

Spring/Summer 2026

A Bright Future Ahead: Honoring HSD's Class of 2026!

The Hazelwood School District celebrated the achievements of the Class of 2026 during its graduation ceremonies held Saturday, May 30, at the University of Missouri–St. Louis (UMSL). Graduates from Hazelwood Central High School, Hazelwood East High School, and Hazelwood West High School were recognized in front of proud families, friends, staff members, and community supporters.

The ceremonies highlighted the academic success, perseverance, and future aspirations of the district's graduating seniors. District leaders praised the students for their hard work and determination throughout their educational journeys.

"This year's graduating class demonstrated resilience, leadership, and excellence both inside and outside the

classroom," said HSD Superintendent Dr. Nettie Collins-Hart. "We are incredibly proud of our students and excited to see the impact they will make in their colleges, careers, and communities."

Members of the Class of 2026 collectively earned millions of dollars in scholarships. Hazelwood East High School seniors earned over five million dollars in scholarships, Hazelwood Central High School seniors earned over ten million dollars, and Hazelwood West High School seniors earned over 23 million dollars in scholarships.

The graduation ceremonies created memorable moments for students and their families as the district honored another successful graduating class and celebrated the bright futures ahead for its newest alumni.



Hazelwood School District

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To the Hazelwood School District Faculty, Staff, and School Community,

This school year was filled with many accomplishments, and I could not be prouder of the progress we made together. From academic growth to extracurricular achievements, our students continued to impress and inspire us throughout the year. Our focus remained on perseverance, growth, and excellence, and our scholars consistently rose to the occasion. Every day of learning mattered, and the dedication shown by our students, staff, and families played a tremendous role in making this year a success.

March was recognized nationwide as Music in Our Schools Month, a time to celebrate the important role music education plays in the lives of our students. Throughout the month, HSD proudly highlighted the dedication and talent of our student musicians through concerts and community events. I had the pleasure of attending both the All-String Orchestra Concert and the Choir Concert held at Central High, and I was truly impressed by the exceptional talent and hard work our students demonstrated. Their performances reflected not only musical excellence, but also the discipline, teamwork, and confidence that music education so powerfully nurtures.

From the Desk of the Superintendent

Programs like these enriched the educational experience for our students and strengthened connections across our schools and the broader community. Music has a unique ability to bring people together, and it was inspiring to see that spirit on full display throughout the month.

I also had the pleasure of attending the Spring Showcase, where I experienced firsthand the incredible artistic talent across our district. The creativity and expression displayed in our students' work were truly remarkable. Events like these serve as an important reminder of the value of providing well-rounded opportunities that allow every student to shine.

One of the most meaningful highlights of the season was celebrating graduation with our senior students and their families. Watching our graduates walk across the stage was both powerful and inspiring. It represented not only their hard work and perseverance, but also the unwavering support of families, educators, and the entire community. We are incredibly proud of the Class of 2026 and look forward to all they will accomplish in the future.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support of our schools throughout this school year. Together, we celebrated tremendous accomplishments, supported our students through every challenge and milestone, and helped make this a successful and memorable year for all. Have a great summer!

Sincerely,

Dr. Nettie Collins-Hart

Hazelwood School District Superintendent



HSD News is a news magazine created by the district's Communications and Public Relations Department. You can contact the Communications and Public Relations Department at (314) 953-5045 or info@hazelwoodschooldistrict.org

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Spring Showcase Highlights Student Creativity and Innovation in HSD

The Hazelwood School District's annual Spring Showcase brought together students, families, and community partners on Saturday, March 7, 2026, for a vibrant celebration of creativity, innovation, and collaboration. Held at West High School, the event highlighted the incredible STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) work students had been developing throughout the school year.

From the moment attendees entered the gym, they were greeted by a colorful display of student artwork representing every school across the District. Walls and tables were filled with paintings, sculptures, mixed media pieces, and digital creations, each reflecting the unique perspectives and talents of HSD students. The showcase not only demonstrated technical skill, but also emphasized creativity, imagination, and personal expression.

Beyond the art displays, the event featured an impressive array of STEAM projects. Students proudly presented science fair experiments, engineering designs, and robotics demonstrations, engaging visitors with hands-on explanations and interactive elements. These projects highlighted critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration—skills students have been building all year.

In addition to celebrating student achievement, the showcase also served as a valuable resource for families. Community partners were on-site as part of a summer resource fair, offering information about camps, educational programs, and enrichment opportunities. Families had the chance to connect directly with local organizations, learning about ways to keep students engaged and inspired during the summer months.

