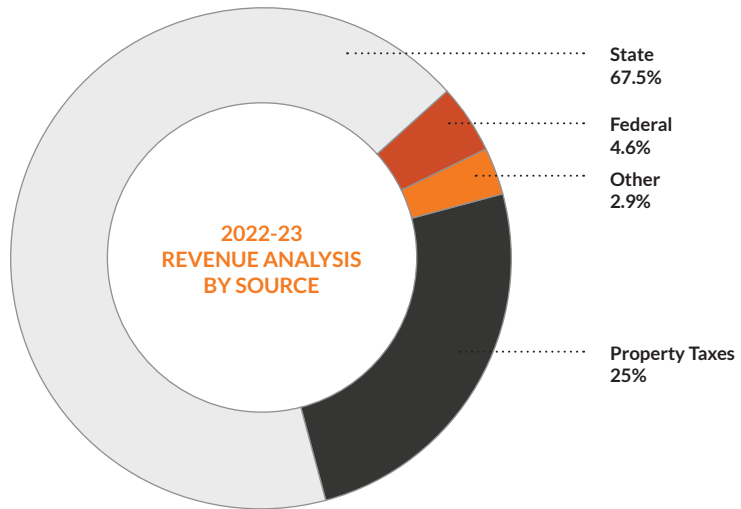
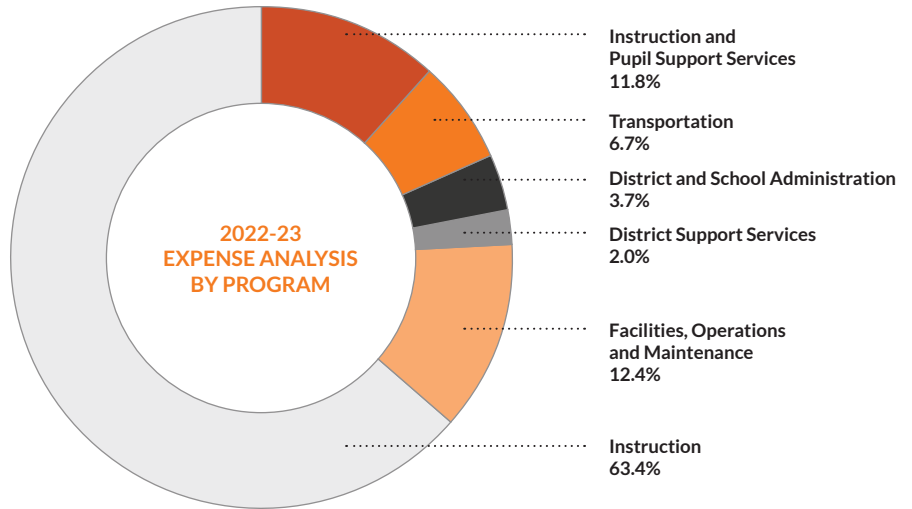


The White Bear Lake Area School District has been recognized for excellence in financial reporting for 23 consecutive years by the Association of School Business Officials and Government Finance Officers Association.

These awards are the highest form of finance recognition a governmental agency can receive.

## Partnerships

The district has many innovative partnerships with the White Bear Center for the Arts, White Bear Area YMCA, Tamarack Nature Center and many others.



Audit of 2022-23 data is in process at time of printing.



## 2023-24 DISTRICT PROFILE

The White Bear Lake Area School District serves all or parts of Birchwood, Gem Lake, Hugo, Lino Lakes, Little Canada, Maplewood, North Oaks, Vadnais Heights, White Bear Lake and White Bear Township.

### Core Values

The White Bear Lake Area School District builds quality lives and strong communities through compassion, integrity, respect, responsibility and service.

### District Mission

The mission of the White Bear Lake Area School District, the community at the forefront of educational excellence, honoring our legacy and courageously building the future, is to ensure each student realizes their unique talents and abilities, and makes meaningful contributions with local and global impact through a vital system distinguished by:

- » Students who design and create their own future
- » A culture that respects diverse people and ideas
- » Safe, nurturing, and inspiring experiences
- » Exceptional staff and families committed to student success
- » Abundant and engaged community partners

