



SCHOOL REPORT

July 2026



A MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT DR. ERIN RATHKE

As another school year comes to a close, I find myself reflecting with immense gratitude on all that we have accomplished together as a community.

One of the highlights of the year was celebrating the Class of 2026 as they walked across the stage to receive their diplomas. There was something especially meaningful and nostalgic about watching our graduates reach this milestone on the beautiful stadium fields of Chaska High School and Chanhassen High School. We were equally proud to celebrate the accomplishments of our IAA and STAR graduates, whose perseverance, growth, and achievements reflect the many pathways to success that we value in ECCS. The weather could not have been more memorable. While it may have been a touch warmer than some of us would have preferred, we were grateful to trade umbrellas and weather delays for a little sunshine and summer heat. The joy, pride, and excitement shared by students, families, staff, and community members created memories that will last a lifetime and served as a powerful reminder of the impact our schools have on students' and families' lives.

This year's accomplishments extend far beyond graduation ceremonies. Across Eastern Carver County Schools, our students excelled academically, athletically, and in the fine arts. Whether in classrooms, on stages, on fields and courts, or through countless extracurricular opportunities, students demonstrated remarkable talent, dedication, and perseverance. What continues to impress me most is the extraordinary level of student participation in activities, athletics, clubs, music, theater, and leadership opportunities. The number of students who choose to get involved and contribute to their school communities truly reflects the strength of our district and the opportunities available to every learner.

As we celebrate this year's successes, we are also thoughtfully preparing for the future. Our teams are already hard at work planning for the 2026-27 school year, ensuring that we continue to provide exceptional learning experiences for every student. We are especially excited to welcome our newest learners, the Class of 2039, as they begin their educational journey with us.

WE REMAIN DEEPLY GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT OF OUR COMMUNITY AND FOR THE SUCCESSFUL PASSAGE OF THE OPERATING REFERENDUM. YOUR INVESTMENT IN OUR SCHOOLS ENABLES US TO PURSUE STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS THAT EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND SUPPORT THE OUTSTANDING WORK OF OUR STAFF. WE DO NOT TAKE THAT TRUST LIGHTLY. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE FUTURE OF OUR DISTRICT COULD HAVE LOOKED VERY DIFFERENT WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT, AND WE ARE COMMITTED TO BEING THOUGHTFUL STEWARDS OF THOSE RESOURCES.

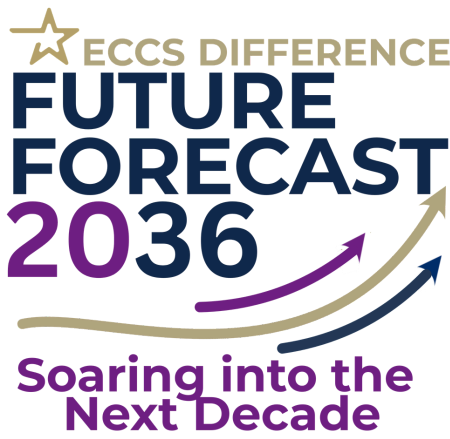


Learn more about the strategic investments we are making thanks to the passage of the November 2025 operating referendum.

Thank you for your continued partnership, support, and belief in our schools. The successes we celebrate today are possible because of the collective efforts of our students, families, staff, community members, and supporters. We look forward to building on this momentum as we prepare for another outstanding year ahead.

In Partnership,

Dr. Erin Rathke
Superintendent



As we look ahead, we are excited to launch our Future Forecast 2036 initiative, a collaborative effort to envision the future of Eastern Carver County Schools. Over the coming year, students, parents, staff, community members, and district leaders will come together as part of our Future Forecast 2036 Input Team to explore opportunities, consider emerging trends, and help shape the future direction of our district. We are deeply grateful for the many individuals who have committed their time, expertise, and perspectives to this important work. Together, we will build on our strong foundation while imagining new possibilities that ensure ECCS continues to provide exceptional opportunities for students for years to come.

