



BEAR'S BULLETIN

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



WELCOME TO THE
FALL 2026 EDITION

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BE A BEAR!
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   /isd624
FOLLOW WHITE BEAR LAKE
AREA SCHOOLS

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Creating the Conditions to Build the Future

As the Building Our Future construction projects come to fruition – with the Early Childhood and Transition Education spaces at Sunrise being finalized to welcome those programs in the fall – it is a meaningful time to pause and reflect.

This transformation has been a massive undertaking. It began with the vision of former, and several of our current, School Board members. Over the course of this journey – from developing the plan to supporting the informational campaign and guiding the initial implementation – district and community leaders have played an essential role.

I remember sitting in my office shortly after joining the district when two of our coaching and teaching legends, Don Glover and Jim Galvin, stopped by. They asked when we were going to begin the facilities work that was so clearly needed. They were familiar with my work in a previous district and were energized by what might be possible here. As I recall, Mr. Galvin was ready to start knocking on doors that very day!

Continued on page V

TRANSLATIONS

Para Español por favor
llame al 651-407-7625

Xav tau ntawv Hmoob
hu rau 651-407-7623

FLIP TO SEE
COMMUNITY
EDUCATION &
RECREATION
CATALOG



Join us for 2026-27!

Find enrollment info for
students at all levels at
www.isd624.org/enroll!



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

School Board Meetings

- August 24 Work Session
- September 14 Regular Meeting
- September 28 Work Session
- October 12..... Regular Meeting
- October 26..... Work Session
- November 9 Regular Meeting
- November 23 Work Session
- December 14..... Regular Meeting

- » Board meetings begin at 5:30 p.m. in the Board Room at Sunrise Park and are open to the public.
- » Agendas, Board Packets, Minutes, Highlights and Video links are posted on the District’s website as they become available.
- » Regular School Board meetings are re-broadcast on Cable Channel 20 in the local viewing area the week of a regular business meeting:
 - Wed. at 2 p.m., 6 p.m. & 9 p.m.
 - Thurs. at 10 a.m.

WBLAHS - Manitou Campus Update

At the June School Board meeting, Associate Principal Jenni Sjosten shared an update on the district’s former Area Learning Center, which has been officially recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education as an Alternative Learning Program (ALP). As a program of White Bear Lake Area High School, this transition creates even stronger opportunities for collaboration with WBLAHS while deepening the program’s connection to the White Bear community.

As part of this transition, the program has been renamed “WBLAHS - Manitou Campus.” Associate Principal Sjosten shared that the name reflects the White Bear community’s rich history and sense of place. The meaning of Manitou – often understood as spirit or life force – also reflects the program’s commitment to honoring each student’s unique story, strengths and potential while providing personalized support throughout their educational journey.



Marketfest 2026

Thank you to those who stopped by to say hello to leaders and School Board members at our Marketfest booth and 3rd annual Spirit Night. We enjoyed saying hello and celebrating all things White Bear together!

Four School Board seats will be on the Nov. 3, 2026 General Election ballot. School Board Election information is available at isd624.org/SchoolBoardElection.

2026-27 and 2027-28 Calendars

The 2026-27 Academic Calendar and the 2027-28 Academic Calendar are available on the district’s website at isd624.org/about/calendar.

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

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

2026-27 Printed Calendars will be mailed to district families in August. Community members who would like a calendar can pick one up at Sunrise Park in September.

White Bear Lake Area Schools 2026-27 Academic Calendar

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

New District-wide Hires & Assignments



District-wide Principal on Special Assignment

Lindsey Samec has been hired as Principal on Special Assignment, a role that opened when Cynthia Mueller left White Bear to become Director of Teaching and Learning with Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools. Samec will work with principals and instructional coaches to support student literacy outcomes and the implementation of the district's strategic plan. She comes to us from Mounds View Public Schools, where she has served as a principal at Valentine Hills Elementary School and most recently at Highview Middle School. Her varied teaching experiences also include work in Minnesota, Michigan, the Dominican Republic and Colombia.



District-wide Educator on Special Assignment

Greta Thun has been hired to serve as Educator on Special Assignment on the Teaching and Learning team. Thun will provide instructional leadership through collaboration with principals and educators to support student math outcomes and the implementation of the district's strategic plan. She previously worked in White Bear, teaching multi-age, 2nd and 3rd grades at Oneka and Matoska International Elementary Schools before most recently serving as the Title I and PLC coordinator at Harambee Elementary School in Roseville Area Schools.