*In addition to English, students in our district speak*



- » Akan
- » Aleut
- » Amharic
- » Anuak
- » Arabic
- » Azerbaijani
- » Bosnian
- » Breton
- » Burmese
- » Chinese, Mandarin
- » Czech
- » English, Creolized
- » Farsi
- » Filipino, Pilipino
- » French
- » Ga
- » German
- » Gujarati
- » Harari
- » Hindi
- » Hmong
- » Igbo
- » Japanese
- » Karen
- » Karen, Pwo
- » Karen, S'gaw
- » Khmer, Cambodian
- » Kom
- » Korean
- » Laki
- » Lao, Laity
- » Latvian
- » Lithuanian
- » Mandar
- » Marathi
- » Nepali
- » Oromo, Afaan Oromo, Oromiffa
- » Pahlavani
- » Polish
- » Portuguese
- » Punjabi
- » Russian
- » Serbian, Herzegovina, Montenegrin
- » Sign Language, ASL
- » Somali
- » Spanish
- » Swahili, Kiswahili
- » Tagalog
- » Tamil
- » Thai
- » Tigrinya
- » Tok Pisin
- » Turkish
- » Twi
- » Ukrainian
- » Urdu
- » Vietnamese
- » Yoruba

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS 2023-24	
Free/Reduced Price Lunch	30.52%
English Language Learner	5.20%
Special Education	17.19%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.42%
Asian	8.43%
Black/African American	6.53%
Hispanic/Latino	8.66%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.05%
Two or more races	7.01%
White	68.90%

Source: District data

STUDENT ENROLLMENT 2023-24	
Early Childhood (Includes all District preschool and early childhood programs at all District locations.)	766
Elementary (Grades K-5)	3682
Middle School (Grades 6-8)	1801
High School (Grades 9-12)	2741
Transition Plus (T+) (Special Ed - ages 18-22)	42
<b>District Total K-12</b>	<b>8224</b>
<b>District Total Birth-T+</b>	<b>9032</b>

Source: District data

### School Board Meetings

January 8 .....	Regular Meeting
January 22.....	Work Session
February 12 .....	Regular Meeting
February 26 .....	Work Session
March 4 .....	Regular Meeting
March 25.....	Work Session
April 8.....	Regular Meeting
April 22.....	Work Session
May 13.....	Regular Meeting
May 20.....	Work Session
June 10 .....	Regular Meeting

- » All Board meetings begin at 5:30 p.m. and take place in the Community Room 112 at District Center (4855 Bloom Ave).
- » Agendas, Board Packets, Minutes, Highlights and Video links are posted on the District’s website as they become available.
- » Regular School Board meetings are re-broadcast on Cable Channel 20 in the local viewing area the week of a regular business meeting:
  - Wed. at 2 p.m., 6 p.m. & 9 p.m.
  - Thurs. at 10 a.m.

#### 2023-24 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

- Jessica Ellison, Chair
- Scott Arcand, Vice Chair
- Deb Beloyed, Treasurer
- Angela Thompson, Clerk
- Kathleen Daniels, Member
- Marge Newmaster, Member
- Christina Streiff Oji, Member

#### 2023-24 SCHOOL BOARD STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

- Arianna Vann-Cook
- Lydia Kleinhaus, Alternate



### WBLAHS Core Values

1. Relationships
2. Ownership
3. Awareness
4. Respect



GO BEARS // // // // // // // // // // //

Continued from cover

Principal Reetz shared his vision for cultivating a high-challenge and high-care culture around four core values: Relationships, Ownership, Awareness and Respect. We see these principles paralleled in the positive interactions we have with the Chamber and other local organizations, which is notable and is not the case in all communities.

At the heart of a successful school is the question of ownership for learning. When my classmates and I were in school (decades ago), teachers were responsible for transmitting knowledge, and students were responsible for learning and remembering facts and theories. However, today, with information at our fingertips 24/7, student ownership of learning is more important than ever. For effective learning, teachers must tap students’ intrinsic motivation and inspire them to be agents of their learning. This work is grounded in the belief that every student can shape their destiny. Today, we aspire for our students to “Design your future. Create your success.”