SAVE THE DATE
Tuesday, August 11

**BACK-TO-SCHOOL
RESOURCE FAIR**

Free backpacks (while supplies last)

Connect and ask questions:

- Transportation
- Technology
- Health Services
- Community Education
- Activities and Athletics
- Student Enrollment
- Equity department
- Nutrition Services
- Community partners

Tuesday, August 11 | 3:00-6:00 | Chaska Middle School West

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EYE ON ECCS: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN LITERACY

For the last Eye on ECCS of the school year, we ventured into five elementary classrooms to celebrate student achievement this year. To reflect with teachers on the gains students made, and how teachers are evolving within the Science of Reading literacy practices, anchored by the state of Minnesota’s READ Act. It mandates that schools use structured literacy – systematic instruction in phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

BREAKING DOWN READING

Maren Yue, fourth grade teacher at Jonathan Elementary, found her students had skyrocketing data fluency scores. They were able to accurately read, but their comprehension scores weren’t showing that same growth.

“It came down to that basic sentence structure for increased comprehension. Breaking it down sentence by sentence. Re-reading the text with a clearer purpose,” Yue said. “We take FastBridge testing three times a year. It flags those kids who are maybe in the at-risk category. But it’s the minute-to-minute, day-to-day observations, exit slips, informal observations, that are really telling us what is working and what isn’t working so we can do something differently to make sure we are understanding what that missing puzzle piece is.”

Yue said as text becomes more rigorous in fourth grade, the importance of understanding the meaning grows with the challenge. “It made us think about it some more. It was how are we going to attack that. How are we going to employ reading strategies to really break down those complex strategies?” Yue said.

“We have a really good curriculum with BAR (Being A Reader). It’s that fine balance between keeping that love and enjoyment for reading and bringing in text that is high interest, high engagement, but also at that complex rigor level.”



DEEP DIVE

Kristi Volp, kindergarten teacher at Chanhassen Elementary, was first introduced to PRESS – Path to Reading Excellence in School Sites – through Carol Redmond, the ECCS elementary literacy coach, last school year. PRESS is driven by research-based approaches to reading that address tiered interventions to help struggling learners or whole class intervention.

“This year I had an opportunity to take some time and dig deep into our FastBridge data and identify some areas where we felt like we could support kids better. We pulled out word segmenting as an area that students were missing; being able to take apart a word and then blend each sound individually,” Volp said.

Volp used PRESS methods to set a routine and create repetition with the content. “We were able to push them a little farther than we had been doing before. Instead of looking at 3-letter segments, we went right into four letters,” Volp said.

“I saw a huge impact using PRESS. We’re getting to our FastBridge testing here at the end of the school year and I know they’re going to do so well on segmenting because they’ve had all of this practice. I see it everyday in their learning,” Volp said.

GIVING STUDENTS TOOLS TO SUCCEED

In first grade at Carver Elementary, Shannon Pepper gives students a weekly checklist for them to monitor their reading jobs. Whether it’s read-spell-read flashcards, sound cards with accompanying pictures for letter sound recognition, high frequency word lists, or lesson plans, they know what’s expected of them and gives them direction when the teacher is working with a small group. It is that independent work stamina that Pepper works with her students to build up throughout the school year.

“Finding and creating things at each student’s level is super important. I do a weekly packet that has the specific skills for each group of learners. At the beginning of the year they are working on it independently and then eventually I let them work in groups so they can chat a little bit. It ends up being one of the students’ favorite activities. It’s all about them reading something and then having to retain and comprehend what they read. When they’re this little, you’re not actually sure that they are doing it. These activities are tools for me to see that they are actually doing the work,” Pepper said.

Utilizing paraprofessionals and volunteers, Pepper strives to meet all small groups three-to-four times per week.

“I love first grade testing because we’re doing 1-on-1 testing. All reading-based. I love that I’m able to see the progress first-hand. It’s purely can you read, and that’s my goal. I always say in first grade I’m teaching them how to read and in second grade they are reading to learn,” she said.

