

THE Education CONNECTION

FALL 2026

NEWS FROM THE GREEN BAY AREA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT



IN THIS ISSUE:

- 2> A Message from the Superintendent's Office
- 3> 2024 Referendum Work Continues
Strategic Plan: A Year of Momentum
- 4 & 5> Operational Referendum (continued)
- 6> Class of 2026 Hall of Fame Inductees
- 7> Friend of Education Award
New Bus App

NOVEMBER 2026

Operational Referendum

Student Growth



Strong Programs



Safe Schools



The Green Bay Area Public School District (GBAPS) has built strong momentum in student growth, high-quality programs, and safe, supportive schools. To continue that progress, GBAPS is asking residents to consider a four-year, non-recurring operational referendum on the November 3, 2026, ballot. This referendum has **no new tax impact** and maintains the current voter-approved tax levy. It is designed to preserve the priorities families and community members said must be protected as the District manages budget pressures.

The 2026 Operational Referendum is a four-year, non-recurring request for additional revenue needed to keep pace with rising inflation. It allows GBAPS to maintain its current efforts to improve academic outcomes, keep class sizes stable, and preserve the diverse programming families and community members have said they value. The referendum is not to add programming or expand costs.

Rather than ask for a set amount for the life of the referendum, the District is requesting what it needs for each of the following years:

- \$29 million for 2027-28
- \$44 million for 2029-30
- \$36 million for 2028-29
- \$49 million for 2030-31

Learn More - Community Information Sessions

SEPTEMBER
22
TUESDAY

6:00 p.m.
East Side Branch Library
2253 Main Street,
Green Bay

SEPTEMBER
24
THURSDAY

6:00 p.m.
Southwest High School Commons
1331 Packerland Drive,
Green Bay



Green Bay Area
Public School District

Engagement. Equity. Excellence.

(Continued on page 4)

A *Message* FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE



Dear Community Members,

Thank you for the warm welcome you have extended as I make Green Bay my new home. It is clear the pride people feel for the greater Green Bay area: its neighborhoods, its diversity, and especially its public schools.

One of the reasons I was drawn to Green Bay is the strong, long-standing support for public education. Whether through community partnerships, volunteerism, or past referendums, this community consistently shows up for its students. Our public schools remain the heart of our community, the place where doors to infinite possibilities open for every child, no matter their circumstances.

Thanks to your support, I have joined a district that, even while navigating financial challenges, continues to grow and improve. The construction projects underway across our schools are creating modern, engaging learning environments that will benefit students for years to come.

Many community members have asked about my vision for the District. This year, two main priorities will guide my work:

- **Financial Stability:** In order to continue to protect the programming and services our community values, an operational referendum is needed. With the \$16.5 million operational referendum ending this school year, the District will face a significant budget deficit for the 2027-28 school year and beyond. Over the next few months, the District will be providing opportunities for the community to learn more about how an operational referendum can preserve what we value, while not increasing the current voter-approved tax levy.
- **Closing Achievement Gaps:** The District must accelerate progress for students who have not consistently found success in our schools. One way in which we will accomplish this, is to ensure that all students and families have a sense of belonging.

To that end, when I arrived in Green Bay, I wrote what I call "The Green Bay Promise," which is the District's shared commitment to students, families, staff, and the community. It reflects what we believe, how we work together,



View our promise by scanning the QR code.

and the kind of district we aspire to be. Below are the commitments stated in "The Green Bay Promise" that I believe every student and family should experience in our schools:

- Students at the center of every decision.
- Equitable access to opportunities and support for every learner.
- Safe, respectful, and connected schools where everyone feels they belong.
- High expectations with strong support for every student.
- Continuous improvement grounded in data and reflection.
- Partnership with families and the community because educating children is a shared responsibility.
- Leadership rooted in integrity, compassion, and accountability.

I am grateful to be part of this community and energized by the work ahead. I encourage you to take a moment to scan the QR code and watch this year's theme video, "Infinite Possibilities." Together, I believe we can accomplish the challenging and essential work to ensure every student in the Green Bay Area Public School District not only succeeds, but truly thrives.



