



BEAR'S BULLETIN

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



WELCOME TO THE
WINTER 2025-26
EDITION

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BE A BEAR!
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/isd624

FOLLOW WHITE BEAR LAKE
AREA SCHOOLS

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Celebrating Student Success and Community Connections

As students have settled into their school-year routines, we're finding many reasons to celebrate success and connection across White Bear Lake Area Schools.

At recent School Board meetings, we've had the honor of recognizing outstanding student achievements at the state and national levels for success in athletics and activities. Academic accolades have also been highlighted, with more than 130 current students and members of the Class of 2025 being celebrated for their accomplishments in the Advanced Placement (AP) program.

Two students also reached the prestigious semi-finalist level in the ongoing National Merit Scholarship process, and one of our current students earned a perfect 36 on the ACT - an achievement reached by just 0.22% of test takers nationwide.

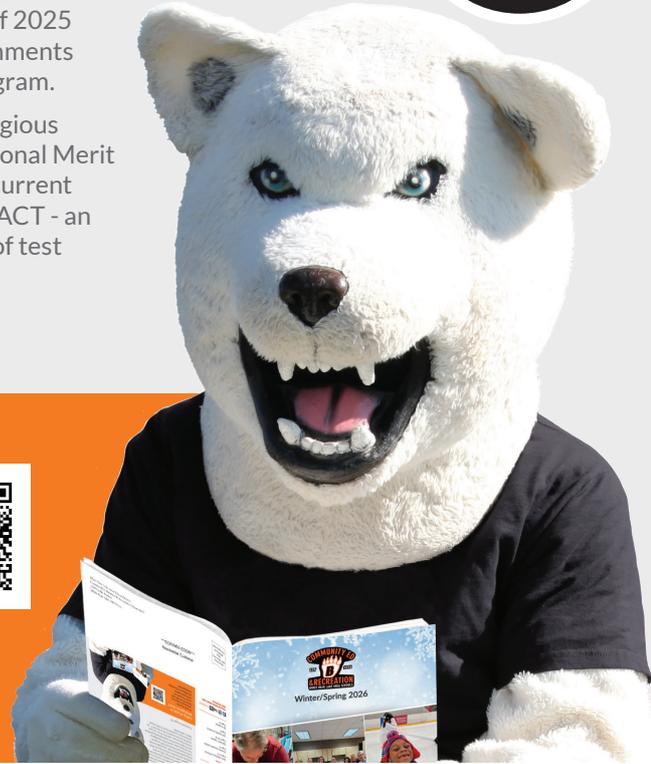
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TRANSLATIONS

Para Español por favor
llame al 651-407-7625

Xav tau ntawv Hmoob
hu rau 651-407-7623

FLIP TO SEE
COMMUNITY
EDUCATION &
RECREATION
CATALOG



Calling all 2026-27 Kindergarten Bears!

Provide the info requested in the form found at this QR code so we can send you information about enrolling as an incoming kindergartner!



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White Bear Lake Area School District
Community Education & Recreation Department
2399 Cedar Avenue
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

STUDENT GROWTH & PROFICIENCY

Early Childhood

Our District offers a diverse range of early childhood education options from family education, vibrant preschool programming and nature-based learning experiences. We partner with our early childhood special education team to provide support and services for our preschool students with exceptional needs. We are recognized as a 4-star Parent Aware preschool program, the highest rating possible in Minnesota.