INDIVIDUALIZED DAILY READING

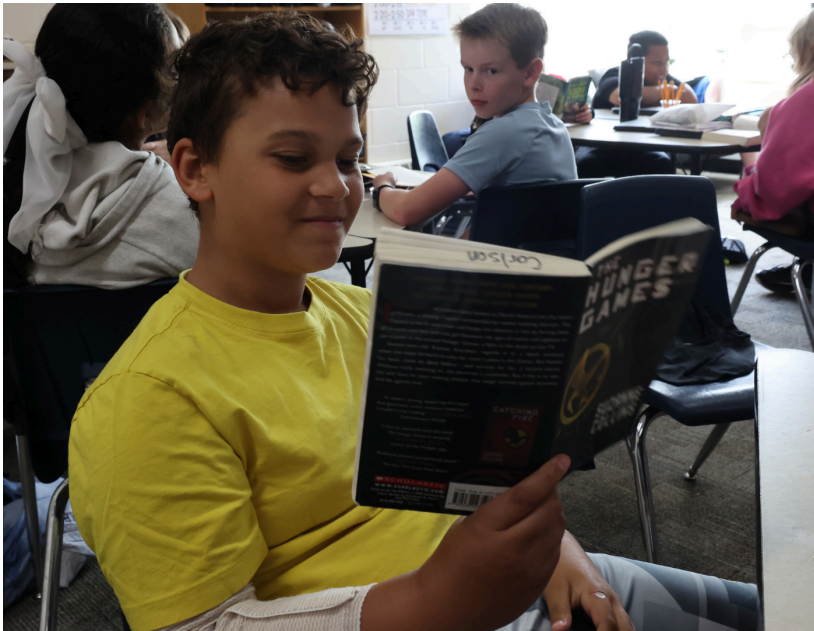
When students are reading in school, building confidence and finding materials that interest them, they’re more likely to read at home.

“Every day in third grade they’re doing their 20 minutes of IDR (Individualized Daily Reading) time completely with their choice book, but also sticking to a theme around what we’re working on so they can apply their skill to their independent book. Giving them choice, you see the interest level in reading go up a lot,” Carver Elementary third grade teacher Megan Cotner said. Cotner uses a Book Club method to have peers share what they read to increase their retention.

“We do fluency work where they work with a partner that is completely student-led. They begin to chat about their books and the interest builds again because they are telling their partner what they liked about the book, and why they should read the book, too,” she said.

“Being more student-led has always been one of my goals. I don’t want to be talking to them all day,” Cotner added. “I want them to take some of the learning in their own hands. They know what to do because we have the same daily routines. And I think that’s where we see some of the higher gains is because they lead.”

In Brett Carlson’s fifth grade classroom at Bluff Creek Elementary, students conclude the school day with 30 minutes of IDR. “The reality of the digital world is fewer and fewer kids are reading at home, so it’s a priority for us to carve out dedicated time for independent reading,” he said. “They’ll say, ‘I don’t like to read.’ What they mean is reading is hard for them; that’s how to translate that. You have to find a book that doesn’t frustrate them but isn’t too easy for them or vacation reading. Once we foster a structure or habits, then it becomes not just reading to read, but reading to learn, which is what they experience in secondary (schools).”



CLASS OF 2026



740

Number of graduates

85%

Pursuing higher education

\$200K+

Local scholarships awards

3.31

GPA average



SENIOR
SPOTLIGHT
VIDEO

Superintendent Dr. Rathke sat down with a group of seniors from each high school to ask them about their experience in ECCS, where they are headed next, and how ECCS prepared them for that future!

Take a few minutes to watch the Senior Spotlight video using the QR code or visit eccs.mn/ss2026.



CELEBRATING ECCS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

TRACK AND FIELD: Chaska High School seniors, **Noella Ross** and **Joshua Schmidt**, successfully defended state titles in the 800 meters and pole vault, respectively, at the Class 3A State Tournament in June. Ross reached the top of the podium for a second consecutive year in the 800-meter race, capturing the title in a new Minnesota all-time record of 2:06.17. Schmidt, who became the state’s all-time leader in boys pole vault earlier this season at 17 ½ feet, set a state-meet record with a jump of 16 ½ feet for his second state title.

Also qualifying for state for the Hawks: **Justin Greathouse** (400 meters), **Fred Harris** (long jump), **Nick Robinson** (discus), **Ayla Schmitz** (high jump), and **Ofure Omozegiele** (shot put and discus).

Chanhassen High School had 11 athletes compete at the State Track and Field Meet. **MacKenzie Jensen** broke a school record en route to a second-place finish in pole vault, eclipsing the bar at 12 feet. The state qualifiers included: **Connor Heltemes** (3200 meters), **James Kopfmann** (100 and 200 meters), **Madelyn Faust** (400 meters), **Zay Dodoo** (400 meters), **Beraiah-Grace Dodoo** (300 hurdles), **Shyloh Beaton** (triple jump), **Alex Hardin** (high jump), and the 4x800 boys relay team of **Boston Pyle**, **Kaz Korzenowski**, **Isaak Feuerhelm**, and **Heltemes**.