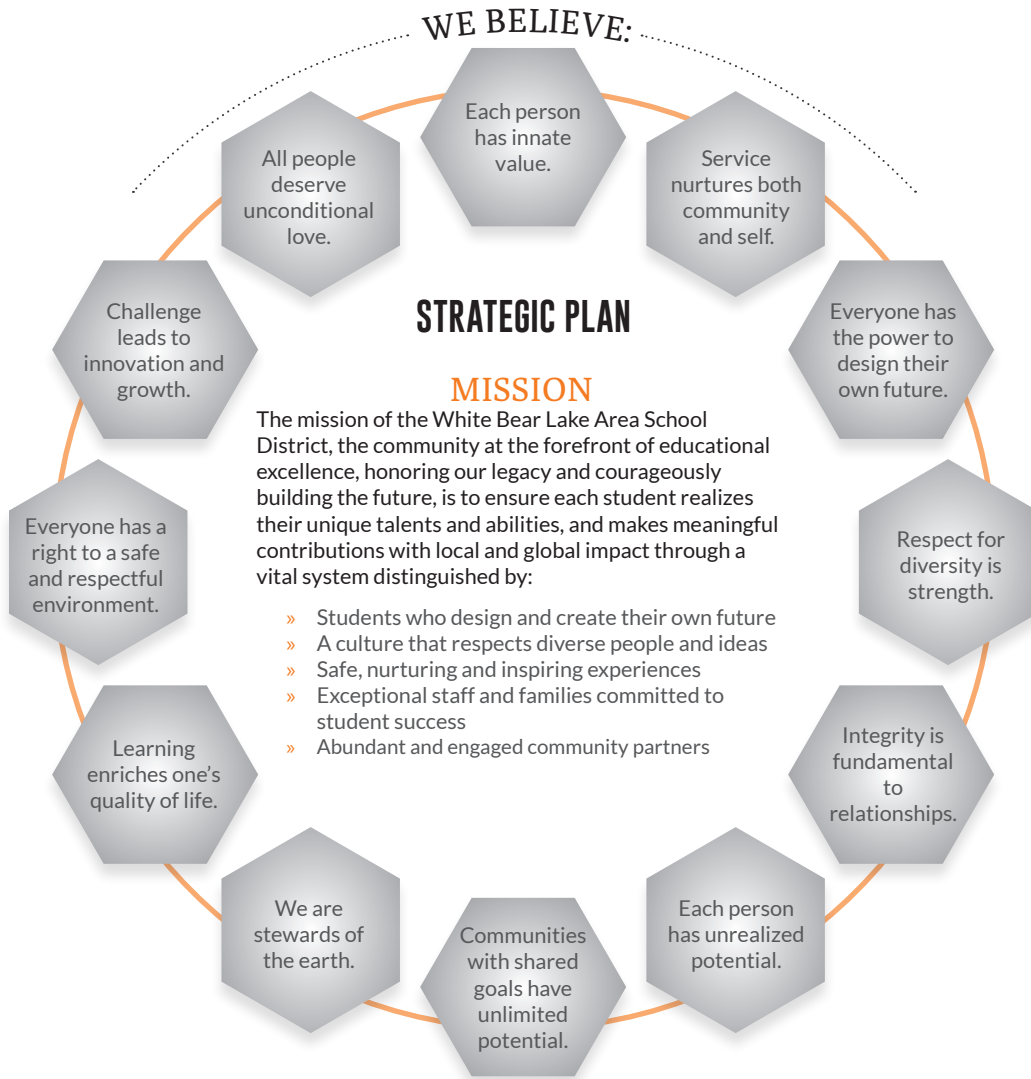
While students are the drivers of their learning, the transformation of learning also requires a collective effort among our educators, students, families and community members to create a culture of strong relationships and high expectations. Our community stepped up in 2019 and approved a referendum to renovate our schools. Today, our district is nationally recognized for the spaces we have created and, more importantly, how those spaces are transforming learning — just as we envisioned. By replacing square classrooms with open spaces and cinder blocks with glass walls, we have inspired a collaborative culture where teachers have a team of support and learning observations are welcomed. We’ve created nurturing spaces where no one is alone. We spark curiosity, see learning happening, and ensure students feel supported and challenged to reach their fullest potential.

As we continue to transform every facet of our organization, we are committed to redefining excellence and engaging our community. Thank you for being a part of this important, exciting work!

Dr. Wayne Kazmierczak, Superintendent

INNOVATE GO DISCOVER GO EMPOWER GO EXCEL  
 INSPIRE GO LEAD GO PERFORM GO SUCCEED  
 DISCOVER GO EMPOWER GO EXCEL GO  
 INSPIRE GO LEAD GO PERFORM GO SUCCEED

# MISSION & STRATEGIC PLAN



**OBJECTIVES**

- Each student meaningfully contributes to community.**
- 100% OF STUDENTS:**
- feel valued.
  - accomplish their personalized learning plan.
  - are prepared for and implement their design for their future.
  - graduate.
  - creatively adapt to an ever-changing world.

**STRATEGIES**

- WE WILL:**
- create and sustain a safe, equitable and nurturing environment.
  - promote, encourage and support students' personal learning experiences and aspirations.
  - ensure our organization continuously transforms to fulfill our mission.
  - establish healthy and vital engagement with our entire community.