Elementary

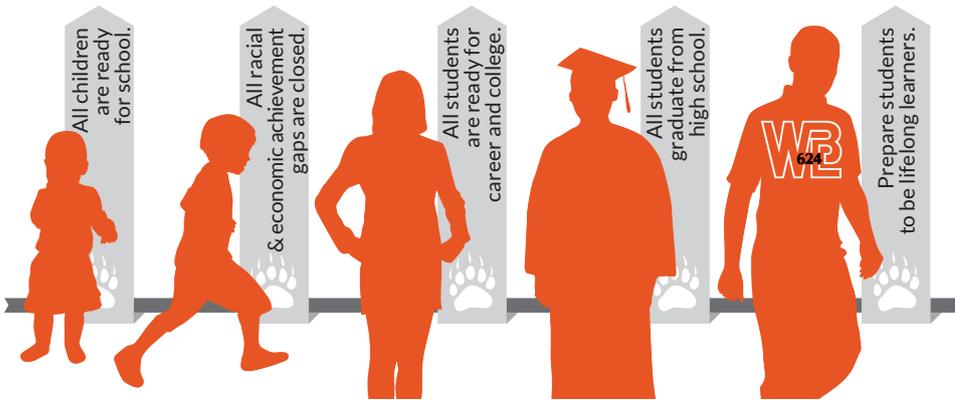
Our elementary students are assessed regularly in reading, math, and science using a variety of grade-level appropriate tools. To measure their progress against state standards, we utilize MCA tests. Students who need additional support or an added challenge receive personalized instruction.

Middle School

Middle school teachers and counselors use the MCA test, along with other data, to guide students in course selection. Instruction is personalized to meet the individual needs of each student.

High School

High school teachers assess students regularly using common assessments in each subject. Students also take nationally-normed tests like the PreACT, PSAT, and ACT at various points in their high school career. Counselors and teachers utilize this data, combined with knowledge of individual student goals and motivation, to help students select from a wide range of course offerings, including more than 250 courses and nine career pathways.



In addition to MCA data, White Bear Lake Area Schools utilizes a variety of local academic measures, including academic and social-emotional screeners, PreACT, ACT, and academic grades and credits, to apprise student progress.

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).

2024-25 WBLAS MCA COMPARISON TO STATE AVERAGES			
	State	WBLAS	WBLAS compared to State
Reading	49.5%	52.2%	+2.7% pt
Mathematics	45.0%	48.3%	+3.3% pt
Science*	25.7%	23.4%	-2.3% pt

Source: Minnesota Department of Education's "Minnesota Report Card"

* The MCA Science test is a new test as of Spring 2025

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

To ensure our district remains at the forefront of education, we are focused on reimagining learning experiences to inspire student success.

- The unification of White Bear Lake Area High School and implementation of a trimester system at the high school in 2025-26 increases student opportunities and allows for more focused learning periods.
- The Elementary Spanish Dual Immersion program launched in fall 2025 creates a bilingual environment that values diversity and cultural understanding.
- Our middle school teachers collaborate to set high standards and provide rigorous instruction.

FALL TO SPRING GROWTH

Results from the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 screening assessments show that the majority of White Bear Lake Area Schools students achieved or exceeded their anticipated academic growth goals.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS & ENRICHMENT

WBLAS is a recognized leader in developing Career Pathways aligned with workforce needs.

Our Career Pathways program helps students align their education with their career goals, by offering hands-on and industry-level training directly in class, including college credit and industry certifications embedded within those classes. Opportunities for work-based learning and site visits continues to expand and get students into the world of work.



NINE CAREER PATHWAYS CURRENTLY OFFERED AT ISD624

Automotive	Construction & Skilled Trades	Family & Consumer Sciences (FACS)
Business	Education	Health & Wellness
Communication Technology	Engineering & Manufacturing	Information Technology



The 4-year graduation rate for the White Bear Lake Area High School Class of 2024 was 96.5%, 12.3 percentage points above the state average and 3 percentage points higher than the prior year. This was the second-highest grad rate amongst area high schools. Graduation rate calculations follow one year behind the current graduating year.

47 COLLEGE LEVEL COURSES OFFERED AT WBLAHS DURING 2024-25

23 Advanced Placement (AP) classes, 22 concurrent enrollment courses, and 2 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 46 students earned 243 credits

Concurrent 490 students earned 2945 credits

AP 537 students earned 3357 credits

PSEO 147 students earned 2310 credits



All tuition calculations except concurrent enrollment based on U of MN tuition rate of \$620.50 per credit. Concurrent enrollment based on Century College tuition rate of \$217.83. 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.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

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

AVID

Our middle and high school students have the opportunity to participate in the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, which offers rigorous instruction to prepare students for college. Lakeaires Elementary is also an AVID school and uses Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading (WICOR) strategies to enhance student learning.

