

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

Be seen. Be heard. Be bold.



Watch the Video
Visit the SoWashCo Schools
YouTube channel to watch a
video about the collaboration.

Empowering Employees: Great Rivers and Andersen Collabo- rate on Workplace English Program

Great Rivers Adult Education Consortium and Andersen Corporation partnered to create the “English at Work” program for Andersen employees. Launched in 2019 at Renewal by Andersen in Cottage Grove, the program has since expanded to other plants nationwide. It provides English language classes during work hours, helping employees develop essential communication skills.

“For us, good communication also means being able to communicate in English, so we offer English courses for our employees,” said Lydia Moua, Senior Learning Development Consultant with Andersen Corporation.

The partnership with Great Rivers has been crucial, as Andersen doesn’t have in-house English instructors. Great Rivers teaches skills that make students more employable and successful in the workplace, such as reading and writing, understanding digital technology and listening and speaking in English.

“We can create curriculum that is specific to that manufacturer and their business that enables their employees to thrive and gives them the opportunity to level up in their careers,” said Susie Evans, Program Manager for Great Rivers.

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Watch for Children

As the school year begins, please remember to watch for kids getting on and off the bus or walking or biking to school. Last school year, the stop arm cameras on our fleet of school buses caught **512 violations of vehicles not stopping when the stop arm lights were activated.** Drivers who violate the law could face serious penalties.





Dear South Washington County Community Members,

We are excited to begin another school year and are soaking up the last moments of summer. On September 4, we will welcome students back to school (Sept. 3 for students in grades 6 and 9) and are looking forward to getting into the routine of having students fill up our schools with a hustle and a bustle. SoWashCo Schools is the sixth-largest school district in Minnesota and we will be welcoming approximately 18,900 students to our schools this fall.

As you drive by our schools, you will start to notice that we will be breaking ground on several construction projects that will expand and improve learning spaces in some of our schools. This important work was made possible by the generous voters in our district last fall. We are so grateful and hope you will follow along on our progress by visiting sowashco.org/construction.

Our big district work in classrooms will focus on literacy. Literacy includes reading, writing, listening and discussing. While there are many priorities and items on our plates, literacy remains, "the priority!" We will be investing in a lot of professional learning for staff to become better teachers of literacy, with the outcome of improving the performance of our students.

While kids are learning in school, there are many other opportunities offered in our communities. We have a dedicated team that has put together classes and activities for people of all ages to enjoy through SoWashCo Community Education. There is something for everyone! Please take time to look through our fall catalog at commed.sowashco.org/catalog.

SoWashCo Schools is grateful for the support of the communities we serve and we look forward to sharing more about our important work throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Julie Nielsen

Julie Nielsen, Superintendent

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Pictured: Nai M.

The program benefits both employees and the company. Workers gain confidence, improve communication with colleagues and supervisors, and develop skills that can lead to career growth. For Andersen, the program fosters a more inclusive and diverse workplace, enhances employee performance, and boosts retention.

Nai M., a graduate of the program, advanced from Manufacturing Associate to Team Lead at Renewal by Andersen. He credits the English classes with providing the confidence and skills that helped him succeed.

Moua concludes, "We're so thankful for a partnership like this with Great Rivers because it really helps us to be able to empower our employees and grows bigger than who we are as a company."

Great Rivers Adult Education Consortium is a partnership between South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools) and Hastings Public Schools. To learn more visit commed.sowashco.org/greatrivers.



Pictured left to right: Woodbury Elementary Kids Club students and Ms. Terri work on a puzzle. Bailey Elementary Kids Club students gather around Ms. Heidi.



Kids Club Programs Achieve I-SAC Accreditation

Woodbury Elementary School (WES) and Bailey Elementary School (BES) Kids Club programs have achieved Ignite's School Age Care (I-SAC) Accreditation from Ignite Afterschool. This premier certification recognizes high-quality school-aged care in Minnesota.

"We are extremely proud of our Bailey and Woodbury Kids Club staff and the Kids Club leadership team," said Amy Brengman, Out-of-School Time Program Manager.

Research shows high-quality programming positively impacts children's school attendance, behavior and academics, while also strengthening skills in communication, teamwork, resiliency and self-esteem.

Additional Kids Club sites will begin the I-SAC accreditation process during the 2024-25 school year. SoWashCo Schools is committed to providing high-quality school-age child care. All SoWashCo Schools Kids Club sites are certified by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and participate in a continuous program improvement process focused on quality goals. Learn more at sowashco.org/kidsclub.