Michael Hernandez
Superintendent of Schools and Learning

Chat with Mike



Superintendent Hernandez is committed to being out in the community listening to you. Please visit gbaps.org, view the calendar, and save the date for your next opportunity to share with Superintendent Hernandez what you love about GBAPS and suggestions to make the District even better!

PROGRESS CONTINUES ON *2024 Referendum*

Construction crews were busy this past summer as they worked to ready schools for the 2026-27 school year. While all schools were ready for students for the first day of school, work will continue on Beaumont, Chappell, Doty Elementaries and Red Smith School. These schools are anticipated to be finished by the 2027-28 school year. The District is grateful to the community for its support of the 2024 Referendum, which is providing students with appropriate learning spaces, and enabling the District to operate with greater efficiency.

Scan the QR Code for photos and construction updates on the 2024 Referendum projects.



Starr Elementary opened its doors to students on August 31, 2026, with only a few finishing touches still needing to be completed. The 500+ student school will serve students from Pre-K to 5th grade. Constructed with a pod layout, students learn in grade-level designated areas, each with their own restrooms and access to the outdoors. The school provides specialized areas for special education services, and students of all abilities will be able to play on the ADA compliant playground. Starr Elementary consolidates Kennedy, Keller, and MacArthur Elementary Schools.



SAVE THE
DATE

OCTOBER
15
THURSDAY

Starr Elementary Open House

The public is invited to take a self-guided tour through Starr Elementary on **Thursday, October 15, 2026, from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.**

FIRST YEAR OF STRATEGIC PLAN: *A Year of Momentum*

The Green Bay Area Public School District has officially completed the first year of its Strategic Plan, marking a year defined by momentum, collaboration, and a renewed commitment to ensuring students and staff thrive. As we look back on the first full year of implementation, one theme stands out: when our community, staff, and families move forward together, powerful things happen.

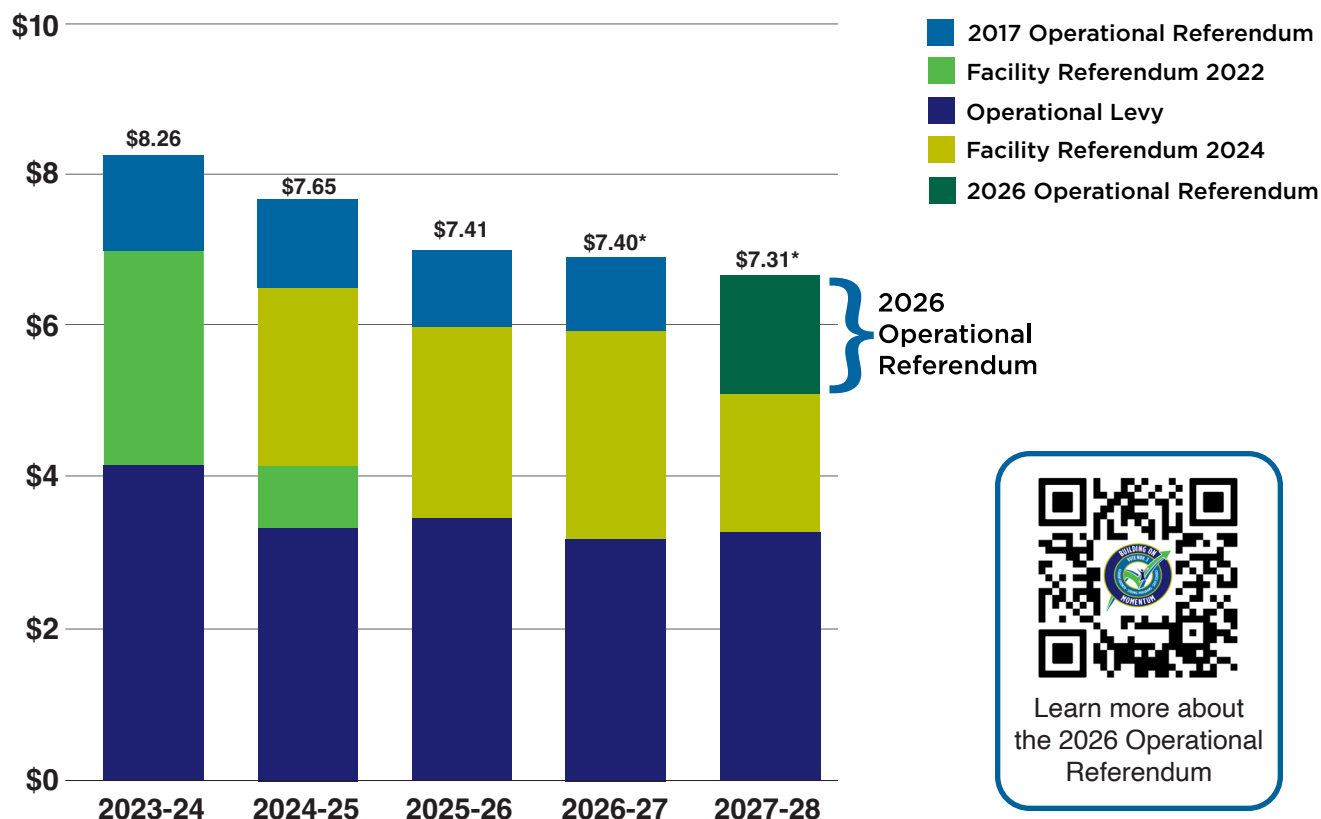
Over the past year, teams across the district have worked intentionally to bring this vision to life and are proud of the key accomplishments of the first year.