American Indian Education Program Coordinator

Tonya Flower was hired mid-year during 2025-26 to serve as the district's American Indian Education Program Coordinator. Flower joined White Bear from Interfaith Action of Greater St. Paul, where she served as American Indian Youth Enrichment Program Manager and collaborated with St. Paul Schools to plan and deliver summer and after-school programming, build strong relationships with families and community partners, and coordinate lessons and special events. Prior to that role, she worked as an American Indian Education Advisor in Anoka-Hennepin Schools and spent 28 years owning and managing a successful small business.

WE ARE HIRING!

Find info at isd624.org/employment

Competitive wages / On the job training
 Chance to work near home / Flexible work hours
 Opportunity for: benefits, time off, holidays
Make a difference for kids in your community



Dr. Katelin Held named 2026 WBLAE Teacher of the Year

White Bear Lake Area High School Language Arts teacher Dr. Katelin Held was named White Bear Lake Area Educators' 2026 Teacher of the Year at a celebration and recognition ceremony last spring.

Held was chosen from an impressive slate of finalists from throughout the district:

- Alison Davies, Grade 2 at Matoska International
- Joe Foster, Grade 3 at Vadnais Heights Elementary
- Erin Samuels, Grade 3 at Matoska International
- Cindi Swenson, Multilingual Educator at White Bear Lake Area High School
- Amanda Vernon, Mathematics at White Bear Lake Area High School

White Bear grad, Wild standout Ryan Carter hired as Girls' Hockey Coach

White Bear Lake Area High School is excited to announce the hiring of Ryan Carter as the new Head Coach of the Girls' Hockey Team.

Carter has served as a color analyst and studio analyst for Minnesota Wild games on FanDuel Sports Network since he re-joined the organization in September of 2018. He also collaborates closely with the team's web and digital content, community relations and marketing departments as a media and content advisor to help provide unique and creative content.

He also hosts the "Wild on 7th" podcast alongside co-host John King, producer Matt Hussey and videographer/editor Nick Gilman. The show offers fans weekly episodes throughout each season that covers both the Wild and greater Minnesota sports fandom alike.

The White Bear native's 2006-2017 NHL career includes time with Anaheim, Carolina, Florida, New Jersey and Minnesota. He appeared in 46 career Stanley Cup Playoff matches and won a Stanley Cup with the Anaheim Ducks in 2007. He played two seasons at Minnesota State University Mankato (2004-06) and helped White Bear Lake Area High School reach the 2001 state high school hockey tournament.



Stay Connected

- **E-Newsletter** - The Community e-Newsletter is sent out each week, with alternating video and text editions covering student and staff successes, school and Community Ed offerings, and School Board proceedings. Email us at communications@isd624.org to be added to the recipient list.
- **Stay Social** - Find isd624 on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube for daily 624 Fact posts and weekly video share-outs. Find links on the District's website.

Digital Backpack

The district's Community Education and Recreation Department distributes electronic flyers from the school district, as well as local organizations that offer opportunities for youth, on the first and third Thursday of each month.

The Digital Backpack and submission instructions can be found online at isd624.org/DigitalBackpack.



DIGITAL BACKPACK

Requesting an Interpreter

Families and community members can request that a district staff member call them through the use of an interpreter who speaks the language they speak.

Information about how to make the request can be found in text and audio translations, in all languages spoken by students in the district, on the district website or at the QR code below:



FREE Senior Activity Pass

More than 1,000 Senior community members (those who are age 65+) who live in the District participate in the Lifetime Activity Pass program and enjoy complimentary admission to school activities.

To request a pass, find the application at isd624.org/SeniorActivityPass and your pass will be mailed to you. If you have questions, please contact Rachael Markuson at 651-407-7563 or by email at rachael.markuson@isd624.org.



Senior Community Member
Lifetime Activity Pass

This Senior Community Member Activity Pass grants
free admission into home activities* for

YOUR NAME

Validated by Dr. Wayne A. Kazmierczak, Superintendent



Continued from cover

That shared vision – and the tireless efforts of nearly 100 community and staff members who served on our facilities planning committee – has been inspiring. To everyone who participated in those early meetings, reviewed blueprints, and shared their hopes for our schools: thank you. You helped lay the foundation for everything we see today.