Curriculum coordinator, Colleen Beckerle, reflected on the success of the event, saying, "This showcase truly captured the spirit of our students—their creativity, curiosity, and dedication. It was inspiring to see the community come together to celebrate their hard work while also connecting families with meaningful summer opportunities."

The Spring Showcase once again proved to be more than just an exhibition; it was a celebration of student voice, community partnership, and the power of STEAM education in Hazelwood School District.



Hazelwood School District Earns 2026 Dr. Rance Thomas Excellence in Community Partnership Award



distinction. Only one organization is selected each year.

HSD was chosen for its exceptional growth in partnership with STLCC–Florissant Valley, particularly over the past two years. The district has expanded dual credit and dual enrollment opportunities, including Central High’s Real-World Friday initiative, strengthened the Hazelwood East Early College program, and now represents 46% of the STEM Academy’s enrollment. District leaders and staff have remained deeply engaged through initiatives such as Mindset Mondays, increased dual credit participation across all high schools, and continued collaboration within career and technical education programs and advisory boards.

Superintendent Dr. Nettie Collins-Hart expressed gratitude for the recognition:

“We are deeply honored to receive the Dr. Rance Thomas Excellence in Community Partnership Award. This recognition affirms the hard work of our students, staff, and parents who are committed to expanding opportunities and strengthening our community. Hazelwood School District values our collaboration with STLCC–Florissant Valley, and this award inspires us to continue building pathways that empower our scholars and uplift the community.”

This recognition reflects Hazelwood School District’s ongoing commitment to service, partnership, and empowering scholars—living out the belief that, as Dr. King reminded us, greatness is found in serving others.

The Hazelwood School District has been named the 2026 recipient of the Dr. Rance Thomas Excellence in Community Partnership Award by St. Louis Community College–Florissant Valley, a distinguished honor recognizing organizations that embody the spirit of service and collaboration championed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The award was presented during the February MLK Celebration in the Florissant Valley campus theatre.

Presented annually during the campus’s MLK Celebration, the award recognizes one external partner whose work advances Dr. King’s mission while strengthening students’ and the broader community’s educational experience. First awarded in 2018 in honor of the late Dr. Rance Thomas, a beloved community leader who worked closely with North County Churches United for Racial Harmony and Justice, the recognition is considered a significant

From Classroom to Operating Room: Central High Student Observes Live Surgeries

For many high school students interested in healthcare, observing a real surgery can feel far off. For Hazelwood Central High School junior Lexa Rodriquez-Fernandez, that opportunity came early through the CAPS (Center for Advanced Professional Studies) program.

CAPS provides students with real-world experience by partnering with local professionals. Through the program, Rodriguez spent a day at Christian Hospital observing three surgeries with urology surgeon, Dr. Arnold Bullock.

"It was my first day in the rotation," Rodriguez-Fernandez said. "They told me I'd be able to watch a surgery the next day. I was like, 'Are you serious?'"

Although nervous about going to the hospital on her own, Rodriguez-Fernandez quickly settled in. "I kept thinking, 'What if I can't find my way around?' But once I got there, everything worked out."

She observed two kidney stone removal procedures and a prostate procedure in which tissue was collected for cancer testing. The experience challenged her expectations of the operating room. "I expected it to be chaotic and really noisy," she said. "But it was actually very calm. Everyone had their own responsibilities, and the team worked together."

At first, Rodriguez-Fernandez hesitated to get close. "I didn't want to look at the patient—I felt like it was their privacy," she said. "But the doctor encouraged me to come closer so I could understand what was happening."

As she became more comfortable, she gained a deeper appreciation for teamwork. "People were charting, handing instruments, and monitoring the patient. Everyone was there to help each other."

The experience renewed her interest in becoming a surgeon. "I originally wanted to, but the years of school made me unsure. After seeing the surgery, it made me want to do it again."

Impressed with her enthusiasm, Dr. Bullock invited her to return. "He gave me his card so I can shadow him again," Rodriguez-Fernandez said.

She also discovered an interest in urology. "It wasn't just the surgery—it was how everything worked together."



Through CAPS, students split their day between school and internships, rotating through hospital departments and building professional connections. Rodriguez-Fernandez credits her teachers, counselors, and parents for their support.

Though she describes herself as shy, the experience pushed her out of her comfort zone. Her motivation remains constant: helping others.

"Even when I was little, I wanted to help people," she said. "That goal is still the same."

With new connections and hands-on experience, Rodriguez-Fernandez plans to continue exploring a future in medicine.