- **Academic Excellence** — GBAPS has developed an instructional-vision, which is a sustained effort to improve academic outcomes. The focus is on a system-wide commitment to grade-level and meaningful instruction. The District has also been providing professional development to ensure fidelity to the Act 20 literacy instruction, which is showing promising results in grades K-2. Finally, the District continues to show progress in students obtaining college credit and industry certifications, along with more students experiencing a work-based learning opportunity.

- **Thriving Student Body** — The District saw progress across all grades with students sharing that they feel a sense of belonging at their schools, more students engaging in co-curriculars, and a small increase in overall attendance.
- **Family & Community Engagement** — A family engagement survey was conducted last November, which demonstrated a favorable response regarding families feeling a sense of belonging with their child's school.
- **Thriving Workforce** — The District made progress toward its goal of 90% or more staff being present, ending the 2025-26 school year with 85.5% attendance for staff. The District is working to improve workplace safety to enable staff to be present, and while more work is needed in this area, continued educational efforts with administrators and staff continues.

During the 2026-27 school year, the District will be working to accelerate progress toward its goals.

Property Taxes will Not Increase as a Result of an Approved Referendum



Why is an Operational Referendum Needed?

There are four main reasons why an operational referendum is needed now:

- **2017 Operational Referendum Expires:** In 2017, voters approved a \$16.5 million 10-year referendum to keep class sizes reasonable, maintain programs, and avoid major cuts. That voter-approved funding ends after the 2026-27 school year.
- **State Funding Gap:** For 17 years, revenue from the state has not kept up with inflationary increases. During that same period, costs for staffing, utilities, transportation, and basic supplies have steadily risen. If state funding had kept pace with inflation, the District would have roughly \$60 million more in annual revenue today.

- **Inflationary Pressures:** Schools face the same pressures as families/community members when it comes to rising costs for electricity, heating, fuel, technology, food, and consumables, which all cost more than they did even a few years ago. These increases are not tied to new programs or expanded services, rather they are simply the cost of keeping schools open and functioning safely.
- **Declining enrollment:** Fewer students means less state revenue. But fixed costs do not decline at the same rate. As enrollment drops, the District must stretch fewer dollars across the same essential responsibilities, creating additional pressure on its operating budget.

What has the District Done to Address Rising Costs?