The centerpiece of this entire vision is, of course, our unified White Bear Lake Area High School. For the first time in decades, our students in grades 9

through 12 are learning together under one roof. This milestone is about far more than a 375,000-square-foot addition or a stunning new student union commons area inspired by our community's sailing heritage – it is about the student experience. By bringing our students together, we have eliminated transitions that once fractured the high school journey. This unity allows for deeper relationships, expanded academic and extracurricular opportunities, and a stronger sense of "Bear Pride" that begins on day one of freshman year.

Beyond the high school, the projects have revitalized 15 campuses across the district. We have done this work strategically – utilizing multiple revenue sources and maximizing every dollar of the 2019 bond – to ensure that the benefits reach every corner of our district, from our earliest learners to our senior citizens.

We know that work of this scale requires a deep level of public trust. That is why we were especially heartened by the results of our 2024 community survey, which affirmed a high level of confidence in our efforts to steward tax dollars responsibly. We were proud to see that 86% of our residents and 91% of our parents rated the quality of our district favorably. These results are a testament to the partnership we share. We take our fiscal responsibility seriously, and we believe these modernized, sustainable facilities are clear evidence of that commitment.

This project has been truly transformational. We haven't just renovated buildings; we have reimagined what learning looks like in White Bear. Together, we have created spaces that foster student agency, support career pathways, and ensure that every child who walks through our doors feels safe, welcomed, and inspired.

To our families, our staff, and the entire White Bear Lake Area community: thank you for your support, your patience during construction, and your unwavering belief in our students. Together, we have built a future that will serve this community for generations to come.

Dr. Wayne Kazmierczak, Superintendent

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

Completed

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

Ready for Fall 2026

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

Find updates, details about individual projects, videos and presentations, at isd624.org/BuildingOurFuture.

Event info on isd624.org

The district's website, which can be found at isd624.org, was refreshed over the summer. Check out the site to find information about upcoming events, along with other important district updates and exciting share-outs. Sort the calendar by school, and take advantage of the option to add events to your personal calendar!



SCHOOLS / STAFF / TRANSLATE / CALENDAR

COURAGEOUSLY BUILDING THE FUTURE

We are a community at the forefront of educational excellence, honoring our legacy and courageously building the future. Go Bears!

EXPLORE ↓

GO INSPIRE
DISCOVER
GO LEAD
EMPOWER
GO PERFORM
POWER GO EXCEL
GO EXPLOR
GO EXPLORE
GO SUCCEED



Stop by for an informal chat with District leaders and Superintendent Kazmierczak over a cup of coffee at the Downtown WBL Caribou Coffee throughout the school year:

- Nov. 17 from 4-5 p.m.
- Feb. 17 from 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
- May 11 from 7:30-8:30 a.m.

IMPORTANT DATES

- » **AUG. 31**
2026-27 FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL: 6 & 9
- » **SEPT. 1**
2026-27 FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL: 1-5, 7-8 & 10-12+
- » **SEPT. 2**
2026-27 FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL: K
- » **SEPT. 4 & 7**
NO SCHOOL
- » **SEPT. 8**
2026-27 FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL: EC
- » **OCT. 4-10**
HOMECOMING 2026
Oct. 9 - parade in Downtown WBL, football game at WBLAHS Stadium
- » **OCT. 14-16**
NO SCHOOL
- » **NOV. 3**
ELECTION DAY
School Board election
- » **NOV. 17**
COFFEE WITH DR. K
4-5 p.m. at Downtown WBL Caribou Coffee
- » **DEC. 24-JAN. 1**
NO SCHOOL

Homecoming 2026 - Oct. 4-10!

The Homecoming 2026 dates have been set! Mark your calendar and plan to celebrate being a Bear with us at various activities that will take place from October 4-10.

An official Homecoming Week schedule will be shared this fall, but plan to join us for the events that have been confirmed thus far - the parade through Downtown White Bear Lake and the Varsity Football game vs. Stillwater on October 9!



GO DISCOVER.

GO EMPOWER GO EXCEL GO EXPLORE GO IGNITE GO LEARN GO MAKE GO MOVE GO PERFORM GO SUCCEED GO BEARS GO ACHIEVE GO COLLABORATE GO GRADUATE GO IGNITE GO INNOVATE



**FALL '26 ENROLLMENT
IS STILL OPEN!**



WHY BE A BEAR?

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

*Design Your Future.
Create Your Success.*

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

**FOLLOW WHITE BEAR LAKE
AREA SCHOOLS**

   /isd624

White Bear Lake Area Schools