Back to School



Elementary Assessment Days

Before the school year begins, families can sign their K-5 student(s) up for an individual 30-minute session with their teacher at their school. This gives each student and their teacher time to connect and get familiar with the student's skill level, the classroom and the school.

Assessment days are offered Friday, Aug. 23, or Tuesday, Sept. 3. Schools will provide more information through email to families.



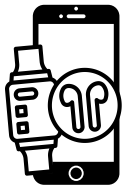
Physical and Immunization Requirements for the Start of School

SoWashCo Schools requires all students to be current with required immunizations and physicals or have a valid exemption form on file with the district. Students not compliant with state law will be excluded from school in October.

To view requirements, find the exempt form or for help finding free or low-cost clinics, visit sowashco.org/health.

Transportation Updates

SoWashCo Schools will have bus route information posted in Campus Parent Portal accounts starting Aug. 27. Families will also receive a postcard confirming your child's busing status. If you need assistance with bus routes please call 651-425-5303 or visit sowashco.org/transportation.



Cell Phone and Electronic Device Guidelines

Starting this school year there are new guidelines regarding cell phones and E-devices.

ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL (K-8)

"Away for the Day": Cell phones and E-devices are not allowed during the school day.

HIGH SCHOOL (9-12)

"Time and Place": Cell phone use is not allowed in classrooms/instructional spaces, including the media center. Cell phone use is allowed during passing time, at lunch, before and after school.

To view the full guidance, including the benefits of limiting cell phone and E-device use at school, visit sowashco.org/families/cell-phones.

Apply for Educational Benefits

Every family with children enrolled in SoWashCo Schools is encouraged to apply for Educational Benefits. **A new application must be submitted every year.**

Households that qualify will receive discounted or free services in and out of school. **Even if you don't think your family will qualify, your completed application could provide additional funding for your child's school!**

Learn more at sowashco.org/edbenefits.



School supply lists for grades K-5 and 6-8 are available at sowashco.org/schoolsupplies

NOTE: High school students will be informed during the first week of school of any supplies needed for class.



Early Childhood Screening is Recommended at Age 3

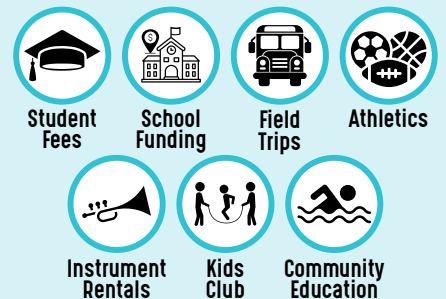
Early Childhood Screening is a free and simple check of how your child is growing and developing. Screening is recommended at age 3 and is required by the State of Minnesota for any child entering kindergarten in a public school.

Why screen at age 3?

- Find out how your child is growing and developing
- Have more time to provide support if needed
- Get connected to early education programs and resources
- Take care of it before Kindergarten begins

If your child has not yet been screened and is between the ages of 3 and 5, please call the Early Learning office to schedule an appointment at 651-425-6175 or visit sowashco.org/screening.

Benefits In School



Benefits Out of School



Apply in SchoolCafé

Learn more at sowashco.org | 3

SoWashCo

SCHOOLS

Family Calendar | 2024-2025 School Year

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| AUGUST 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 | SEPTEMBER 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 | OCTOBER 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 | NOVEMBER 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 |
| DECEMBER 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 | JANUARY 2025 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 | FEBRUARY 2025 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 | MARCH 2025 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 |
| APRIL 2025 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 | MAY 2025 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 | JUNE 2025 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 | JULY 2025 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 |