Lexa (far right) pictured alongside her classmates.



Hazelwood West Sophomores Recognized in Young Writers Contest

Two Hazelwood West High School sophomores, Abigail Anderson and Eandie Nettles, are being recognized for their creativity and storytelling after being selected as finalists in the Unsolved 2026 Young Writers Contest for middle and high schoolers, which challenges students to craft an original, exciting crime fiction story in 100 words or fewer.

Both students learned about the contest shortly before submitting their entries and decided to participate simply to try something new. “I didn’t know anything about it until Ms. Becoat mentioned it in class,” Abigail said. “I was like, why not?”

Eandie had a similar experience, learning about the contest shortly before the deadline. “It was kind of a last-minute thing,” she shared. “I already had something written, but I had to minimize it to fit the 100-word limit.”

Despite the challenge, both students created suspenseful stories filled with twists. Abigail, who enjoys mystery novels, wrote about a girl searching for her friend, only to discover a shocking truth. Eandie’s story took a darker turn, focusing on a haunted location and ending with a chilling cliffhanger. “She got a message on her phone that said, ‘run,’ and I ended it there,” Eandie explained.

Both students were surprised to learn they were selected as two of the contest’s finalists, with the opportunity to have their work

published and potentially earn a scholarship. “Once I really read it, I realized how cool it was,” Abigail said. “It’s going to look great for college.” Eandie added that it took a moment to sink in, saying, “I didn’t really have any words at first.”

Outside of the contest, writing remains an important creative outlet for both students. Abigail is currently co-writing a fantasy novel with a friend, while Eandie balances her interest in writing with drawing and sketching.

When asked for advice on encouraging students to explore writing, both encouraged creativity and exploration. “Expand your creativity,” Abigail said. “If you limit it, you miss out on experiencing things in a fun way,” Eandie suggested, starting small and reading often to build ideas and confidence.

While the two students from our district were not selected as contest winners, both had their work published as part of the **Stranger Saga** series, an accomplishment that reflects the quality of their writing and creativity. We are proud of their achievement and the recognition they received.

Both students have made Hazelwood West proud by stepping outside their comfort zones and showcasing their talent. Their success is a reminder that sometimes taking a chance can lead to exciting opportunities.

Unstoppable: Brown's Fourth Grade Author's Journey Through Adversity



Aiden Love may only be in the fourth grade, but his story carries the weight, wisdom, and inspiration of someone far beyond his years.

A student at Brown Elementary, Aiden is not just a kid navigating school life—he is a published author, a health warrior, and a role model for children facing similar challenges. Diagnosed

with asthma at just six months old and later developing an autoimmune disorder, Aiden has spent much of his life learning how to manage his health. But instead of letting those challenges define him, he chose to turn them into purpose.

That purpose became his first book: **It's Your Breath in My Lungs**. The title itself reflects a deeply personal and spiritual perspective. Aiden explains that it was inspired by his belief and inner strength to keep going, even in difficult moments. His faith-based message runs through his work, encouraging children who might feel constrained by their circumstances.

At its core, Aiden's book is about resilience. It reminds young readers that even when life feels restrictive, they can still dream, play, and grow. His message is simple but powerful: you are stronger than your struggles.

Writing the book wasn't easy. Aiden admits he felt both nervous and excited when it was finished. Sharing his story with others, especially speaking about it publicly, pushed him out of his comfort zone. But the pride of accomplishing something so meaningful outweighed the fear.

And he didn't do it alone.

Aiden's mother played a key role in bringing his vision to life, assisting with the writing process and connecting him with an illustrator and publisher. Still, she makes it clear that the heart of the project belongs to Aiden. Her pride is unmistakable,

especially after watching him persevere through serious health challenges, including a recent stay in the ICU, while continuing to share his book with others.

Even in the hospital, Aiden's impact was evident. Patients and staff alike were inspired by his story, and many asked that his book be made available to others. In those moments, his journey became bigger than himself—it became a source of hope.

Adding to the uniqueness of his project, Aiden also created a companion coloring book. Designed to help kids engage creatively, it allows them to understand asthma while expressing themselves through art. It's a thoughtful extension of his mission: to educate, empower, and uplift.

Now, Aiden is already looking ahead. He plans to write a second book, continuing his story with themes of healing, freedom, and faith. His journey is just beginning, but his voice is already making a lasting impact.

When asked what message he wants to leave with others, Aiden keeps it simple:

"Stay strong. Be brave. Keep going!"