BARR

Building Assets, Reducing Risk (BARR) programming is used in six of our schools to build strong relationships and provide early intervention support.

DUAL IMMERSION

Otter Lake Elementary and Matoska International offer a district-wide Elementary Spanish Dual Immersion program option.

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

Since 2010, Matoska International has offered an IB World School option, providing a rigorous and globally-minded education for their elementary students.

132 ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) SCHOLARS

73 AP Scholars
 28 AP Scholars with Honors
 31 AP Scholars with Distinction

40% INCREASE

The 2024-25 academic year marked the highest-ever WBLAHS enrollment in AP courses with a substantial 40% increase over the past three years.

FINANCE

Financial Management

To ensure that maximum resources reach our classrooms, White Bear Lake Area Schools remains committed to fiscal responsibility.

Stewardship

The district continues to demonstrate strong stewardship, ensuring that taxpayer dollars are used effectively and efficiently to support student learning and well-being.



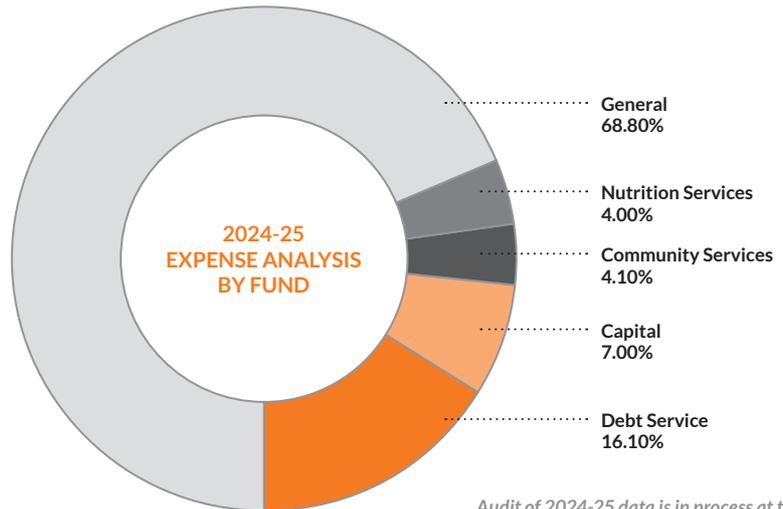
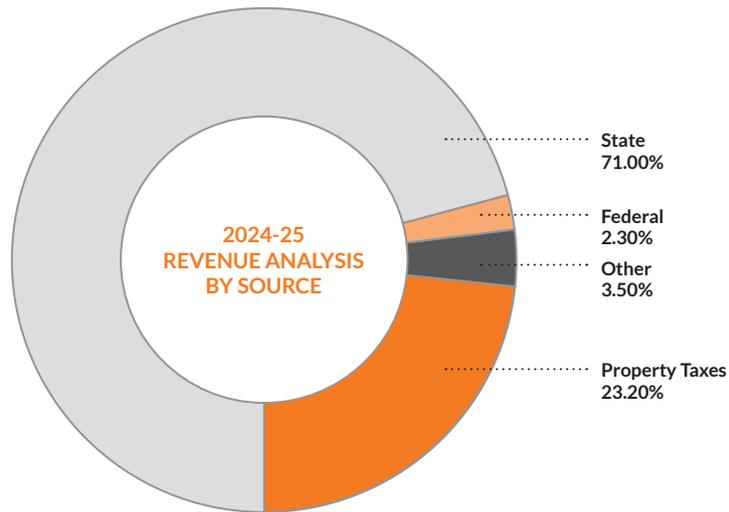
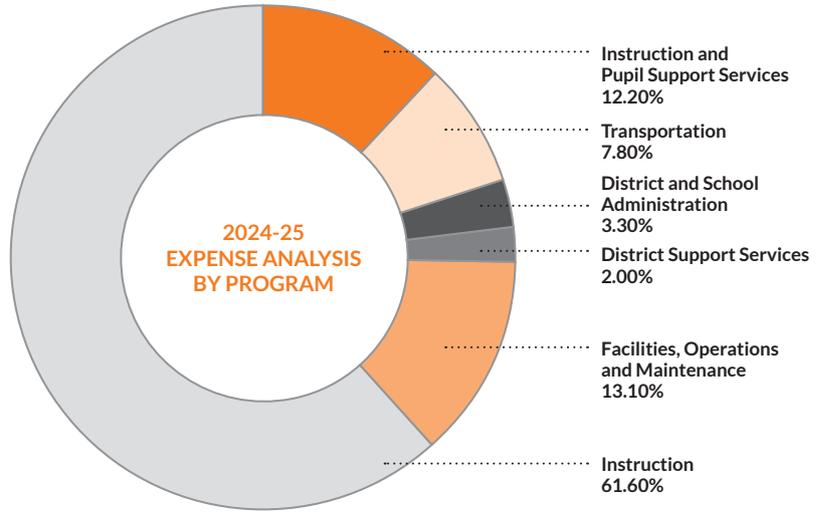
Financial Excellence