First or Last Day of School
No School for Students (K-12)
Important Date

| IMPORTANT DATES | | | |
|--|-----------------|--|------------|
| Event Information | Grades | Event Information | Grades |
| AUGUST | | JANUARY | |
| 29 Assessment Day | K-5 | 1-3 No School - Winter Break | K-12 |
| SEPTEMBER | | 20 No School - MLK Jr. Day | K-12 |
| 3 First Day of School | 6, 9 | FEBRUARY | |
| 3 Assessment Day | K-5 | 14 No School - Professional Development | K-5 |
| 4 First Day of School | K-5, 7-8, 10-12 | 14 Complete Schoolwork at Home Day | 6-12 |
| 30 No School | K-12 | 17 No School - Presidents Day | K-12 |
| OCTOBER | | MARCH | |
| 16 No School | K-8 | 7 End of Trimester 2 | K-12 |
| 16 Pre-ACT and Practice ACT Testing | 10, 11 | 10-14 No School - Spring Break | K-12 |
| 16 Complete Schoolwork at Home Day | 9, 12 | 17 No School - Teacher Workday | K-12 |
| 17-18 No School - Fall Break (MEA) | K-12 | APRIL | |
| NOVEMBER | | 1 MCA, Seal of Biliteracy Testing | 10, 11, 12 |
| 5 No School - Professional Development | K-5 | 1 Complete Schoolwork at Home Day | 9, 10, 12 |
| 5 Complete Schoolwork at Home Day | 6-12 | 18 No School - Employee Holiday | K-12 |
| 26 End of Trimester 1 | K-12 | 21 No School - Professional Development | K-12 |
| 27 No School - Teacher Workday | K-12 | 22 ACT and Science MCA Testing | 9-12 |
| 28-29 No School - Employee Holiday | K-12 | 22 Complete Schoolwork at Home Day (if not participating in testing) | 9-12 |
| DECEMBER | | MAY | |
| 2 No School - Professional Development | K-12 | 23 No School - Professional Development | K-12 |
| 23-31 No School - Winter Break | K-12 | 26 No School - Memorial Day Holiday | K-12 |
| | | JUNE | |
| | | 4 Last Day of School, End of Trimester 3 | K-12 |

Last Updated: May 7, 2024

Calendar dates are subject to change. Please visit sowashco.org/calendar for updates.



SoWashCo Community Education Provided Over \$75,760 in Youth Fee Assistance

SoWashCo Community Education works to make classes and activities accessible to everyone. Our programs and activities improve quality of life by encouraging ongoing learning, personal growth, and social interaction. When young people are involved in regular, high-quality learning experiences, their families, schools, and communities benefit.

Our Youth Financial Assistance Fund helps lower the cost of activities for families in need who live within the SoWashCo Schools boundaries. Last year, our program supported 743 youth programs and provided over \$75,760 in financial aid. These programs included Driver Education, ACT Prep, gymnastics, swim lessons, middle school athletics, robotics and more.

Families can ask for up to \$250 per student each school year to help cover fees. To receive fee assistance, families must apply and qualify for Educational Benefits.

Learn more or donate at commed.sowashco.org/financial-aid.



Pictured left to right: Gymnastics students practice walking on the beam. A student builds a robot.



Pictured: Valley Crossing Elementary Kids Club students and staff standing in front of Skoolie with donation boxes filled with school supplies.

Kids Club Gives Back to SoWashCo CARES

Over the summer, Kids Club students and staff at Cottage Grove, Bailey, Middleton, and Valley Crossing elementary schools organized service projects to support SoWashCo CARES Education Foundation. Kids Club is a child care program offered by SoWashCo Schools that helps students in grades K-5 learn and grow before and after school, on non-school days, and during the summer.

Service learning is an important part of the Kids Club curriculum. Each season, students and staff at each site plan and carry out projects to give back to the community and help those in need.

This summer, each site chose to collect books or school supplies to donate to SoWashCo CARES, a community-led nonprofit that supports students, staff, and community members in South Washington County. The organization will distribute these items to families in need throughout the year.

Learn more about Kids Club by visiting sowashco.org/kidsclub. Discover how you can support SoWashCo CARES at sowashcocares.org.

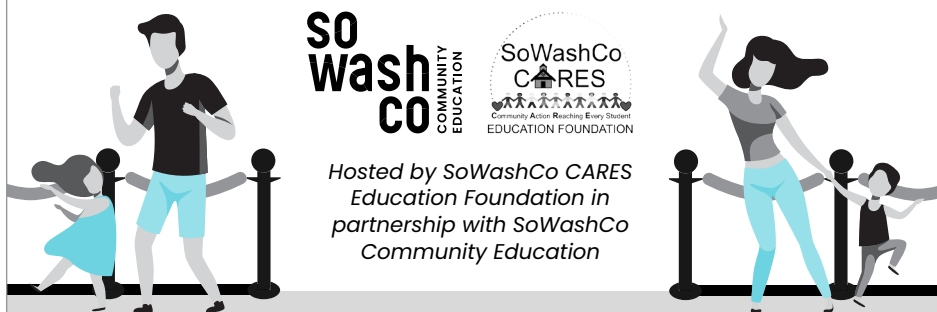


Pictured: German family, owners of 328 Grill in St. Paul Park, drop off school supply donation at Cottage Grove Elementary.

VIP Red Carpet Dance

5-8 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 2 • Oltman Middle School

Family-friendly | Snacks | Raffle | Crafts | Balloon Sculptures | Dancing



Hosted by SoWashCo CARES Education Foundation in partnership with SoWashCo Community Education

Join Us for a Fun-Filled Fundraising Event

Hosted By SoWashCo CARES Education Foundation and SoWashCo Community Education!

