



Willmar Senior High Graduation Rates Show Steady Progress

Willmar Senior High School continues to see growth in its graduation rates. The Class of 2024 reached a **90.7% graduation rate**, continuing a steady upward trend from 78.6% in 2020. This puts Willmar students above the 2024 Minnesota state average of 84.2%.

A Five-Year Overview

The following data reflects the consistent progress made over the last several years:

- **2020:** 78.6%
- **2021:** 82.5%
- **2022:** 81.8%
- **2023:** 82.9%
- **2024:** 90.7%

Focus on Relationships and Connection

Principal Paul Schmitz notes that while no single factor explains the growth, the school has been intentional about re-engaging students following COVID.

"It is difficult to point to one specific reason for this growth," says Schmitz. "Since the pandemic, we have really tried to focus on personal relationships and the connection students have with our school. We want them to feel that this is a place where they belong."

Redefining Success Through Persistence

While the four-year graduation rate is a primary metric, Willmar's diverse student body—which includes many English Learners and students from around the world—often requires a more flexible view of success.

"Although we are very proud of our four-year graduation numbers, we also see our 'continuing' students as a major success story," Schmitz explains. "If a student has faced significant challenges but chooses to return for a fifth or sixth year to finish their diploma, that is a win for them and for us."

This commitment to staying with students until they finish is reflected in the school's dropout rate. For 2024, the dropout rate is approximately 3%. By encouraging students to continue their education rather than walking away, the school has created a stronger safety net for those who need extra time.

The Value of a Comprehensive High School

Beyond focusing on college and technical preparation, Willmar offers a variety of options for students to enhance their education through a comprehensive high school model. This approach provides a wide variety of opportunities that are difficult to find in other educational settings. For example, our welding shop offers a level of hands-on, industry-standard training that isn't typical for a high school, and our newly added CNA program allows students to earn professional certifications before they even graduate.

These specialized programs, alongside our established gym and weight room facilities and new cosmetology courses, provide a physical and social environment where students can explore interests in person. "We are trying to respond to what our students and community actually need," Schmitz adds. "The credit for this progress belongs to our staff, who work every day to make sure students feel welcomed. We want school to be a place where students find a path that works for them, supported by the kind of facilities and personal connections that only a comprehensive high school can provide."

**WSHS Registration Dates for 2025/2026**

DATE	EVENT	GRADE	TIME
Thurs., Aug. 13th	Parent/Athlete/Coaches (PAC) All sports Athletic meeting	All Grades	6:00 PM in BPAC (theater)
Mon., Aug. 17th	All Fall sports begin	9 th – 12 th	
Fri. Aug. 14th	Registration	9 th – 12 th	9AM-3PM
Mon., Aug. 17th	Registration	9 th – 12 th	11AM-2PM
Tues., Aug. 18th	Registration	9 th – 12 th	4PM – 7PM
Wed., Aug. 26th	OPEN HOUSE	9 th – 12 th	4:30PM – 6:30PM
Mon. , Aug. 31	1 st Day of School (Ramp up schedule)	9 th – 12 th	8:00AM – 2:45PM

On-line payments:

Credit card payments are suggested and accepted online **ONLY** if you have an active Parent/Student Campus Portal account. Should you need assistance with your Campus Portal account, contact Jessie Olson @ [320.231.8555](tel:320.231.8555). If paying online is not an option for you, you may pay in person at registration.

Health Services Update**IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENT FOR SENIORS:**

Minnesota law requires that all children get vaccinated against certain diseases or have a legal exemption on file to enroll in school. Students entering 12th grade need to have documentation or legal exemption for the booster dose of the meningococcal vaccine (most students received the initial dose of this vaccine when they entered 7th grade). Willmar Public Schools adhere to a "No Shot - No School" policy (or legal proof of exemption).

If you are unsure about your student's immunization status you can download the [docket app](#) and check; other resources are to contact your child's health care provider or the school nurse at Darla 320-231-8457 LPN or Joy 320-905-5575 LSN to inquire if your child is up-to-date with this immunization.