School Consolidation

Closure of 7 schools
(6 buildings)



Staffing Reductions

Reduced 100+ staff across multiple employment categories through attrition and revised methodologies



Strategic Delays & Canceling Vendor Contracts

Postponed non-essential purchases, including instructional materials, ended software contracts



Operational Savings

Implemented district-wide 10% department budget reductions for three years in a row



Benefits Restructuring

Made changes to employee benefits plan to control costs



Long-Term Investment

Passed a 2024 capital referendum focused on consolidation and energy efficiency that provides operational savings

What Happens if the Referendum Fails?

The District has already made years of behind-the-scenes cuts to avoid affecting students. After those reductions, the only remaining areas to cut are the ones that will directly impact students — class sizes, programs, and student services. If the referendum fails, the District will need to make

significant cuts, which will include laying off staff and increasing class sizes, and eliminating or reducing programming (including co-curriculars), all which will have a negative impact on the District's current momentum to improve academic outcomes and address school culture and sense of belonging.

Building on Momentum

Since 2017, the District has been moving forward on a positive trajectory thanks to the community's support through approval of referendums, volunteer hours, community partnerships, and so much more. Below are just a few of the ways our shared commitment continues to propel us ahead.

#1

in the state for the number of students earning industry certifications

91.8%

staff retention rate vs. 86.3% for the state of Wisconsin

51%

of 2025 graduates earning 5 or more college credits; 65% earning at least one

10

ADA compliant playgrounds with either synthetic or rubberized surfaces, ensuring all students have access

90%

of families who participated in the November 2025 engagement survey stated that their children feel safe at school

CLASS OF 2006 *Inductees*



The Green Bay Area Public School District and the Green Bay Area Public Schools Education Foundation are pleased to announce the 2026 class of inductees for the Hall of Fame. This year, eight alumni are being recognized who met the criteria of graduating a minimum of 20 years before being

nominated and exemplified the District's values of excellence, engagement, equity, integrity, and responsibility. In addition, new this year, a former educator will also be inducted. To qualify, the former staff member must have retired from the District or been employed a minimum of 10 years and exemplified the District's values.

The Class of 2026 will be honored on Friday, October 9, 2026, at the Hotel Northland. Scan the QR code to learn more about the inductees, purchase tickets for the October 9th event, and/or read about last year's Hall of Fame class.



Diane (Dockry) Ford
East High School
Class of 1971



Cheryl Renier-Wigg
East High School
Class of 1982



John Hawley
Preble High School
Class of 1975



Ron Metzler
Preble High School
Class of 1976



John Anderson
Southwest High School
Class of 1983



Tim Vertz
Southwest High School
Class of 1988



Ronald Miller
West High School
Class of 1956



Jeff Roznowski
West High School
Class of 1976



Jack Drankoff
Educator Inductee
1969–2012



The Green Bay Area Public Schools Education Foundation is a proud partner of the Hall of Fame, recognizing alumni and former educators who had a significant impact on the District, their profession, and/or their communities.

The Education Foundation elevates the educational experience of GBAPS students by funding innovative projects and programs beyond the scope of the District's budget.

FRIEND OF EDUCATION *Award*



Brown County
UNITED WAY

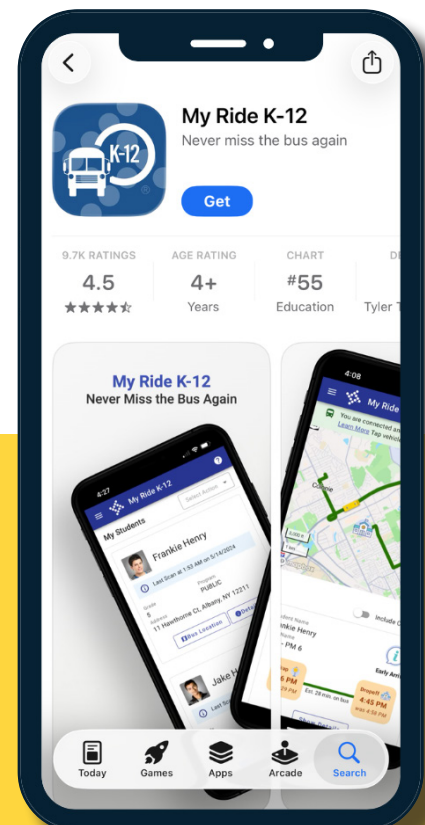
The Board of Education honored President and CEO Robyn Davis and the Brown County United Way with the Friend of Education Award at its June 22, 2026, meeting, recognizing their extraordinary partnership and \$450,000 investment in the District's Community Schools strategy. Their support has helped expand the model from Howe Elementary to Nicolet Elementary, increasing family engagement and strengthening access to vision, dental, mental health, and medical services for hundreds of students. At Howe Elementary, the results are clear: chronic absenteeism has steadily declined, and the school's state report card rating has improved over the past three years. These outcomes reflect the powerful impact of community partnership and shared commitment to student success.