The VIP Red Carpet Dance will be held from 5-8 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 2, at Oltman Middle School. This family-friendly event is for children ages 3 and up, accompanied by an adult. Enjoy a raffle, crafts, balloon sculptures, face painting, and dancing!

Tickets are \$35 for one adult and one child, with additional tickets available for \$10 per person. All proceeds benefit the Youth Financial Assistance Fund. [Purchase tickets at bit.ly/swcVIP24](http://bit.ly/swcVIP24).



Register for Fall Community Education Classes at sowashco.ce.eleyo.com

Learn more at sowashco.org | 5



Securing Our Future.

Supporting Our Students.



*Pictured:
Rendering of the draft design concept for the
Secured Entrance at Park High School.*

Construction Updates

Over the past year, architects have met with design teams to form the design work for the additions and renovations at the secondary schools.

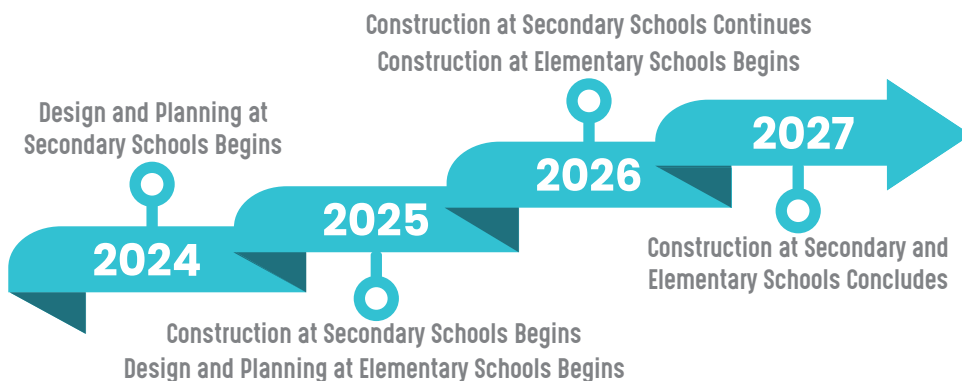
Drafts of design concepts for Oltman and Woodbury middle schools and East Ridge, Park and Woodbury high schools are available to view online. Design drafts for Lake and Cottage Grove middle schools will be available later this year.

After the design phase is completed for each project, construction permits for the work will be secured and the request for proposals (RFP) bidding process for the construction will begin.

The first projects slated to “break ground” are East Ridge High School and Oltman Middle School. They are both tentatively scheduled to begin construction in April of 2025. The start and end of the construction schedule will be determined by frost.

In early 2025 the design process will begin for Bailey, Grey Cloud and Pine Hill elementary schools.

Learn more at sowashco.org/construction.



Project Design Concepts

Design concept drafts were developed from user group feedback. All design concepts are drafts and are subject to change. To learn more and view Interactive floor plans and renderings visit sowashco.org/construction.

Park High School

- Additions and renovations should reduce the current ‘institutional’ aesthetic and be more welcoming
- Kitchen and cafeteria should be able to serve future student population growth
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) expansion should support future growth of curricular offerings
- Creation of secure entry and consolidated Administration and Student Services

East Ridge High School

- Additions to match the existing building interior and exterior aesthetic
- Kitchen and cafeteria should be able to serve future student population growth
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) expansion should support future growth of curricular offerings
- Moving toward departmental clusters design

Woodbury High School

- Main office in center of student activity with Student Services directly above
- Creating department-based organization in building
- Kitchen/Cafeteria relationships
- Media Center – large group gathering space, conference rooms and storage

Oltman Middle School

- Cafeteria / Kitchen / Served expansion
- 2 story classroom addition to include 2 STEM classrooms, 1 multi-purpose classroom, 3 science classrooms, 9 general classrooms, 2 medium group rooms and flex / pod space

Woodbury Middle School

- Creation of secure entry and moving of main office
- Music suite renovations and creation of a third music room
- Conversion to multi-purpose space
- Create new bus road to revise traffic flow for safety

Cottage Grove and Lake Middle Schools

Design and planning work began this year and concepts should be available in late 2024.

SoWashCo Voices

Why is literacy important?

"Literacy is so important to learn about places and people and events, to think creatively, to learn about how to write and how to express your own ideas."

TIP: "Make reading a part of your day, every single day."

Kris Scallon
Coordinator of Extended Learning (former)



Pictured:
SoWashCo
summer school
students and staff.