In a world that often underestimates young voices, Aiden Love is proof that courage, faith, and determination have no age limit.





From Hazelwood East to Boston: Nadya Young Selected as National Medical Delegate

Hazelwood East High School senior Nadya Young is headed to Boston this summer as a delegate for the prestigious Congress of Future Medical Leaders, representing both her school and

the state of Missouri. The national honors program recognizes high-achieving students pursuing careers in medicine and requires a minimum 3.5 GPA along with strong ACT or SAT scores. Nadya was selected.

“At first, I was very confused and excited,” she said of the unexpected notification. “It came in a thick envelope, and I had never heard of the Congress.” After sharing the news with her family, the significance of the honor became clear. “It’s really an honor... for them to pick me.”

Nadya’s interest in medicine began early and has developed into a goal of becoming a dermatologist. “For my medical career, I would like to pursue dermatology,” she said. She plans to attend Xavier University in Fall 2026, majoring in biology (pre-med) with a minor in business administration, and hopes to later study dermatology at Howard University.

Her interest in dermatology grew from a mix of personal curiosity about skincare and exposure to medical shows. “I thought I had acne... then I came across Dr. Pimple Popper and decided that is what I want to do.”

Nadya’s selection reflects more than academic success. Throughout high school, she has been actively involved in:

- Softball (freshman and sophomore years)
- Cheerleading (sophomore through senior year)
- FBLA and DECA
- Student Council
- Fishing Club
- Leadership roles outside of school

She emphasizes the importance of balance and discipline. “It’s not just what you do in school, but outside as well,” she

said. “When you’re in class, make sure you’re learning, completing your work on time, and doing it with integrity.”

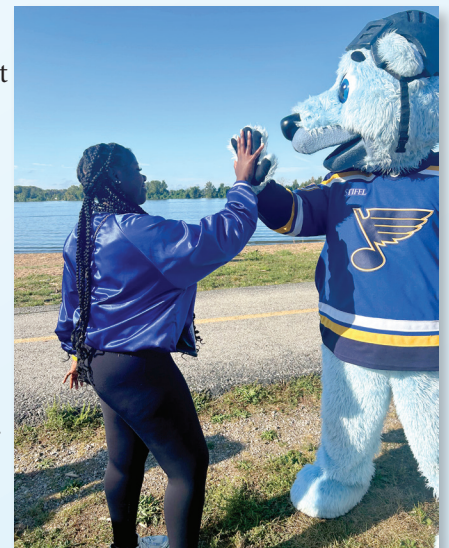
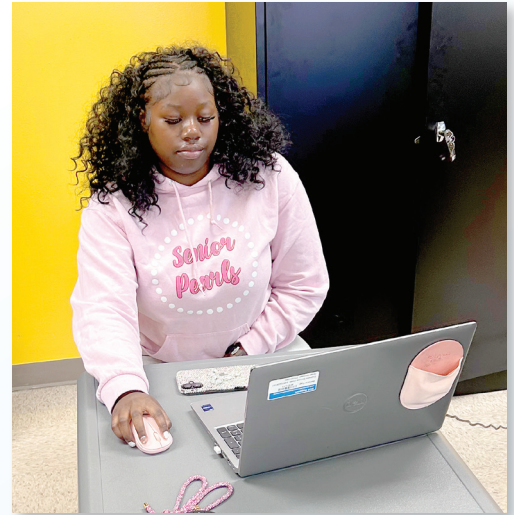
Although she does not know who recommended her, Nadya recognizes that her efforts were noticed. “I know I’ve been in good standing with the administration,” she said, adding that the honor brings both pride and responsibility.

Her advice to underclassmen: stay focused, stay involved, and build strong relationships.

This summer, Nadya will travel to Boston for the first time and is especially excited about hands-on experiences. “I’m looking forward to viewing surgeries and listening to lectures... I know they’ll have a lot of interesting and informational things.”

For Nadya, the opportunity is about more than recognition—it’s preparation for a future in medicine, leadership, and service. Her message to peers reflects that mindset: “Make sure you do enough to be proud of yourself... not what others are doing, but what makes you proud.”

As she prepares to graduate and step onto a national stage, Nadya Young represents Hazelwood East with discipline, purpose, and heart—and a bright future in medicine ahead.





One Thousand Books and Counting: A Lusher Kindergartener's Inspiring Start

At Lusher Elementary, one kindergarten student is already making headlines for an extraordinary achievement. Malachi Henderson, a bright and determined young reader, has read 1,000 books before even starting kindergarten—a milestone that reflects both dedication and a love for learning. The 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program is sponsored by the St. Louis County Library.