School Pictures: 8th Street Photography will be here to take all students photos on August 14th, 17th, and 18th. **All students are required to have their photo taken prior to getting their iPad.** Seniors may use 8th Street Photography as an option for their senior picture. There is no fee with 8th Street Photography unless you order a photo package.

**Ramp Up Notes****2026****Job Fair & Career Expo**

Thursday, April 23rd Willmar Senior High hosts the 9th annual Job Fair & Career Expo. Students have 30 minutes to explore a variety of job and career opportunities. They can fill out job applications and discuss career opportunities for their future.





WILLMAR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PROM 2026

The Willmar Senior High School Prom 2026 @ Stonewall Farms will be on Friday, May 1st, 2026.

The Grand March begins at 5:30pm. Everyone is welcome for our free viewing at Grand March.

Once Grand March is over, student guests and chaperones will load our buses and travel to Stonewall Farms. Students will be required to show their ticket as they enter the bus. A small purse or handbag will be allowed. No backpacks.

NO other vehicles OR people will be allowed on the Stonewall Farms site. Local law enforcement will be parked at the entrance. Our apologies, only prom guests will be permitted at our post-Grand March festivities. Students will return to Willmar High School via bus transportation and the final bus will return to WHS shortly after 11:30pm.

For the 5:30 GRAND MARCH, you do not need an automobile to be a part of the Grand March. Arrangements can be made with Mr. Michelson to walk through Grand March and be introduced like all other prom guests, without the pressure of having a vehicle.

EARLY BIRD THREE DAY DISCOUNT SALES for PROM: APRIL 20th - April 22nd

Tickets will be sold during 3rd Block lunches. Willmar Public School students are charged \$35.00 and out of town guests are \$45.00. *NOTE*: Non-WHS Guests MUST have a copy of their driver's license to purchase a ticket.

REGULAR SALES: Tickets will be sold during 3rd Block lunches from April 23rd - April 30th. Willmar Public School students are charged \$45.00 and out of town guests are \$55.00. *NOTE*: Out of Town Guests MUST have a copy of their driver's license to purchase a ticket.

All of the decorations and services to coordinate this prom are funded entirely and solely by ticket sales. No Willmar Public School dollars are used to host the event.

In order to preserve the safety and welfare of Willmar Senior High School students, the administration reserves the right to deny admission to attend the Willmar High School prom. NO ONE under high school age or over 20 will be allowed to attend. Only those students who are eligible to be a high school student may attend. Each set of prom guests must have at least one junior or senior student. REMINDER; Freshman students MAY NOT attend Prom, even if they are invited by a Junior or Senior.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Principal Paul Schmitz(schmitzp@willmar.k12.mn.us), or Prom Coordinators Mr. Travis Michelson(michelsont@willmar.k12.mn.us) and Mrs. Kari Michelson(michelsonk@willmar.k12.mn.us).



**Honor Society Inducts 30 New Members**

Congratulations to the 24 Willmar High School senior and junior students who were inducted into the National Honor Society on January 26, 2026.

Acceptance for membership requires students to demonstrate skills in the **4 Pillars of National Honor Society**.

Students must have a minimum current GPA of 3.75 to fulfill their requirement of **SCHOLARSHIP**. They are then invited to apply for membership.

Student applicants then complete an application describing the various ways in which they provide non-compensated **SERVICES** in the Willmar community and beyond.

Finally, students are evaluated by Willmar High School administrators, teachers and staff on their **CHARACTER** and **LEADERSHIP** in the classroom, activities or athletics, and in the community.

The National Honor Society was formed in 1921. There are more than 12,500 local chapters of the National Honor Society in high schools across the country today.

In addition to the service projects the members do outside of school, our main collective services are Bethesda Heritage, Food Pack and Adopt a Highway in Kandiyohi County.

