

January - February
2026

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www.luxcasco.k12.wi.us

Superintendent

Jo-Ellen Fairbanks

Principals

Peter Kline,
Primary School

Heather Mleziva,
Intermediate School

Todd Chandler,
Middle School

Tyson Tlachac,
High School

The Spartan Impact

Since November, the Luxemburg-Casco School District has been engaged in a strategic planning process designed to shape a clear and thoughtful direction for our district's future. The goal of this work is to engage students, parents, staff, and community members in identifying shared priorities, setting clear goals, and creating a roadmap to guide decision-making and the use of resources for continuous improvement.

The process began with a community engagement session in November, followed by a community survey and focus groups in December, and the first meeting of the Strategic Planning Workgroup in January.

During the community engagement session, participants highlighted several positive impacts the district has on students, including a focus on the whole child, relevant and engaging learning, caring staff and strong relationships, a safe and welcoming environment, and preparation for life after graduation. Community members also shared what matters most for our graduates, such as strong character and values, resilience and growth, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, life readiness, and the ability to communicate and collaborate. Priorities identified for ongoing improvement included career pathways for every student, clear guidance for families, mental health and student supports, clear and trusted communication, and stronger connections with the community.

Focus groups were held with Board members, school and district leaders, teachers, students, families, business partners, and community members. Common themes that emerged included pride in district staff and student opportunities, the importance of strong foundations and life skills, meaningful career pathways and authentic learning experiences, staffing stability, deeper partnerships, a focus on rigor and relevance, creating a sense of belonging, effective communication and fiscal transparency, and preparing students for the future.

A total of 602 community members responded to the survey. A summary of the survey results can be found on the final two pages of this newsletter. The full survey results are available on the district website. <https://www.luxcasco.k12.wi.us/district/board-of-education/district-strategic-planning>

The first Strategic Planning Workgroup meeting included a review of the district's history and current state, a tour of the high school career and technical education facilities, and roundtable discussions. Strengths identified by the group included academics, dedicated staff, a strong small-town community, sound fiscal responsibility, a focus on the whole child, and student opportunities. Areas identified for growth included mental health supports, character modeling, and communication.

Two additional Strategic Planning Workgroup meetings will be held on **February 7 and March 7 from 9:00 a.m. to noon in the High School Heritage Room**. Community members are encouraged to attend and share their feedback — even if you were unable to participate earlier in the process. Your voice matters as we plan for the future of Luxemburg-Casco.

Dr. Jo-Ellen Fairbanks, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Primary School News

January Assessments

Upon returning from a well-deserved winter break, the Primary School students are gearing up for our winter assessments in reading and math to determine where students are in their learning. In 2023, the State of Wisconsin passed a law called Act 20. This law states that each student in grades 4K-3 will take an assessment called the *AimswebPlus Early Reading Screener*. A screener is an assessment that quickly checks your student's reading skills. We are currently in our second year using AimswebPlus.

The screener checks important literacy skills, including alphabet knowledge, letter sound knowledge, phonemic awareness, decoding, and oral vocabulary. The skills are tested differently based on the student's grade level. The *aimswebPlus early reading screener takes place 3 times per year in grades 5K - 2nd grade and in the fall and spring for students in 4K.*

At the end of the winter screening window, parents will receive their student's reports sharing their student's percentile rank, which helps show how the student's score compares to others at the same grade level. The information from the early reading screener is one way that our teachers will learn about and monitor their students' reading skills. If a student's score is below the 25th percentile, a reading plan will be developed to help your student meet grade-level goals. This is called a Personalized Reading Plan, or PRP, and is now required by the state. While plans for reading intervention have been in place for many years in our district, ACT 20 requires a formal written plan for students who score below the 25th percentile.



Primary School News

Volunteers helping with lunch duty are very much appreciated !!!!!!!

Our Primary School and PTA are pleased to be working together on a new initiative that supports both our students and our hardworking teachers. Parent volunteers have been helping to cover lunchroom supervision since December, allowing teachers a well-deserved break during the school day. Currently, we have enough volunteers on Wednesdays to fully cover lunch duty, with some other volunteers able to help on some Mondays and Thursdays.