GOLF: Chaska’s **Griffin Stein** and Chanhassen’s **Avin Schumacher** each earned all-state honors for their 36-hole performances at the Class 3A State Tournaments at Bunker Hills Golf Course in June. Stein carded scores of 73 and 70 to tie for fifth place in his state debut. Schumacher posted the tournament’s best score on Day Two with an under-par 70 to tie for 12th place.

SPEECH: ECCS was well-represented at the MSHSL State Speech Tournament in April. Chaska: **Kaitlin Schapira**; Chanhassen: **Mary Malone**, **Brielle Christenson**, **Kennedy Seibert**, **Clark Hazard**, **Grace Dodoo**, **Mabel Porthan**, **Sneha Kharel**, **Caroline Williams**, and **Isaac Rossow**. Williams and Rossow finished second together in the Duo category at the state meet.

DECA: **Charlie Bonneville**, **Rugved Bhavsar**, **Blake Thom**, and **Sophia Bixler** of Chaska High School, and **Ava Pumper**, **Joey Gilardi**, **Leah Jonsword**, **Maddie Knauff**, and **Makenzie Coy** of Chanhassen High School, traveled to Atlanta to participate in the International DECA Conference.

DRAMA: Chaska High School’s **Braylon Vollbrecht** was one of 24 students from across the state to selected by the Hennepin Arts Spotlight Showcase as a “Triple Threat” recipient; a prestigious recognition based on acting, dancing, singing, and leadership!



Joshua Schmidt and Noella Ross



MacKenzie Jensen



Griffin Stein



Avin Schumacher



Congratulations to Chaska High School’s Lisha Veerakumar on her first-place finish in Research Persuasive Writing & Speaking at the HOSA International Leadership Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana.



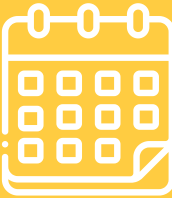
Leading the Chaska High School boys basketball team to a 25-game win streak and the program’s first Class 4A title since 2004, head coach Nick Hayes was named the Strib Varsity’s All-Minnesota Boys Sport Coach of the Year in June.



Congratulations to all the National Merit Scholars from Chaska and Chanhassen High Schools. Chaska HS Scholars: Parker Gingras, Samuel Hanson, Luke Johnson, and Ayden Pana. Chaska HS National Merit Finalists: Samuel Kvam and Kaitlin Schapira. Chanhassen HS National Merit Scholarship Winner: Clara Christenson.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR 2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR



Aug. 31: First Day of School Grades 6-12
Aug. 31-Sept. 1: Connect & Assess Days Grades K-5
Sept. 2: First Day of School Grades K-5
Sept. 4-7: No School - Labor Day Break
Oct. 15-16: No School - Education MN
Oct. 19: No School - Conference/Workshop
Oct. 30: No School - Conference/Workshop
Nov. 25-27: No School - Thanksgiving Break
Nov. 30: No School - Conference / Workshop
Dec. 23-Jan. 1: No School - Winter Break
Jan. 18: No School - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Jan. 19: No School - Conference / Workshop
Feb. 15: No School - President’s Day
Feb. 26: No School - Conference / Workshop
Mar. 22-26: No School - Spring Break
May 31: No School - Memorial Day
June 3: Last Day of School Grades K-12

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Carver Elementary: 952-556-1900
Chanhassen Elementary: 952-556-6700
Clover Ridge Elementary: 952-556-6900
Jonathan Elementary: 952-556-6500
La Academia: 952-556-6300
Victoria Elementary: 952-556-3000
Chaska Middle School East: 952-556-7600
Chaska Middle School West: 952-556-7400
Pioneer Ridge Middle School: 952-556-7800

Chanhassen High School: 952-556-3500
Chaska High School: 952-556-7100
Integrated Arts Academy: 952-556-6200

STAR: 952-556-6120
Family Learning Center: 952-556-6100
Community Education: 952-556-6400
Welcome Center: 952-556-6100
Transportation: 952-556-6160
Nutrition Services: 952-556-6145

SCHOOL REPORT

Published by the ECCS Community Relations Department.
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