Students inducted in academic year 2024-25

Mumtahaz Abdulahi	Lyza Gustafson	Daniela Medina
Noelle Becker	Lily Jorgenson	Ahnaly Morales
Natalie Berg	Hailey Jurgenson	Adamaris Moreno
Aabree Bergstrom	Sarah Kelp	Pablo Ossa Letelier
Carlee Brown	Mia Koosman	Ethan Riemersma
Cavin Carlson	Telilie Lange	Madalynn Villnow
Tangh Conklin	Riley Laumer	Brynna Willis
Kianna Eichhorst	Shea Loso	Abigail Zavala
Adeline Engan	Tyler Madsen	
Irene Espinoza	Kennedy Mara	
Rheya Glein-Erickson	Ashlyn Martinez	

Student inducted in academic year 2025-26

Lawson Anez	Sophia Haase	Thomas Quinn
Leiah Arends	Juliette Haugen	Madison Runke
Eileen Bosch	Allison Mages	Travis Venenga
Anthony Buzzeo	Gabrielle Martinez	
Jackson Carlson	Brooklyn Mathews	
Isaac Cayler	Cole Newville	
Ellery DeBoer	Brielle Olinger	
Brenna Donelan	Flor d Medina Palma	
Logan Fagerlie	Aidan Paulson	
Emily Floren	Aubrey Peterson	

AP Exam Dates

Tuesday, May 5th-Chemistry 8:00 am

Wednesday, May 6th -English Literature & Composition 8:00 am

Thursday, May 7th– Statistics 8:00 am

Friday, May 8th-Art & Design, final day to submit 7:00 pm

Monday, May 11th–Calculus 8:00 am

Monday, May 11th-Music Theory 12:00 pm

Tuesday May 12th– Psychology 12:00 pm

Wednesday, May 13th- English Language & Composition 8:00 am

Testing locations are to be determined

**FROM THE COUNSELING OFFICE****Summer School 2026**

Students who have failed classes at the high school have the opportunity to recover these credits through summer school. Summer school takes place at the Area Learning Center in Willmar. The dates of summer school are June 8th - June 25th. Classes take place Monday through Thursday 8:15 am-12:15 pm. Please contact your student's counselor for further details and how to apply for this great opportunity for your students to get back on track!

Testing Update

Willmar Senior High will hold its large testing day for MCA Reading, MCA Math, and ACT test on April 21st. MCA Math test for 11th graders taking the ACT will be given April 14th and 16th. Makeup testing for those who missed the MCAs will be given between April 16th and May 1st. State law requires all students to take the MCA tests.

Most students take the MCA, but students who receive special education services and meet eligibility requirements may take the alternate assessment MTAS instead. The ACT test is not required for students but is encouraged for students to take this test for college admissions purposes.

For more information on testing, please refer to the Minnesota Department of Education at:

<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/JustParent/TestReq/index.html>





WHS Music Department News!

The WHS Vocal Music Department attended the Region 8AA solo and ensemble contest on February 4th at Becker High School. There were 5 schools in attendance from the region. Willmar received 23 superiors and had events that consisted of solos, duets, SATB, TTBB, and SSAA ensembles. At the end of the day each judge chose their top performance of the day. Willmar received 2 "Best of Site" awards. Awarded "Best of Site" at the contest were: Mikayla Ornelas and Mathias Elkhurst - duet, and Cavin Carlson, Mathias Elmhurst, Hector Robles, Lawson Anez, Logan Fagerlie, Rene Vallejo, Travis Venenga, and Anthony Buzzeo - octet. All of these students performed their works at the March 16th concert.

The WHS Band Department traveled to St. Ben's College on February 11th for the Region 8AA solo and ensemble contest. Willmar had 75 entries in the contest which was hosted by Big Lake. The judges were not notified to select "Best of Site" awards so none were awarded. Perfect scores of "40" were achieved by the Cardinal Percussion Ensemble, Isaac Thielen's euphonium solo, Annika Dahl and Marin Wallestad's marimba duet, the Jazz Ensemble, and Judah Ferdinand's alto sax solo. The perfect scores performed at the band concert on Monday, March 9th.