Lunch breaks are a busy time, and while our teachers always put students first, they rarely get a chance to truly pause and recharge. With the help of parent volunteers, teachers can step away briefly, knowing that students are still being safely supervised in a familiar and friendly environment. This initiative is a wonderful example of our school community coming together. Parent volunteers assist with general supervision, helping students follow lunchtime routines and ensuring a calm, positive atmosphere in the lunchroom. Clear guidelines and support will

be provided so volunteers feel confident and prepared in their role.

We are incredibly grateful to the parents who have already offered their time, and we warmly welcome others who may be interested in getting involved. Even occasional help can make a meaningful difference. By sharing this responsibility, we help support staff wellbeing while strengthening the partnership between families and the school.



If you would like to learn more about volunteering for lunchroom supervision, please keep an eye out for further information from the PTA or contact the school office. Thank you for your continued support and for helping make our school such a caring and connected community.

Intermediate School News

Primary School Band Visit

The week before Winter Break, small groups of 6th Grade Band Students made visits to each grade level at the Primary School to play some holiday music for the students there and spread some holiday cheer!

Primary students got an up close and personal look at the instruments, got to help “play” them (with assistance from the 6th graders), and got to learn a little about each instrument and what they sound like separately, and then all together as we played different songs for them. The 6th graders enjoyed seeing their former teachers and school building (many couldn’t believe how small everything looked compared to their memories), visiting their siblings, talking with the students there, and playing some holiday music to help everyone get into that holiday spirit!



Upcoming Dates to Note:

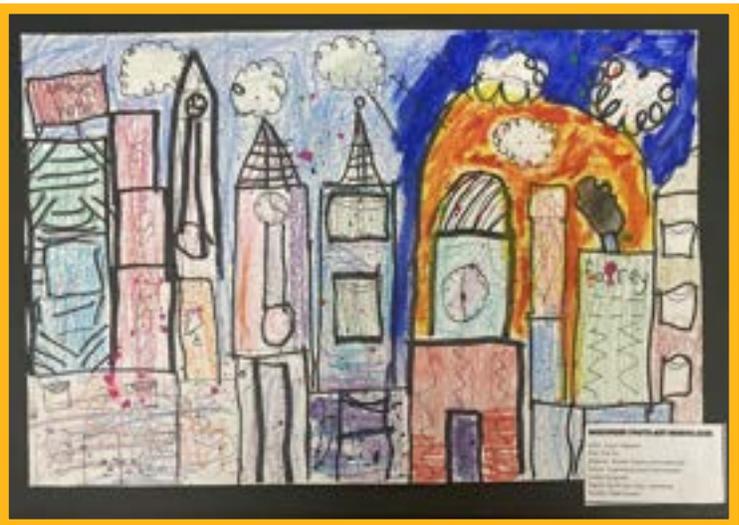
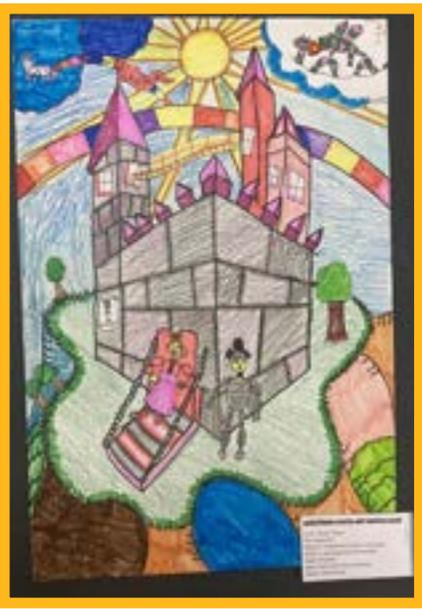
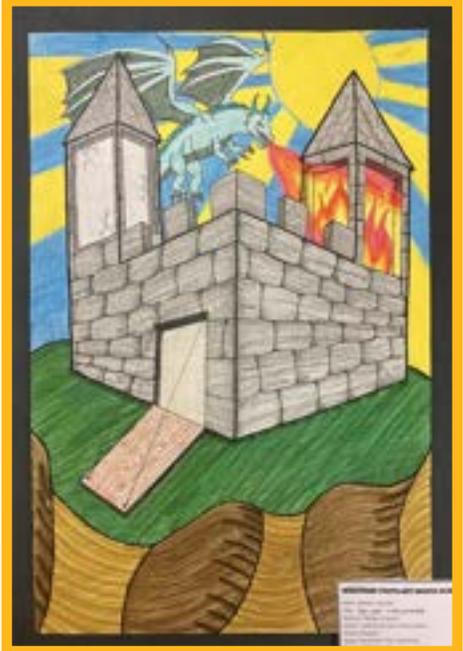
- February 5th - Parent-Teacher Conferences 3:30-7:30pm
- February 27th - End of 2nd Trimester
- February 27th - Early Dismissal (Teacher In-Service) 12:25pm
- March 6th - Progress Reports Issued
- March 16th - FORWARD Testing Window Opens
- March 16th-20th - Spring Break