In a recent interview at his school, Malachi shared that the journey to 1,000 books took time and consistency. "It was good," he said simply, reflecting on the experience. Over the course of a year, he read daily, often with family support. "Most of them I read with my mom, some with my dad, and some I read on my own," Malachi explained, highlighting the role his family played in encouraging his reading habits.

Like many children his age, Malachi enjoys books filled with adventure and familiar characters. His favorites include stories about *Paw Patrol*, *Spider-Man*, and *Biscuit*. But one book stood out above the rest: *The Little Engine That Could*.

He explained his choice with surprising insight: he admired

how the little train kept going even when others doubted it. The story's message of perseverance closely mirrors Malachi's own journey toward reading 1,000 books, an accomplishment that required patience, effort, and determination.

When asked how it felt to reach such a big goal, Malachi didn't hesitate: "It feels good, and I'm happy." His hard work didn't go unnoticed. He earned rewards, including a coloring book and Play-Doh, and even gained local attention, including being featured on the local news.

Teachers and staff praised Malachi not only for his achievement but also for the example he sets for others. When asked what advice he would give to his classmates, his answer was simple but powerful: "You should read. It's good for you."

Malachi Henderson's story is a reminder that big accomplishments can start with small, consistent steps. He proves that a love of reading can open doors at any age.



West High's Alaina Hubecky Named Hazelwood School District 2025-2026 Teacher of the Year

Alaina Hubecky, a science teacher at Hazelwood West High School, is Hazelwood School District's 2025-2026 Teacher of the Year! Kicking off her teaching career with HSD in August 2018, Hubecky has brought her passion and expertise to Hazelwood students for the past eight years.

Throughout her time at West High, Hubecky has taught 9th grade Physics First, 10th grade Biology, and 11th grade Chemistry. She also leads the science department at Hazelwood West High as the department manager.

"I am honored to receive this award alongside esteemed colleagues. I am forever grateful for my family and friends' support every day," Hubecky said.

Ms. Hubecky was surprised with her award in her classroom with a special visit from HSD superintendent Dr. Collins-Hart and West High principal Dr. Demetrius Adams. She was also recognized at the annual PTA Founders' Day event in February at Hazelwood Central High. She was presented with a plaque and a golden apple trophy. In a room full of school-

based teachers of the year and support staff honorees, she shared her award with them, as well as her students and the Hazelwood community and families.

"This award isn't a reflection of me; it's a reflection of all of us. It represents our shared commitment to education and our belief that every student deserves a chance to succeed," she said. "I'm proud to belong to this community."

Hubecky earned her Bachelors of Education degree, with an emphasis in Chemistry, and her Masters of Science in Learning Technologies and Design, both from the University of Missouri-Columbia. When she's not in the classroom teaching, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, crocheting, and reading.

Congratulations to Ms. Hubecky, and to all the teachers nominated for the 2025-2026 teacher of the year award. Our HSD teachers are true classroom heroes, and we appreciate all the contributions you make to educate and lead our students.

HSD Celebrates the Power of Music During Music In Our Schools Month

Throughout March, the Hazelwood School District joined schools across the country in celebrating Music In Our Schools Month, a national observance that highlights the importance of music education and the opportunities it provides for students to grow creatively, academically, and socially.

Across the District, students, educators, and families came together for a series of performances and events that showcased the talent and dedication of HSD's student musicians. From concerts to community presentations, the month offered numerous opportunities for students to share their passion for music and for the community to celebrate the impact of music education.



The celebration began March 3, when student musicians were featured during a presentation at the Hazelwood School District Board of Education meeting at The Learning Center. The presentation offered Board members and community members a firsthand look at the strength of the District's music programs and the commitment of its students and educators.



Later in the week, student musicians and artists participated in the Spring Art Showcase on March 7 at Hazelwood West High School. The event highlighted creative work from across the District and included musical performances that reflected the energy and artistry of HSD's music students.

Students continued to shine during two major concerts held at Hazelwood Central High School. On March



11, the District hosted the All-String Orchestra Concert in the Central High Field House, bringing together talented string musicians from multiple schools. The following evening, March 12, choirs from across the District performed during the Choir Concert in the Central High School Auditorium, filling the space with powerful performances and collaborative spirit.

Music In Our Schools Month also extended beyond the stage through a special HSD Podcast episode highlighting the District's music program. During the episode, Hazelwood orchestra director James McKay and Hazelwood Central High band student Tonnice Kamkwala Jr. talked about their experiences in music and what Music In Our Schools Month means to them.