The WHS Orchestra Department traveled to St. Cloud Apollo HS on February 25 for their region 8AA solo and ensemble contest. There were a total of 30 entries with 21 superiors and 9 excellent ratings. The judges selected "Best of Site" awards and a special congratulations to Sophia Haase (violin solo) and Parker Rucks (viola solo) for their recognition of this award. Both Sophia and Parker performed their selection at the orchestra concert on March 9th.

Several WHS music students were selected to be members of the 2025-2026 MMEA All-State ensembles this year. Their final performances were held on the weekend of February 14th. Students selected from WHS: Nehemiah VanHorne - orchestra, Carter Newberg - band, Mathias Elmhurst, Anthony Buzzeo, Sophia Haase, and Mikayla Ornelas - choir. Being selected as a member of the All - State ensembles is the highest honor any high school musician can achieve. Congratulations to these outstanding musicians from Willmar Senior High School!

The CLC music festival will be held on Thursday, April 2nd at St. Cloud Apollo H.S. The Cardinal Band, Orchestra, and Choir will perform throughout the day and will receive a clinic from a professional musician/educator. The evening concert will feature members of the All-Conference Band, Choir, and Orchestra.

May will be a busy month of concerts as the music department looks to end the year strong. Below is the May concert schedule:

Monday, May 11 - MS/Varsity Orchestra concert 7:30 p.m. WHS Brau PAC

Monday, May 18 - Pops Concert - Concert Band & Choir, Varsity Band & Choir - 7:30 p.m WHS Brau PAC

Wednesday, May 20 - WHS Commencement Concert - Cardinal Band, Choir, Orchestra, Choralaires, 8:00 p.m. WHS Brau PAC

Monday, May 25 - Memorial Day Program (all WHS Bands) 10:30 a.m. Fairview Cemetery

Sunday, May 31 - WHS Graduation Ceremonies (Cardinal & Varsity Band, Cardinal Choir - 2 p.m. Civic Center



Kandiyohi Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities: Sparking Innovation and Growth

Are you ready to break out of the classroom and dive into the real world of business? The KCEO Class, which is open to Juniors and Seniors offers an innovative program designed to inspire and empower future entrepreneurs. Here's what you can expect:

- Get out of the classroom: Step away from traditional learning and immerse yourself in hands-on experiences that prepare you for real-world challenges.
- Meet with at least 30 local businesses: Build connections and gain insights from established businesses in your community. These interactions provide invaluable knowledge and mentorship.
- Learn from real-world, project-based experiences: Engage in three hands-on business projects, giving you the tools and confidence to succeed.
- Start and operate your own business: Put your skills to the test by launching and managing your own business venture, turning your ideas into reality.

KCEO is here to help you learn about local industries and help you unleash your entrepreneurial potential and make a lasting impact in your community.

Parents, if your child is interested in the KCEO class, have them apply here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScXinbsESVcnRlomi7WhdeJx9Cier7Y7le3GV45eV51bWnwBg/viewform>





April 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	March 30 Term 4 starts	March 31	1 Ramp Up	2	3 NO SCHOOL for Staff & Students	4
5	6	7	8 Ramp Up	9	10	11
12 Senior Athletic Social & Program 6:30 pm	13	14	15 Ramp Up Touch the Truck Day	16	17	18
19	20 PROM tickets go on sale	21 ACT or MCA Math for 11th grade MCA Reading for all 10th grade	22 Opportunity Day	23 Job Fair & Career Expo	24	25
26	27 Spring Fest begins	28 Mock Crash	29 Ramp Up Mid Term	30 Safety Day		