This year marks a quarter-century of recognition the district has received for excellence in financial reporting the District from the Association of School Business Officials and Government Finance Officers Association.

These prestigious awards are the highest honor a governmental agency can receive in the area of accounting and financial reporting, representing a significant accomplishment for the district's Finance Department and staff.

Partnerships

The district has innovative partnerships with Bear Care, Lakeshore Players, Tamarack Nature Center, White Bear Center for the Arts and many others.



Audit of 2024-25 data is in process at time of printing.

2025-26 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



- » Abkhazian
- » Afar
- » Akan
- » Aleut
- » Altai
- » Amharic
- » Anuak
- » Arabic
- » Assyrian
- » Neo-Aramaic
- » Azerbaijani
- » Bislama
- » Bosnian
- » Burmese
- » Cantonese
- » Chinese, Mandarin
- » Czech
- » Dutch
- » Edo
- » English, Creolized
- » Farsi
- » Filipino, Pilipino
- » French
- » French, Creolized
- » Ga
- » Haitian Creole
- » Harari
- » Hindi
- » Hmong
- » Igbo
- » Indonesian, Bahasa
- » Indonesian
- » Italian
- » Japanese
- » Karen
- » Karen, Pwo
- » Karen, S'gaw
- » Khmer, Cambodian
- » Kurdish
- » Lithuanian
- » Luganda
- » Mandar
- » Mendankwe-Nkwen
- » Mende
- » Nepali
- » Ojibwa, Chippewa
- » Oromo, Afaan Oromo, Oromiffa
- » Pahlavani
- » Portuguese
- » Romanian
- » Russian
- » Sign Language, ASL
- » Slovak
- » Somali
- » Spanish
- » Swahili, Kiswahili
- » Tagalog
- » Taiwanese
- » Tamil
- » Thai
- » Tigrinya
- » Turkish
- » Twi
- » Ukrainian
- » Vietnamese
- » Yoruba

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS 2025-26	
Free/Reduced Price Lunch	30.5%
Multi-Language Learner	8.8%
Special Education	18.4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.3%
Asian	9.2%
Black/African American	7.5%
Hispanic/Latino	8.9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1%
Two or more races	7.5%
White	66.6%

Source: District data (K-12+)

STUDENT ENROLLMENT 2025-26	
Early Childhood (Includes all District preschool and early childhood programs at all District locations.)	738
Elementary (Grades K-5)	3662
Middle School (Grades 6-8)	1885
High School (Grades 9-12)	2665
Transition Plus (T+) (Special Ed - ages 18-22)	49
District Total K-12	8212
District Total Birth-T+	8999

Source: District data

The Annual Update pages in this edition of the Bear's Bulletin provide a preview of the information that will be included in a stand-alone Annual Update publication, which will be completed and available online in late-December.