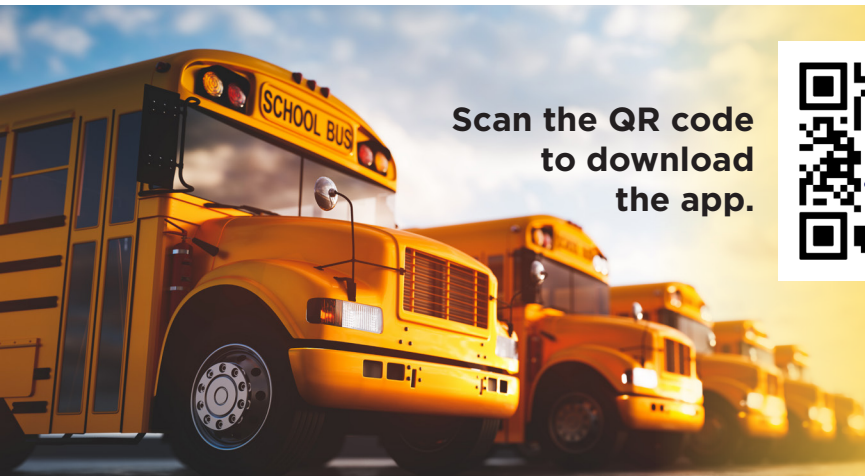
NEVER MISS THE BUS *Again!*

New for the 2026-2027 school year, parents and students can access their own secure data for bus stop location, route, and pickup time at the touch of a button.

- Security settings limit access to the My Ride K-12 app to students, parents, and guardians to protect student data
- Integration between Student Transportation software, GPS, and the school bus route app provides timely information
- Mobile-friendly parent app provides secure, confidential login
- Shows student bus info stop, time, start date



Scan the QR code
to download
the app.





**Green Bay Area
Public School District**

Engagement. Equity. Excellence.

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Green Bay Area Public School District
200 South Broadway
Green Bay, WI 54303

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THE *Education* CONNECTION

Land Acknowledgement Statement

We, the members of the Green Bay Area Public School District, recognize and honor the original inhabitants of Northeast Wisconsin. Our district lives, works and learns upon the ancestral homelands of the Menominee and Ho-Chunk Nations, and the current homeland of Oneida Nation. We acknowledge the 12 diverse and vibrant Wisconsin First Nations, who have persevered here since before recorded time, and continue to be integral parts of our community. We uphold our responsibility to repair relationships, initiate partnerships, and stand with all First Nations communities. (Adopted May 2022)



**Green Bay Area
Public School District**

Engagement. Equity. Excellence.

gbaps.org



GBAPS Board of Education

President: James Lyerly - (608) 347-4747

Vice President: Dr. Samantha Meister - (402) 616-9235

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Intra-City Student Council Representative:

Paige Miller, Preble High School

Superintendent: Michael Hernandez - (920) 448-2100



Scan the QR code to access this document on the District website, where it can be translated into multiple languages.

It is the policy of the Green Bay Area Public Schools to be nondiscriminatory on the basis of sex; race; religion; national origin; ancestry; creed; pregnancy; marital or parental status; sexual orientation; or physical, mental emotional or learning disability in their education programs and activities and also employment practices. Direct inquiries to Equity Office, Green Bay Area Public Schools, 200 S. Broadway, Green Bay, WI 54303, 920-272-7611.