**PARAMETERS**

- WE WILL:**
- make all decisions based on the best interest of the student.
  - respect the dignity and worth of each person.
  - not compromise excellence.
  - expect the best of everyone.
  - practice participatory decision-making throughout the organization.

### FREE Senior Activity Pass

More than 1,000 Senior community members (those who are age 65+) who live in the District participate in the Lifetime Activity Pass program and enjoy complimentary admission to school activities.

To request a pass, find the application at [isd624.org/SeniorActivityPass](http://isd624.org/SeniorActivityPass) and your pass will be mailed to you. If you have questions, please contact Rachael Markuson at 651-407-7563 or by email at [rachael.markuson@isd624.org](mailto:rachael.markuson@isd624.org).



### Requesting an Interpreter

Families and community members can request that a district staff member call them through the use of an interpreter who speaks the language they speak.

Information about how to make the request can be found in text and audio translations, in all languages spoken by students in the district, on the district website or at the QR code below:



### Digital Backpack

The district's Community Services Department distributes electronic flyers from the school district, as well as local organizations that offer opportunities for youth, on the first and third Thursday of each month.

The Digital Backpack and submission instructions can be found at [communityservices.isd624.org/about/digital-backpack](http://communityservices.isd624.org/about/digital-backpack).



## WE ARE HIRING!

Find info at [isd624.org/employment](http://isd624.org/employment)

Competitive wages / On the job training  
Chance to work near home / Flexible work hours  
Opportunity for: benefits, time off, holidays  
**Make a difference for kids in your community**



## Stay Connected

- E-Newsletter**  
 The Community e-Newsletter is sent out each week, with alternating text and video editions. Text editions cover student and staff successes, school and Community Education offerings, and School Board proceedings. Request to be added to the recipient list by sending an email to us at [communications@isd624.org](mailto:communications@isd624.org).
- Construction Updates**  
 Find updates about the construction projects happening throughout the district at [isd624.org/BuildingOurFuture](http://isd624.org/BuildingOurFuture).
- Stay Social**  
 Join the district's social media circles - Facebook, Twitter/X and YouTube for daily 624 Fact posts and weekly video share-outs. Find links on the District's website.



NOVATE GO DISCOVER GO EMPOWER GO EXCEL  
 NOVATE GO INSPIRE GO LEAD GO PERFORM  
 DISCOVER GO EMPOWER GO EXCEL GO  
 INSPIRE GO LEAD GO PERFORM GO SUCCEED



## Building Our Future Update

The community's support of the 2019 Building Our Future bond referendum has resulted in an impressive list of completed facilities. The next projects to be completed include final work at the current WBLAHS - South Campus, which will open as Mariner Middle School in the fall of 2024, and completion of the addition and renovation at the current WBLAHS - North Campus site to become a 9-12 high school.

Projects remaining on the horizon are Central Middle School, which broke ground and will be completed in phases, and the renovation of the current Sunrise Park Middle School to house various community programs including the Senior Center and Early Childhood programs, the Transition Education Center and district offices.

An important element of the district-wide projects has been expanded indoor and outdoor spaces for student and community activities. The WBLAHS Field House has seen its share of action since it was completed in the spring of 2023, with the indoor walking track being opened to community members, the WBLAHS track teams hosting indoor track and field meets, and a variety of camps and activities taking place at the five-court indoor space.

Ball fields projects were recently completed at the current South Campus site, and the stadium and turf fields surrounding the current North Campus have seen quite a few practices and contests, along with community use. The new courts on Bald Eagle Avenue were painted and lined to accommodate both tennis and pickleball. Changes to Price Field included replacement of the original grass with a turf field to allow for use by multiple activities and teams and a 90-degree turn of the field to run north-south, which created enough space to add an 8-lane running track.

Structural changes are visible, but changes being made to our buildings' learning environments are equally evident. Our community's engagement in Strategic Planning helped us think about how teaching and learning happen in our schools. The facilities projects we've undertaken allow us to serve students differently, using bricks and mortar to transform our students' environments and help them design their future and create their success.

Complete info about the district's facilities projects, including construction details about individual projects, videos and presentations, can be found online at [isd624.org/BuildingOurFuture](https://isd624.org/BuildingOurFuture).