For Hazelwood's music educators, the month served as an opportunity to celebrate both student achievement and the broader value of music education.



"Each performance this month was a reflection of our students' hard work, growth, and passion for music," said HSD band director Dr. James Garrett. "Watching them take the stage with confidence and pride shows how deeply music education shapes not only their skills, but their character. These moments remind us that when students are given the opportunity to express themselves through music, they truly thrive."

As the month concluded, the performances and events served as a powerful reminder of how music enriches the Hazelwood School District. By fostering creativity, collaboration, and confidence, the District's music programs continue to inspire students and strengthen connections across the community.





Goal Getter: Octavia Hall's Record-Breaking Soccer Run at Hazelwood East

Under the bright sky at Hazelwood East's soccer field, senior and team captain Octavia Hall is doing what she has always loved—scoring goals and leading her team.

"I've been playing all my life," she said. "I've been at Hazelwood East since the eighth-grade program, and soccer has always been a big part of who I am."

Entering her final high school season, Octavia already has an impressive record. Ranging between 30 and 40 goals scored, she currently ranks third in the state and is approaching her 50th career goal.

"Octavia is one of the best players I've ever seen," said Coach Watz. "She's consistently among the top 20 goal scorers in the state and is one away from her 50th."

Still, for Octavia, the game is about more than statistics. "Everyone loves scoring," she said. "But this season I just want to have fun and enjoy my last year."

She has also witnessed major growth in the program. When she joined as a freshman, the team had about 15 players. Now, nearly 40 athletes fill varsity and junior varsity rosters.

Much of that growth has come under Coach Watz, who began coaching during her freshman year. "He's a really good coach," Octavia said. "It's been amazing seeing how the program has grown."

As captain, she takes pride in mentoring teammates. "Players come up to me and ask how to do things," she said. "I really enjoy teaching everyone out here."

Looking ahead, Octavia is considering the University of Louisville to study radiology. While Louisville competes at the Division I level, she is exploring playing club soccer or potentially walking on. She has also received interest from several National Association Intercollegiate Athletics programs.

The season runs through early May, with Senior Night standing out as a highlight. "We have about 12 seniors," she said. "They announce our names, our grades, and how long we've been playing—it's something you'll always remember."

As she closes her high school career, Octavia hopes her legacy goes beyond records. "I hope other players keep going, keep scoring, and most importantly keep enjoying the game," she said.

For Octavia, soccer has always been about more than goals—it's about teamwork, growth, and passion. "It shouldn't feel like a chore," she said. "It's something you should enjoy with others."

With her leadership, talent, and love for the game, Octavia Hall's final season is one Spartans—and soccer fans—won't forget.

Hazelwood Athletics Thriving Through Growth, Opportunity, and Leadership

Athletics across the Hazelwood School District are on the rise, driven by increased participation, competitive success, and a strong focus on developing student-athletes from middle school through high school. District leaders and coaches are working collaboratively to expand opportunities while emphasizing academics, character, and community pride.

Hazelwood East High School continues to build momentum, with student-athletes excelling both competitively and academically. This year, three wrestlers qualified for the state tournament, while football players earned All-District and All-State honors. Soccer and volleyball athletes also received All-District recognition, and multiple teams produced All-Tournament selections. Growth has been supported by enhanced strength and conditioning programs, expanded activities like esports and robotics, and a partnership with Nike that has improved uniforms and equipment. New opportunities such as girls flag football are also increasing participation. Leaders point to a strong culture of “Spartan Pride,” along with collaboration across the District and a growing middle school pipeline, as key drivers of future success.

Hazelwood West High School has seen steady improvement across athletics and academics. Teams in boys soccer, girls softball, and girls swim have performed well, alongside state qualifiers in wrestling and track. Participation is rising, particularly in boys swim and girls tennis, and the addition of girls flag football has already led to a collegiate signing. Coaches are taking a collaborative, intentional approach, attending clinics and aligning programs with middle schools to better prepare athletes. Academic accountability remains a priority, with biweekly grade checks reinforcing the District’s “students first” philosophy. Looking ahead, West is focused on sustaining growth through strong leadership, community trust, and investment in youth programs.

Hazelwood Central High School is also trending upward, with competitive performances in conference play and multiple postseason qualifiers earning all-conference honors. Increased participation has strengthened program depth, while a focus on clear expectations, accountability, and academic success has helped drive improvement. Stronger communication with families and closer ties to middle school programs are further supporting growth. Leaders aim to build sustainable programs that consistently



compete while fostering pride across the school community.