School Board Meetings

January 12.....	Regular Meeting
January 26.....	Work Session
February 9.....	Regular Meeting
February 23.....	Work Session
March 2.....	Regular Meeting
March 23.....	Work Session
April 13.....	Regular Meeting
April 27.....	Work Session
May 11.....	Regular Meeting
May 18.....	Work Session
June 8.....	Regular Meeting

- » Board meetings begin at 5:30 p.m. in the Board Room at Sunrise Park
- » 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.

2025-26 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

- Scott Arcand
- Angela Thompson
- Deb Beloyed
- Kathleen Daniels
- Jessica Ellison
- Dan Skaar
- Christina Streiff Oji

2025-26 SCHOOL BOARD STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

- WBLAHS Senior Tom Reese
- WBLAHS Junior Lily Johnson, Alternate

2026-27 and 2027-28 Calendars Approved

The School Board recently approved the 2026-27 Academic Calendar and the 2027-28 Academic Calendar.

Both approved calendars include start dates prior to Labor Day, which falls later than usual in both 2026 and 2027. The earlier start provides several benefits, including four instructional days before Labor Day with a four-day holiday weekend, and an earlier end to the school year – June 4, 2027, and June 2, 2028 – rather than mid-June.

In addition to the calendar shift, the late-August start allows for more instructional time before state testing and better alignment of trimester transitions with natural breaks, reducing interruptions in learning. It also allows for better scheduling for extended school year programs for students with special needs and staff.

The approved calendars are available on the district's website at www.isd624.org/about/calendar.

Quarter-Century of Finance Awards

White Bear Lake Area Schools has once again earned top honors for financial reporting, marking the 25th consecutive year the district has received both the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting and the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting.

These awards are the highest form of recognition a governmental agency can receive in the area of accounting and financial reporting, representing a significant accomplishment for the district's Finance Department and staff.

"Our Finance Office continues to live up to the theme we've set for ourselves this year: Elevating Excellence, Built on a Foundation of Trust," said Superintendent Wayne Kazmierczak. "Our community has grown to expect us to act with the integrity that's been demonstrated through our long tradition of service to our students, families, and community members."

To be considered for the awards, the Finance Department submits its annual comprehensive financial report for impartial review. Reports must meet rigorous criteria to qualify for recognition. According to GFOA Director of Technical Services Michele Mark Levine, the district's annual report demonstrates "a constructive 'spirit of full disclosure' to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the report."

Jim Rowan, CAE, SFO, Executive Director of ASBO International, highlighted the broader impact: "For over half a century, ASBO International's Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting has been the gold standard for promoting and recognizing excellence in financial transparency. Clear and accurate financial reporting is crucial for engaging school communities and building their trust. Districts that earn the COE have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to these principles."

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



Continued from cover

Hundreds of students are also gaining valuable hands-on experience through our Career Pathways programs. Last year, students in our automotive program completed 455 Ford ACE High School Automotive Program courses and 36 students earned certification through AllData Automotive Intelligence. Another 36 students achieved ServSafe certification in the Food Service industry, more than 100 students earned First Aid/CPR credentials and 41 students became Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA). These meaningful experiences provide students with practical skills, industry-recognized credentials, and confidence as they prepare for future careers.



Student success is matched by district excellence. For the 25th consecutive year, White Bear Lake Area Schools have earned top honors for financial reporting. The district also received national recognition for communications excellence, with six projects earning Awards of Excellence – the highest honor presented by the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) – in the 2025 Publications and Digital Media Excellence Awards. Honored projects include the 2024 Annual Update, 2024-25 Calendar, Fall 2024 Bear’s Bulletin and the Community e-Newsletter. The “Building Our Future - Impact on Teaching and Learning” video and “The Week in 62.4 Seconds” video series were also recognized.