## PROJECT TIMELINE

### Ready for Fall 2021

- Area Learning Center Phase 1
- Lincoln, Matoska, Vadnais Heights and Willow Lane Elementaries Updates
- New Transportation Facility
- WBLAHS - South Campus Phase 1 Gym Addition

### Ready for Fall 2022

- Birch Lake, Lakeaires, and Otter Lake Elementaries Updates
- North Star Elementary (New Elementary School)
- WBLAHS - South Campus Phase 2 Addition

### Ready for Fall 2023

- Area Learning Center Phase 2
- Oneka Elementary Updates

### Ready for Fall 2024

- WBLAHS opens to grades 9-12 at the current WBLAHS - North Campus location
- Current WBLAHS - South Campus opens as Mariner Middle School
- Central Middle School Phase 1 updates

### Ready for Fall 2025

- Central Middle School Phase 2 updates
- Current Sunrise Park Middle houses Early Childhood Center, District Services Center, Senior Center and Transition Education Center





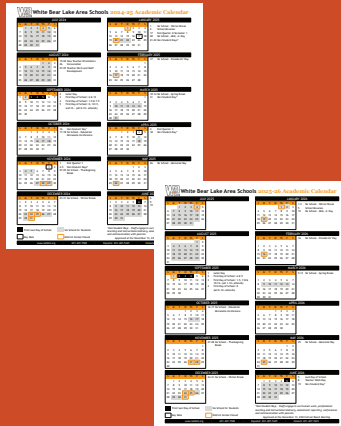
Community members are invited to stop by for an informal chat with Superintendent Kazmierczak over a cup of coffee.

Find us at Caribou Coffee in Downtown White Bear Lake:  
 - Feb. 22, 2024 - 12-1 p.m.  
 - May 7, 2024 - 7:30-8:30 a.m.

### Calendars Approved

The School Board recently approved the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic calendars.

Electronic versions are available at [isd624.org/about/calendar](http://isd624.org/about/calendar).



## IMPORTANT DATES

- » **DEC. 21 - JAN. 1**  
NO SCHOOL  
(Winter Break)
- » **JANUARY**  
WELCOME TO WHITE BEAR MONTH  
**JAN. 15**  
NO SCHOOL  
(MLK, Jr. Day)
- » **JAN. 24**  
END OF QTR 2/SEM 1
- » **JAN. 25 & 26**  
NO SCHOOL  
(Teacher PD Days)
- » **FEB. 9**  
NO SCHOOL  
(Teacher PD Day)
- » **FEB. 19**  
NO SCHOOL  
(Presidents' Day)
- » **FEB. 22**  
COFFEE WITH DR. K  
12-1 p.m. at Downtown WBL Caribou Coffee
- » **MARCH 11-15**  
NO SCHOOL  
(Spring Break)
- » **MARCH 29**  
NO SCHOOL  
(Teacher PD Day)
- » **APRIL 5**  
END OF QTR 3
- » **APRIL 22**  
NO SCHOOL  
(Teacher PD Day)
- » **MAY 7**  
COFFEE WITH DR. K  
7:30-8:30 a.m. at Downtown WBL Caribou Coffee
- » **MAY 27**  
NO SCHOOL  
(Memorial Day)
- » **JUNE 6**  
LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

**WELCOME TO  
WHITE  
BEAR**

January 2024

## Get to know us!

While all are welcome to visit our schools any time, there will be special opportunities in January for families to learn more about our schools!

[isd624.org/Welcome](http://isd624.org/Welcome)

Check out the website to find opportunities to learn more about each of our educational programs:

- Elementary
- Middle School
- High School

Early Childhood program registration information will be available later in the spring.

# GO DISCOVER.

GO EMPOWER GO EXCEL GO EXPLORE GO INNOVATE GO IGNITE GO LEAD  
GO PERFORM GO SUCCEED GO BEARS GO ACHIEVE GO GREAT

*Design Your Future.  
Create Your Success.*

FOLLOW WHITE BEAR LAKE  
AREA SCHOOLS

f X YouTube /isd624

**Translations:**

Para Español por favor llame al 651-407-7625

Xav tau ntawv Hmoob hu rau 651-407-7623



## WHY BE A BEAR?

### *Benefits of being a BEAR:*

- Student-centered instruction. We believe all students grow and learn in different ways and at different rates, all can achieve.
- More academic opportunities to explore interests, excel and design your future.
- Students are agents and owners of their own learning in an environment that is safe, supportive and challenging — with high expectations for student success.
- Our educators inspire, facilitate, and challenge students, nurturing curiosity and confidence. We provide a window to their future.
- We are transforming learning. Our flexible learning spaces and learning studios ignite opportunities for communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.

**APPLY  
TODAY**



White Bear Lake Area Schools