At the middle school level, programs are laying a strong foundation for future success. Recent highlights include district championships for Hazelwood West Middle School in boys soccer, football, and girls volleyball, and a sweep of boys and girls basketball titles by Northwest Middle School. Central Middle School wrestling captured its second consecutive district championship. Enhancements such as earlier football practices, a district-wide jamboree, and competition against out-of-district teams are elevating play. Hudl cameras are providing valuable game analysis, while partnerships with local organizations are improving access to quality facilities. Camps, shared events, and increased use of high school facilities are helping students envision their future in Hazelwood athletics, while family engagement efforts continue to grow.

From middle school programs to varsity competition, Hazelwood athletics are united by a commitment to developing well-rounded student-athletes and building programs in which the community can be proud. With strong leadership, expanding opportunities, and a focus on continuous improvement, the district is well-positioned for sustained success.

From Dreams to Destinations: East High Athletes Commit to Their Future



East High's signing day was filled with excitement, pride, and powerful reminders that dedication truly pays off. Four outstanding seniors — Kenneth Cleaves, Terrance Little, Excell Thomas, and Oscar Chatman — officially committed to continuing their academic and athletic careers at the collegiate level in football, each with a unique journey but a shared message: the work matters.

Family members, coaches, teammates, and staff gathered to celebrate these scholar-athletes as they signed to Missouri Valley College, Upper Iowa University, Milliken University, and Southwest Baptist University.

Kenneth proudly announced his commitment to Missouri Valley College, expressing gratitude and enthusiasm for what lies ahead. When asked about his initial reaction after learning of his acceptance, he shared, "I was really excited knowing that I got somewhere to go at this high school and will keep playing college ball."

For Kenneth, the opportunity to continue competing is matched by his excitement for growth and new experiences. "Really, you get to meet new people, new coaches, and just have fun." His advice to younger student-athletes reflects the mindset that carried him to this moment, "Just make sure you do your work, stay on task, and always work hard for what you want."

Senior Terrance Little committed to Upper Iowa University after navigating a competitive recruitment process. While the decision wasn't easy, it was ultimately rewarding. "It was really a hard decision finding what school I was going to go to because a lot of schools were making offers to me, but when I really figured it out, I was kind of excited." Looking ahead, Terrance is eager to embrace the full college experience. His advice to future athletes is simple but powerful: "Just put in the work."

You're gonna get what you put in."

Excell Thomas, a senior at Hazelwood East, signed with Milliken University to continue both his football and academic career. His journey was one of discovery and determination. "At first, I didn't know if I was going to college for football. I didn't know if I was going to college at all. But once I started reaching out to coaches and seeing the exposure that I was getting, I really locked in and went ahead and committed." When he received his acceptance, Excell felt relief and pride. "It was not surprising, but it was a relief for me because it is a private college, so they have higher expectations. I was really excited and relaxed when I finally made my decision." He closed his interview with school spirit and confidence: "Go Big Blue."

Oscar Chatman Jr., another proud senior from Hazelwood East, committed to Southwest Baptist University after narrowing his choice to two schools. For Oscar, the deciding factor was comfort and connection. "With Southwest Baptist, it felt like home, and it wasn't too far from St. Louis, so I wanted to stick around and stay in the area." His excitement was immediate once he received his acceptance: "I was very excited because at that point, that was the school I wanted to go to." Oscar also offered meaningful advice rooted in long-term discipline: "Everything matters starting from your freshman year—weight lifting, taking things seriously. Just everything matters."

Signing day at East High was more than a ceremony — it was the culmination of years of early mornings, late nights, practices, lessons, growth, and perseverance. Each of these student-athletes demonstrated that success is earned through consistency, commitment, and belief in oneself. As they take the next step toward collegiate athletics, they leave behind a powerful message for the next generation of East High students: Work hard. Stay focused. Trust the process. Your moment will come! Congratulations to Kenneth, Terrance, Excell, and Oscar — HSD and East High are proud of you!



Central High's Apex Legends Team Earns Shot at Nationals

After falling just short in last year's state esports competition, Hazelwood Central High School's esports team returned determined to go further. This season, that effort paid off. After finishing second in the state Apex Legends tournament, the senior trio has earned a chance to compete nationally.

