

school  
district  
scoop.

(See it here first.)



5901 Sunnyfield Road  
Minnetrista, MN 55364

Nonprofit  
Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
MOUND, MN  
PERMIT NO. 51

ECRWSS  
POSTAL CUSTOMER

# headlines & happenings



WELCOME TO THE FALL 2022 ISSUE OF THE WESTONKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER. WE’VE HAD A GREAT START TO THE SCHOOL YEAR, AND WE’RE EXCITED FOR WHAT’S NEXT!

## Westonka Public Schools earns Top 10 state rankings

SchoolDigger has ranked Westonka Public Schools as the No. 7 school district in the state out of 446 Minnesota districts. The rankings were calculated based on 2022 math, reading and science Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) scores. Additionally, Westonka ranks 10th in the state on Niche’s “2023 Best School Districts in Minnesota” list, which uses state test scores, college readiness and reviews.

## Westonka has lowest total school taxes in Hennepin County

With the lowest total school property taxes in Hennepin County and test scores consistently among the top in the state, Westonka Schools continue to be a great return on your investment. (Source: School Tax Report Payable 2022)

## Westonka gets ‘clean’ audit report

Auditors at the October 2022 Westonka School Board meeting gave the district an unqualified or “clean” opinion—the best opinion a district can receive. Westonka currently has an unassigned fund balance of \$3,116,203, or 9.04% of general fund expenditures, and has further dedicated dollars to maintaining low class sizes in order to help recover pandemic learning losses.

## White Hawks football, boys soccer teams are conference champs

The Mound Westonka High School football and boys soccer teams claimed their respective conference/district championships this fall. Follow White Hawks sports and activities online at [www.westonkawhitehawks.org](http://www.westonkawhitehawks.org) and on Twitter @GoWhiteHawks.

## New members inducted into Mound Westonka Athletic Hall of Fame

The Mound Westonka High School Athletic Hall of Fame Class of 2022 was officially inducted September 23 at a morning ceremony at the Westonka Performing Arts Center. On hand to receive their awards were: Dave Eiss, class of 1960; Rachel (Foley) Weyer, class of 2002; Pat Furlong, coach; and Jim Halvarson, coach and class of 1980. Accepting on behalf of former Activities Director Larry Exel, who passed away in 2006, were his wife, Sharon, daughter Kathleen Lomar Exel and granddaughter Maggs Lomar Exel.



# performing arts center calendar

october 23	<b>Cantus “Song of the Universal”</b>	Join premier men’s vocal ensemble Cantus for a journey exploring the connections to the divine through oneself and the ineffable alike.
november 11-12, 18-20	<b>“Oliver!”</b> Presented by MWHS Theatre	Students from both Mound Westonka High School and Grandview Middle School will perform the beloved coming-of-age musical based on the 1838 Charles Dickens novel.
november 25	<b>“An Intimate Christmas with Lorie Line”</b>	Spend an intimate evening with Lorie Line this holiday season. Share beautiful music and funny and heartwarming stories, all centered around the piano.
december 17-18	<b>“The Nutcracker Sweet”</b> Presented by WestMet Classical Training	Don’t miss this holiday classic (with a twist!) presented by Minnesota’s newest elite classical training dance school in Long Lake.
december 19	<b>“Christmas with Cantus: Into the Light”</b>	Cantus offers a thoughtful, intricately crafted holiday program that honors tradition and speaks to the moment.

Purchase tickets for upcoming shows at [www.westonkapac.com/tickets](http://www.westonkapac.com/tickets)



# facilities review

## Ongoing facilities review of Westonka district

The Westonka School Board Facilities Committee spent much of the past year conducting a review of facilities needs across the school district. Areas of study included: facility maintenance, grade configuration, Early Learning Center expansion (Phase II), building/campus security, building capacities, design of educational space to support 21st Century Learners, and activity space.

To aid in this process, the school board called for an updated demographic study to help project enrollment and to ensure the district understands the capacity of its buildings.

## Demographic study shows decade of stable enrollment

A 2022 demographic study predicts that the Westonka district will have stable to slightly increasing enrollment over the next 10 years. District enrollment is projected to increase from 2,373 students in 2021-22 to 2,379-2,454 students (increase of 6-81 students) in 2031-32. These projections indicate that Westonka should have sufficient classroom space to accommodate enrollment in the near term.

The School Board Facilities Committee believes that the appropriate time to further explore the expansion of early learning and/or K-12 grade reconfiguration will be at a time when overall enrollment requires the district to add space to support students. This will ensure that these areas of focus can be examined in a comprehensive way that will have lasting value to Westonka students and the community.



# community research

## IN AUGUST 2022, WESTONKA CONDUCTED A COMMUNITY SURVEY TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE PERCEPTIONS OF DISTRICT RESIDENTS

### Community survey shows strong support for district, facilities areas of focus

With the results of the demographic study, the Westonka School Board called for a community survey to help better understand the attitudes and opinions of residents of the Westonka School District and to gauge the level of support for the remaining four areas studied by the facilities committee:

- 1. **Facility maintenance** - *Deferred maintenance improvements across all district schools to address aging infrastructure (schools built between 1951 and 1972), including HVAC, pipes, boilers, etc.*
- 2. **Building/campus security** - *Security improvements in all buildings, including the addition of a secured entrance at Grandview Middle School.*
- 3. **Design of educational space to support 21st Century Learners** - *Improvements including the interior redesign of Mound Westonka High School to increase security and improve the functionality and learning environment for students.*
- 4. **Activity space** - *Outdoor activity space improvements on the high school campus, expanding opportunities for activities participants and improving safety and accessibility.*

While the purpose of the survey was to collect general community opinions and did not include any finalized project proposals, residents indicated support for the district overall, as well as support for the communicated facility areas of focus. View the survey results at [www.westonka.k12.mn.us/schoolboard](http://www.westonka.k12.mn.us/schoolboard).

95%

Rate the quality of education at Westonka Public Schools as “good” or “excellent”

74%

Would support a property tax increase for the interior redesign of Mound Westonka High School

# teacher spotlight

Five Westonka Teacher of the Year candidates were recognized last spring for their exceptional commitment to student learning: Lyndsay Geyen from Westonka Early Learning, Mara Drill from Hilltop Primary School, Jodie Rasicot from Shirley Hills Primary School, Bailey Fowler from Grandview Middle School, and Amy DiGaudio from Mound Westonka High School.



## 2022 Westonka Teacher of the Year Mara Drill Second Grade, Hilltop Primary School

“As a teacher, Mara may leave the building at the end of each day, but she never stops thinking about her students and what they truly need to succeed. She is an idea seeker and implementer. If a student is struggling to be a stronger reader, she seeks out any strategy possible that will help them improve ... She simply cannot rest until the student is making the gains needed to be a strong, independent thinker.”

—Michael Moch, Hilltop Primary School principal

# hands-on learning

## The Pathways Program expands vocational opportunities for Mound Westonka High School students

Westonka Public Schools has made long-term investments to provide curriculum and opportunities that match students’ interests and abilities. Through the Pathways Program housed at Hennepin Technical College, junior and senior Mound Westonka High School students have opportunities to explore a wide range of career courses, covering everything from auto body repair to culinary arts.

MWHS junior Madison Roberts is currently enrolled in the nursing assistant program through Pathways. After completing the program, Roberts can sit for her certified nurse assistant (CNA) exam and can immediately begin exploring employment opportunities. “I enjoy that this is a very hands-on course that allows me to experience and practice situations that would happen in my future nursing career,” said Roberts.