Youth Art Month

This month five exceptionally hard working students from LC Intermediate and Middle School were chosen to represent Luxemburg at the Wisconsin Art Education Association **Youth Art Month Regional Exhibit**. The show will be hosted from January 24, through February 22, 2026 at the Neville Museum in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The awards ceremony will be held on Saturday, January 24, 2026 at the museum at 1:00 pm. The reception will end by 3:00 pm.

Congratulations on being selected for this honor!

The regional show will be judged by a combination of local artists and art teachers. **Three works of art submitted from each art teacher will be selected to move on to the State Youth Art Month Show as part of Wisconsin's Youth Art Month Celebration.** Student work in the regional exhibit may be invited to be displayed at the Youth Art Month State Exhibit in Madison - possibly even win an award! Here are the students' work from the Intermediate School.



Students in order from left to right: Jace D-5th, Ethan C. 6th, Harper T.-6th, Malaya A.-6th, & Grace H. -3rd

Middle School Spartans Make a Rookie-Season Statement in the Vocabulary Bowl

Luxemburg-Casco Middle School made its debut this fall in the Vocabulary Bowl, a nationwide academic competition where students “score points” by mastering new words on Vocabulary.com. Schools compete to earn the highest number of mastered words, and—much like a sporting season—rankings shift daily as students push to outpace their rivals.

According to PRNewsWire.com, it was truly “a global showdown: Only 5% of schools earned titles—meaning this season’s winners are in a word class of their own. In the U.S., schools competed in three divisions based on enrollment size: Division I (1,000+ students), Division II (500–999 students) and Division III (up to 499 students). International schools, teachers and individual learners also had their own brackets.”

In our first season on this competitive stage, LCMS students showed tenacity worthy of any athletic arena. Day after day, students logged on—in class, at home, on weekends—determined to build their vocabulary skills and defend the Spartan name. What followed was a months-long academic tug-of-war with rankings seeing back and forth like a nail-biter in the fourth quarter. And then the Spartans surged.



Luxemburg-Casco Middle School claimed the top spot in Wisconsin for Division III, mastering an impressive 8,496 words, and closed out our rookie season as the second-place team in the entire nation for our division—a remarkable accomplishment for first-time competitors. At the building level, individual Spartan standouts emerged.

- 7th grader Noah Spaunbauer led the entire school with an astonishing 1,558,745 points, earning the title of LCMS’s lead wordsmith.
- 8th grader Almerik Horst followed with a formidable 842,385 points, securing the top spot among 8th graders.



Thanks to the collective effort of every LCMS student, Mrs. Shelly Piesler earned a place in the Vocabulary Bowl Winners Circle as the 2025 Wisconsin State Winning Teacher—a testament to both her leadership and her students’ dedication. Students mastering the most words will be invited to select a prize that [Vocabulary.com](https://www.vocabulary.com) mailed to our district. This achievement reflects the LCMS mission of “preparing our students to thrive in a global community by ensuring excellence in intellect and virtue.” Our students did just that—showing discipline, heart, and pride “pays off.”