"Last year's third-place finish in Overwatch 2 was an amazing milestone for our program, and seeing three of those same players come through this year to earn second place in Apex Legends made this achievement even more meaningful," said Esports Head Coach Dr. Bryan Hindrichs. "It really shows their growth, resilience, and commitment. I'm extremely proud of the hard work Morgan Wilbret, Larry Parker, and Keegan Daniels put in, and their dedication to both the game and each other."

For the team, the accomplishment reflects both competitive growth and strong teamwork built over their final years of playing together. "We were undefeated up until the finals in state," said senior Larry Parker. "We're still kind of bummed about second place. We still want more, so at nationals we're definitely looking to take first and finish with at least one first-place win before we graduate."

Last year, the team placed third in state competing in Overwatch 2. This year, they switched to Apex Legends, a fast-paced shooter requiring strategy, communication, and quick decision-making. The state tournament also used a unique 3-on-3 format instead of the traditional battle royale mode. "Apex Legends is usually a battle royale, but at state we played 3-on-3," Parker said. "It was very fun and chaotic because of the new format."

Senior Morgan Wilbret said the format reduced

randomness. "At first, I didn't think we'd like 3-on-3, but it became more fun because there was less luck involved. It was just our team versus theirs." The jump from third to second place came from experience and continued practice. "Last year was our first year doing esports," Wilbret said. "We were still learning how everything worked."

"The difference this year is our critical thinking," Parker added. "We kept improving and applied what we learned from other games."

While individual skill matters, the team credits communication and collaboration as their biggest strengths. "One of the biggest aspects of our gameplay is how willing we are to accept others' ideas," said senior Keegan Daniels. "There's no real team captain—we make decisions together." Each player brings a unique style, allowing them to adapt quickly. "I like to rush," Parker said. "But if my teammates say wait, we wait. If long-range is better, we adjust."

Despite finishing second, the team received an invitation to nationals—an unexpected but welcome opportunity. "Making it to nationals felt like a big relief," Daniels said. "I didn't expect another chance to go further, so it's great." For the seniors, the April 10 competition was their final chance to compete together before graduating. "It feels like a second chance at redemption," Parker said. "I'm excited."

While proud of their progress, the team's goal is clear. "We're aiming for number one," Wilbret said. "But making it this far shows how much we've grown." As they prepare for nationals, Hazelwood Central's esports team plans to finish their high school careers the same way they've played all season—together, competitive, and aiming for the top.

To Offset Loss of Revenue and Maintain Education Programs, Prop H Placed on August 4 Ballot

A Zero-Rate-Change Proposal: Keeping the Tax Rate the Same



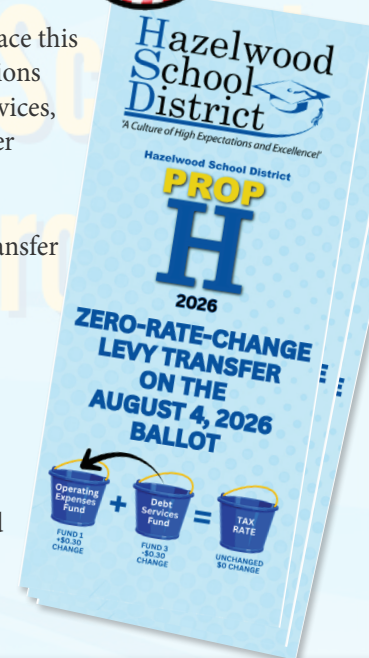
To offset a projected \$30 million in state and local funding loss over the next five years, Hazelwood School District has placed Prop H, a zero-rate-change proposal, on the August 4 ballot. While the ballot language shows a 30-cent increase to the operating levy and a corresponding 30-cent decrease to the debt service levy, the district's overall tax rate would remain unchanged for residents and businesses. Unlike the 2022 Prop H bond issue, which funded capital projects, this measure would allow the district to transfer funds to support day-to-day operations.

The measure is intended to help offset significant revenue losses, including a \$4 million reduction in state funding this year and a projected loss of at least \$30 million over the next five years due to reduced state funding and the senior property tax freeze.

District leaders say that without a solution to replace this lost revenue, Hazelwood could face difficult decisions affecting academic programs, student support services, transportation, extracurricular activities, and other resources that help students succeed.

If approved, Prop H would allow the district to transfer approximately \$8 million annually beginning in the 2026–27 fiscal year, helping maintain current programs and services while providing greater financial stability without affecting the district's ability to meet existing bond obligations.

The measure requires a simple majority vote to pass. Election Day is Tuesday, August 4, 2026, and registered voters living within Hazelwood School District boundaries are eligible to vote. The voter registration deadline is July 8, 2026.



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