Our success as a district is built through collaboration and care – qualities that make White Bear such a special place to learn and grow. A recent example of this spirit was on display at one of our middle schools, where a sixth grader who was born without a right hand wanted to learn the violin. Her school nurse and orchestra teacher began researching adaptive solutions and discovered specifications for a 3D-printed bow holder. They teamed up with a science teacher who is a hobbyist 3D printer and a tech education colleague who specializes in CAD design. After several prototypes and adjustments, the team successfully created two customized devices, allowing the student to play the violin. This story exemplifies the creativity, compassion, and teamwork that define our district.



Community members also play a vital role in supporting and enriching our schools. Programs such as the high school’s “Test Drive... Next Stop Reality” event – an engaging program that helps juniors navigate real-world budgeting and decision-making through interactive stations focused on housing, transportation, childcare, insurance, and more – are only made possible by the 200 volunteers who stepped up and gave of their time to help make it happen.

And finally, as the temperatures drop, we invite our community to stay active and connected by walking the indoor WBLAHS Field House track. Open Monday through Thursday from 6–9 p.m., the track offers a warm, safe, and free space to enjoy some exercise while sharing in the pride of this wonderful community facility.

Dr. Wayne Kazmierczak, Superintendent

Otter Lake Elementary and Mariner Middle School Named Minnesota Schools of Excellence

Otter Lake Elementary and Mariner Middle School are among just 13 schools statewide to be recognized as 2025-26 Minnesota Schools of Excellence by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association. White Bear Lake Area Schools is the only district in Minnesota to have more than one school earn this prestigious honor this year.

WE ARE HIRING!

Find info at 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



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.



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:



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.

- **Construction Updates**

Find updates about the construction projects happening throughout the district at isd624.org/BuildingOurFuture.

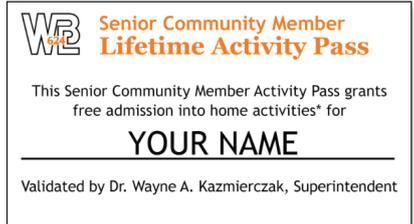
- **Stay Social**

Join the district's social media circles - Facebook, Instagram and YouTube for daily 624 Fact posts and weekly video share-outs. Find links on the District's website.

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 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.



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

Building Our Future

The Building Our Future bond referendum projects are nearing completion, marking an exciting new chapter for White Bear Lake Area Schools and community. The final project, the transformation of the former Sunrise Park Middle School building into a multi-use facility housing the Early Childhood Center, Transition Education Center, Senior Program, and District Service Center, is progressing steadily. The Senior Program and district offices are already in place, with the Early Childhood Center and Transition Education Center scheduled to move in during the summer of 2026.

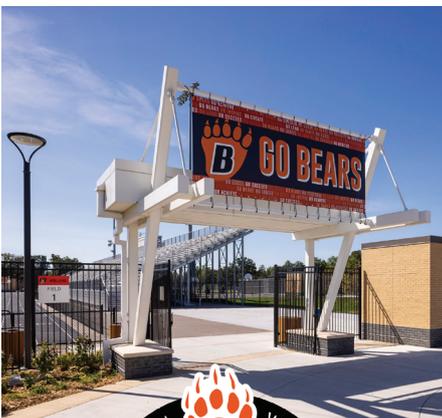
At the same time, the completion of White Bear Lake Area High School shines as a proud symbol of the community's investment in education. The redesigned academic spaces feature studio-style classrooms that provide flexibility for teachers to adapt lessons designed for collaboration, project-based learning, and individual exploration. These inspiring environments foster creativity and help prepare students for success in college, career, and life.



The school's fine arts facilities are equally impressive, with new band, orchestra, and choir rooms supporting growing music programs. The Performing Arts Center, seating 845 guests, provides a professional-quality venue for concerts, theater productions, and community gatherings, allowing students' talents to shine.

Enhanced athletic and competition spaces, both indoor and outdoor, offer modern, welcoming environments that promote fitness, teamwork, and community pride. From updated gymnasiums and fitness areas to expanded outdoor fields and courts, these facilities serve students and provide exceptional spaces for the community to enjoy.