Congratulations to all of the students who dedicated their time inside and outside of school to represent Luxemburg-Casco Middle School with grit and excellence. Thank you to Principal Todd Chandler and Administrative Assistant Sherri Alexander for enthusiastically relaying our rankings and motivating students over the announcements. We’re incredibly proud of this season’s results—and we’re already looking forward to the Spring Semester and another chance to compete on the national stage.

We are Spartans.

Written and Revised by: Laura Neher & her ELA Classes

Middle School News

Patriot's Pen

Each year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) offers middle school students across the country an opportunity to demonstrate their patriotism and compete with their peers for academic recognition and cash prizes. For the 2025-2026 academic year, the VFW's Patriot's Pen Essay Contest asked students to compose a 300-word essay on the theme, "How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?" Essays were judged on students' understanding of the theme, connections of the theme to personal experience, and overall clarity and composition quality.

This year, 18 of our 8th-grade students elected to participate in the contest and achieved notable success at the Kewaunee County level (VFW District 9). Isaac Dart earned first-place and received a \$100 cash prize, while Heath Kinnard earned runner-up and received a \$75 cash prize. Mr. Glenn Brunner and his wife, of the Ralph Perry Post 3392, presented Isaac and Heath with certificates of recognition on behalf of The Patriot's Pen. Isaac's essay will advance to the next state level of competition.

Isaac's essay focused on his performances of the national anthem, military service songs, and other patriotic pieces, which he plays with the band to honor the local veterans at events like our LCMS Veterans Day program. Heath's essay highlighted how President Kennedy's "Ask Not" speech, along with symbols such as the American flag and the bald eagle, inspired his sense of personal patriotism and demonstration of national pride.



High School News

L-C Aboard to Spain and France

Over winter break, Lauren Schumacher and Katie Waege led an LC Abroad trip to Barcelona, Spain and Paris, France.

14 high school students spent the week exploring the cities and learning more about the history, art, and culture of each area.

Travelers made delicious traditional Catalan cuisine during a cooking class under the direction of a professional chef, visited La Sagrada Familia, Park Guell, Notre Dame of Paris, Sacre Coeur, and the Louvre.

Students also went to the top of the Eiffel Tower and visited many cathedrals, restaurants, and museums on their own, including the Barcelona City History Museum, the Picasso Museum, and the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art.

The new year was celebrated at the hotel in Barcelona where travelers enjoyed games, snacks, and the Spanish tradition of eating 12 grapes before midnight: each grape symbolizes good luck, prosperity, and health for each month of the coming year!

The grand finale of the trip was a night cruise on the Seine River to learn more about the monuments and see the Eiffel Tower sparkle. The students were adventurous, responsible, and everyone had a lot of fun. Our next LC Abroad trip will be June 2027 to Rome and Sorrento, Italy. LC Abroad trips are open to high school students and take place every other year.



High School National Honor Society Students Seek to Make a Positive Impact

LCCHS's National Honor Society has been busy this first semester of the 2025-2026 school year. The fifty plus students in the club have volunteered at over ten different community and school events since early September with several events including over thirty members at once. The students began the year by baking treats to handout to their high school peers after the first weeks of school were completed - this was a fun way to give students a boost after the "newness" of the school year started to wear off. Another treat giveaway was also done on the first day of semester exams; students seemed to enjoy the quick "good luck" that the NHSers and treats provided.



Hearing about a fire in Casco, the NHS students wanted to help the families displaced by the fire, so they collected over \$900 at an LC Football game to be distributed to those families. In addition, the "Trick or Treat for Charity" was a great success. Students collected

nonperishable items which were donated to the Marv Bins Food Pantry, which serves the Luxemburg-Casco community. This is the third year for this activity; the generosity of our community has been amazing.

Some of the students' favorite activities happen around the Christmas season. NHS students helped with Kewaunee County's Shop with a Cop, did some caroling at an assisted living facility (the residents were gracious with our off-key singing), and played "secret elf" for high school staff. The holiday season encapsulates the NHS pillars of leadership, service, and character.