"If we have questions we can seek the answers by reading and understanding."

TIP: "Read for fun. Don't just read because you have to."

Kim Doublin
Bus Driver

"The more we can create a literate society, the more we can create connections between us."

TIP: "Connect learning and skill development with things [you're] interested in."

Tim Hoffman
Assistant Principal,
Cottage Grove Middle School

"In everyday life [literacy is] important!"

TIP: "Practice makes perfect."

Jenny Rinnels
Assistant Cook Manager,
Nutrition Services

"[Literacy] is such an important tool to be able to grow. The deeper literacy goes, the easier that growth is for our students."

TIP: "Keep exposing yourself to what you're interested in."

Heather Moreno
Arts Specialist,
Bailey Elementary

"Literacy...is empowering and it's liberating."

TIP: "Make literacy fun by gamefying it."

Elliot Vang
Cultural Liaison

SoWashCo Schools New Faces



Jake Winchell
Director of
Community
Education

Why is Community Education an important asset to everyone who lives in South Washington County?

Community Education works hard to connect the community with resources and experiences that will enrich their daily lives. No matter your age or abilities, we have something for everyone. We strive to help better the lives of all in the communities we serve. We also work to connect the community with the school district. Not everyone has children in the school system, so providing different methods for the community to get inside our buildings and see the great things going on within them is important.

In your role, how do you plan to make an impact in the community?

I look forward to impacting the community with high quality programs and services that SoWashCo Community Education has become known for. As needs and desires change, it is our responsibility to change with the community and continue to develop as a program as well. Our staff have worked hard to identify needs within the South Washington County, which the community will see with partnerships with community organizations, expanded early childhood opportunities and much more.

What do you enjoy most about Community Education? There is so much to enjoy about the work we do. I got my start working in Community Education because of my desire to work with children and that still might be what I enjoy most. While I am not working directly with children in my role, being able to visit Kids Club sites, preschool classrooms, athletic activities and more, I get to see the smiles and the positive experiences the children are receiving.

What is something you want the community to know about you? I live in Cannon Falls with my wife, our four children and our dog, Grover. Prior to SoWashCo Schools, I was in Bloomington as their Director of Community Education. I am thrilled to be a part of SoWashCo Community Education and consider myself very lucky to be a part of this district and the communities we serve.

Jennifer Marty

Principal of Royal Oaks Elementary
Jennifer Marty is now the principal of Royal Oaks Elementary (ROES). Before taking on this new role, Ms. Marty was the assistant principal at Bailey Elementary School. She is looking forward to working closely with ROES families and the community.



Sandy Saucedo-Falagan

Principal of Nuevas Fronteras Spanish Immersion School (NFSI)
Sandra Saucedo-Falagan is the new principal of Nuevas Fronteras Spanish Immersion School (NFSI). Ms. Saucedo-Falagan has held several positions within SoWashCo Schools and most recently worked at Spring Lake Park Schools. Ms. Saucedo-Falagan is excited to build connections with NFSI families, staff and the community.



Justin Ellevold

Principal of Cottage Grove Middle School
Justin Ellevold has been named the principal of Cottage Grove Middle School (CGMS). Mr. Ellevold is no stranger to CGMS having served as the assistant principal since 2018. He is looking forward to strengthening his relationship with students, staff and the CGMS community in his new role.





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For more information visit sowashco.org



age 50+

Member Celebration and Resource Fair

Community, activities,
resources and fun!

Sponsored by:



Join Us for the Age 50+ Member Celebration and Resource Fair on Sept. 30

SoWashCo Community Education is hosting a member celebration and resource fair on **Monday, Sept. 30 from 10-11:30 a.m. at the District Program Center, 8400 E Point Douglas Rd. S in Cottage Grove.** Stop by to learn about activities for adults age 50+, meet our staff, discover local resources and sign up for a membership.

Members of our Age 50+ program enjoy a variety of free or low-cost programming and members-only discounts.
A membership is just \$20 per year. Sign up online or at the event.



Scan the QR code
to sign up or visit
bit.ly/Age50Join

Woodbury High School
CELEBRATING **50**
YEARS



Woodbury High School Celebrates 50 Years of Learning

Woodbury High School (WHS) is celebrating 50 years since it first opened its doors to students. A referendum to build Woodbury High School passed in April 1973 and the building opened in 1975.

WHS is asking alumni, community members and businesses to share memories, pictures and artifacts to display and share. We also want to recognize significant community members who have graduated from WHS.

We have information on how you can help or how to share memories or items on our website, whs.sowashco.org.