Together, these spaces showcase how the Building Our Future referendum has transformed not only our flagship high school but also the learning and gathering environments across the communities we serve, a lasting reflection of our community's pride, vision and commitment to our youth.



Projects made possible by the community's support of the 2019 Building Our Future bond referendum:

Completed

- Area Learning Center Phase 1
- Lincoln, Matoska, Vadnais Heights and Willow Lane Elementaries Updates
- Transportation Facility
- WBLAHS - South Campus Phase 1 Gym Addition
- Birch Lake, Lakeaires, and Otter Lake Elementaries Updates
- North Star Elementary
- WBLAHS - South Campus Phase 2 Addition
- Area Learning Center Phase 2
- Oneka Elementary Updates
- Mariner Middle School
- Central Middle School Phase 1 Updates
- White Bear Lake Area High School
- District Service Center and School Board at Sunrise Park
- Mariner Middle School HVAC Improvements
- Central Middle School Phase 2 Updates
- Senior Center at Sunrise Park

Ready for Fall 2026

- Early Childhood Center and Transition Education Center (TEC) at Sunrise Park

Info about the district's facilities projects, including construction details about individual projects, videos and presentations, can be found at isd624.org/BuildingOurFuture.

WELCOME TO WHITE BEAR

January 2026

Get to know us!

We are hosting special opportunities in January for families to learn more about our schools!

isd624.org/Welcome

Check out the website to see how you can learn about each of our programs:

- Early Childhood
- Elementary
- Middle School
- High School



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

- Feb. 25, 12-1 p.m. at White Bear Lake Area High School
- May 5, 7:30-8:30 a.m. at Downtown WBL Caribou Coffee

IMPORTANT DATES

- » **DEC. 24 - JAN. 2**
NO SCHOOL
(Winter Break)
- » **JANUARY**
WELCOME TO WHITE BEAR MONTH
- » **JAN. 19**
NO SCHOOL, DC CLOSED
(MLK, Jr. Day)
- » **FEB. 16**
NO SCHOOL, DC CLOSED
(Presidents' Day)
- » **FEB. 25**
COFFEE WITH DR. K
12-1 p.m. at White Bear Lake Area High School
- » **MARCH 9-13**
NO SCHOOL
(Spring Break)
- » **MAY 5**
COFFEE WITH DR. K
7:30-8:30 a.m. at Downtown WBL Caribou Coffee
- » **MAY 25**
NO SCHOOL, DC CLOSED
(Memorial Day)
- » **JUNE 2**
TEC GRADUATION CEREMONY
12:30 p.m. at Central Middle School Auditorium
- » **JUNE 3**
ALC GRADUATION CEREMONY
6 p.m. at White Bear Lake Area High School PAC
- » **JUNE 4**
WBLAHS GRADUATION CEREMONY
7 p.m. at WBLAHS Stadium (outdoor ceremony)
- » **JUNE 5**
LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

GO DISCOVER.

EVER GO EMPOWER GO EXCEL GO EXPLORE GO IGNITE GO INNOVATE
GO PERFORM GO SUCCEED GO BEARS GO ACHIEVE GO GRADUATE



**FALL '26 KINDERGARTEN
ENROLLMENT IS
NOW OPEN!**



WHY BE A BEAR?

- **Student-centered instruction.**
We believe all students grow and learn in different ways and at different rates – that all can achieve.
- **Expanded academic opportunities.**
Our students explore their interests, excel and design their futures.
- **Empowered, supported learning.**
Students are agents and owners of their learning in an environment that is safe, supportive and challenging – with high expectations for student success.
- **Inspiring, nurturing educators.**
Our educators facilitate learning and challenge students – fostering curiosity and confidence.
- **Transformative learning.**
Our flexible learning spaces and learning studios ignite opportunities for communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.

*Design Your Future.
Create Your Success.*

**Int'l Baccalaureate (IB)
& Elementary Spanish
Dual Immersion
programs available!**

FOLLOW WHITE BEAR LAKE
AREA SCHOOLS

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White Bear Lake Area Schools