High School National Honor Society Students Seek to Make a Positive Impact.....Continued



Another activity that NHS hosts is the Red Cross Blood Drives that occur four times throughout the year. Students help to advertise the drives as well as recruit donors. Many students volunteer at the drives to help check in donors as well as man the canteen. Especially inspiring is the number of NHS members who have decided to give blood themselves. This is helping to set up members to be lifelong donors whose impact will be felt for years to come.

As we enter into second semester, NHS has plans to cook another meal for Freedom House, volunteer for Earth Day at Baird's Creek, as well as distribute water and gatorade for the Epic Marathon.

Each school year, NHS students put in countless hours to make a positive impact on our school and community. It's through groups like National Honor Society that students learn the benefits of helping others and the community, organizational and time management skills, and the importance of taking initiative.

Students in National Honor Society represent high achieving students who possess strong qualities of leadership, character, and service. Each January, students with cumulative grade point averages of 3.6 or above are invited to apply for membership. They go through a rigorous application process before acceptance in late February is convened upon new members at an initiation ceremony. Active participation is required of members.

This year's group is led by President Annie Annoye, Vice-President Baylee Wypiszewski, Treasurer Rylen Hinckley, and Secretary Riley Westlund. These officers, voted on by the student group, organize and lead meetings, brainstorm ideas for activities, communicate with community organizations about volunteer opportunities, and lead students at activities. The advisor is Mrs. Katie Waege.





LCHS brings *Frozen the Musical* to the Stage February 13, 14, 15, 2026

This winter the LCHS Auditorium is being transformed into the Kingdom of Arendelle!

High School students are bringing Disney's *Frozen the Musical* to life in a vibrant production. With beautiful music, imaginative staging, and lots of stunning surprises (including digital backdrop technology), the show is capturing both the spectacle and the emotional core that have made *Frozen* a modern classic.

Based on the hit animated film, *Frozen the Musical* tells the story of sisters Elsa and Anna as they navigate love, fear, and the power of self-acceptance. While audiences will recognize beloved songs like "Let It Go" and "Do You Want to Build a Snowman?", the stage version expands the story with new music and deeper character development.

The seniors in the cast and crew include: Ariel VanLangendon, Corwin Brewer, Danica Gagne, Donovan Schmelzer, Ella Ferron, Elleana Ronsman, Esperanza Trejo, Grace Turner, Jonah Doperalski, Levi Bahn, Lilly Theys, and Quentin Massart.

From senior Elleana Ronsman (Anna), "We're so excited about *Frozen*, a show we grew up with. Now a chance to perform it, especially since it's something to get the younger generation engaged in the arts, is an absolute privilege."

Don't miss your opportunity to see *Frozen the Musical* live. Reserve your tickets now!

Tickets are available at LCHSchoir.Ludus.com and at the HS Ticket Office Thursdays 3-5:30. All seats are reserved seating.

Shows are Friday Feb 13 @ 7:00 PM; Saturday Feb 14 @ 1:00 PM and 7:00 PM; Sunday Feb 15 @ 1:00 PM.

Lux-Casco residents set clear expectations on educational and personal competencies through Community Survey

As shared with the Luxemburg-Casco community this past November, the Luxemburg-Casco School District is undertaking a comprehensive strategic planning process designed to chart the future direction of its schools. Community engagement is a central pillar of the process.

In conjunction with a Community Engagement Session, a Community Survey was conducted between Nov. 10 and Dec. 7, 2025. The survey was administered by the Donovan Group, which serves school districts nationwide through stakeholder engagement, and used the company's survey engine. The Donovan Group made efforts to ensure that all eligible respondents had the opportunity to take the survey while also protecting against participation by the same individual on multiple occasions.

"We are pleased with the tremendous initial response we have received from the community in our Strategic Planning Process," says Luxemburg-Casco Superintendent Dr. Jo-Ellen Fairbanks. "Coming together to shape a shared vision for the future of our schools gives us a quality roadmap as we grow and innovate to serve our students and community well. We thank all of those who took the time to participate in the Community Survey."

A total of 602 respondents comprised the survey results. Much of the feedback on the district's mission and vision was positive. The community also spoke loud and clear on what it wanted to see in the areas of educational and personal competencies.