May 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 NO SCHOOL for Students-Teacher In -Service PROM	2
3	4	5	6 Ramp Up Senior Mtg 1:10 BPAC	7	8 Last day to sign up for Senior Retreat	9
10	11 Varsity Orchestra Concert 7:00 pm BPAC	12	13 Ramp Up Senior Retreat	14 Military Signing Day	15	16
17	18 Varsity/Concert Band/Choir 7:30 pm BPAC	19	20 Opportunity Day Excellence in Ed/ Scholarship Awards 6:00 BPAC Commencement Concert 8:15 pm BPAC	21	22 Graduation Practice 8:00 am	23
24	25 NO SCHOOL for Staff & Students	26	27 Ramp Up	28 Last Classroom Day for Seniors	29 Graduation Practice 8:30 am	30
31 Commencement 2:00 @ Civic Center	June 1	June 2 Opportunity Day	June 3 Opportunity Day End Term 4	June 4	June 5	June 6





Willmar Senior High School

Class of 2026 Calendar of Events



Class Motto: "In the Middle of difficulty lies opportunity" Albert Einstein

Class Song: "I Lived" by One Republic

Class Flower: Red and White Dahlia

DATE	EVENT	TIME	LOCATION
Thurs., Mar. 19 th	End of 3 rd Term		
Mar. 23-27 th	Spring Break		
Mon., Mar. 30 th	School Resumes; 4 th Term begins		
Fri., April 3 rd	Deadline for athletes who lettered to provide action or group photo for the Spring Athletic Awards event.		To Main Office Athletic Secretary (Brenda)
Sun., April 12 th	Senior Athletic Awards Social	6:30pm	Willmar Conference Center
	Senior Athletic Awards Program	7:00pm	
Fri., May 1 st	Sr Midterm Grades due		
Fri., May 1 st	Prom-No School for students		
	Grand March		@ WSHS @ 5:30
	Prom		@ Stonewall Farms
Wed., May 6 th	Class of 2025 meeting w/Principal followed by cap & gown distribution	1:07pm	Brau Performing Arts Center
Fri., May 8 th	Deadline to sign up for the May 14 th SR. RETREAT		Main Office
Mon., May 11 th	Varsity Orchestra Concert w/ 7 th & 8 th Grade Orchestra's	7:30pm	Brau Performing Arts Ctr.
Wed., May 13 th	Senior Retreat	8:30am	Civic Center
Mon., May 18 th	Varsity Band/Choir Pop Concert-All V, CN	7:30pm	Brau Performing Arts Center
Wed., May 20 th	Senior Scholarship & Awards	6:00pm	Brau Performing Arts Center
Wed., May 20 th	Commencement Concert	8:15pm	Brau Performing Arts Center
Fri., May 22 nd	Graduation Practice	8:30am	Willmar Civic Center
Mon., May 25 th	All bands for Memorial Day Ceremony	10:30am	Fairview Cemetery (Gorton Ave NW)
Thurs., May 28 th	LAST classroom day for Seniors		
Fri., May 29 th	LAST day for Seniors	8:00-2:45	Willmar Civic Center
	2 nd Graduation Practice	8:30	
Sun., May 31 st	Commencement	2:00pm	Willmar Civic Center





Cardinal Courier

Willmar Senior

High School

2701 30th Street NE

Willmar, MN 56201

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HOMEWORK

Homework for students who have been absent can be received by contacting the individual teacher through parent/student portal or emailing the student's teacher directly using the district website directory. Students may also access homework on their iPad. The Main Office is open until 4:30 Monday through Friday for homework pickup.



WHS Main & Guidance Office Staff

The following people are available for questions or concerns on WHS policies, activities, or individual student matters.

Paul Schmitz, Principal	231-8310
Nick Clasemann, Ass't. Principal Grades 10 & 12	231-8311
Scott Hisken, Ass't Principal Grades 9 & 11	231-8312
Ryan Blahosky, Activities Coordinator	231-8331
Jen Hess, Counselor A — G	231-8321
Megan Erickson, Counselor H — N	231-8322
Leah Rosendahl, Counselor O — Z	231-8323
Natalie Campos, Social Worker	231-8464
Monica Crow, Social Worker	231-8381
Darla Hammerschmid/ Nurse	231-8457
Joy Wohlin-Oman/Nurse	320-905-5575