Almost three-quarters of survey participants responded to the optional question of, "How would you describe the Luxemburg-Casco School District to someone new to the community?" The responses revolved around four overall themes: community feel, academics and opportunities, strong emphasis on athletics, and dedicated and caring employees.

Many respondents described the district as a close-knit, family-oriented, small-town community in which people rally to support one another and the schools. The district's academic strength, paired with rigorous expectations and a wide range of options, also were noted. Teachers and staff who form strong relationships and genuinely care about students' success and wellbeing additionally was mentioned by many.

Respondents were asked, on a scale of 0-10, how likely they would be to recommend the Luxemburg-Casco School District to a friend, college or family member. Just under 85 percent (84.7%) gave a score of 7 or higher, with the overall highest scores being 10 (32.9%) and 9 (21.1%).

Similarly, those surveyed also were asked an optional question around what makes the Luxemburg-Casco School District unique. Again, the small-town atmosphere and quality staff were prominently mentioned. Interestingly, a recurring sentiment was that the district offers the curriculum and extracurricular variety of a much larger district in spite of L-C's rural location. Career preparation also was mentioned as a strength of the district.

Survey participants were very clear in their expectations on what educational and personal competencies are important to teach students during the entirety of their K-12 education. In order of priority, receiving mention by more than three-quarters of respondents, were critical thinking and problem solving (92.0%); communication skills (91.2%); respect and cooperation (86.4%); organization and time management (79.1%); initiative and self-motivation (78.2%); and self-regulation and responsibility (77.1%).

Responses were more varied on the question of what elements make up a desired academic setting. Among the top choices were clear expectations (77.6%); exploring career pathways (73.1%); real-world connections (67.3%); earning college credits in high school (59.0%); and partnerships with area businesses (56.7%).

Lux-Casco residents set clear expectations on educational and personal competencies through Community SurveyContinued

The district's current mission statement – We inspire minds, challenge students, and promote excellence. We are Spartans. – was responded to favorably by nine in 10 respondents (90.5%).

L-C's present vision statement – Preparing our students to thrive in a global community by ensuring excellence in intellect and virtue. We are Spartans. – received a similar positive response from more than 88 percent of participants.

The survey went on to ask participants about their reactions to the district's core values of rapport/relationships, teaching/learning, and a positive environment. More than 93 percent (93.4%) of those who responded either "really" or "somewhat" liked the core values.

Survey respondents indicated that the core values that should most guide the L-C School District are academic excellence (78.9%); communication (76.4%), respect (71.1%); safety (70.3%) and character development (70.1%).

The survey additionally asked participants where they believe the district should focus its improvement efforts over the next five years, with up to four responses allowed. Most mentioned was assisting students in finding their purpose/passion beyond high school (38.4%), followed by career and technical education program (31.7%). School safety and security (28.2%), along with mental health services for students (28.1%), also ranked among the top responses.

The next core piece of the process is the Strategic Planning Workgroup, which will be made up of parents/guardians, teachers/staff and community members. Its task is to offer thoughtful oversight and guidance to district leadership and Board of Education members.

The Strategic Planning Workgroup will meet on three upcoming Saturdays – Jan. 17, Feb. 7 and March 7 – from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the Heritage Room of L-C High School.

Individuals interested in participation on the Strategic Planning Workgroup can contact Superintendent Fairbanks at ffairbanks@luxcasco.k12.wi.us. While it is preferred that workgroup members attend all three days, it is not necessary.

Of those who took the Community Survey, more than half (53.3%) were between the ages of 35-54, while nearly one-third (32.1%) were age 55 or older. There also was student representation of just under 7 percent.

District parents made up just under one-half (49.2%) of survey respondents, and district staff represented roughly 16 percent of participants. Almost 37 percent (36.9%) of those who took part were an alumnus of Luxemburg-Casco.

Longevity within the district was a core element of survey participants. Approximately 72 percent (71.9%) had lived in the Luxemburg-Casco School District for 11-or-more years, including 54.3 percent who have been residents for 20-plus years.

The district's Strategic Planning Process is expected to be completed in spring 2026.