

School Pages

Winter 2023-24



A Message from Superintendent Eric Melbye

BPS facing 2024-25 budget shortfall

There is an understanding among school and district leaders, educators and legislators that funding is central to providing a high-quality education and often leads to improved outcomes. By many measures this belief was a factor in the Minnesota Legislature approving historic funding for schools earlier this year.

The funding primarily addresses shortages school districts have endured covering increasing costs for special education and English language learning programming - otherwise referred to as cross-subsidies.

As superintendents, we appreciate the significant investments, but included in the education bill were new mandates, programs and requirements that came with increased costs. Some of the new requirements were funded, others partially or temporarily funded, and several came with no funding.

A confluence of other factors is creating a challenging fiscal environment for the 2024-25 school year.

For starters, our K-12 enrollment this year is down by 122 students to 9,680, the lowest enrollment in more than 40 years, and a loss of revenue of approximately \$1.3 million. In total, our enrollment was nine students short of projections - not bad forecasting from our finance and information services teams. With state funding largely distributed through per student formulas, this decline in student enrollment will

have a significant impact on our revenue. Read the latest enrollment report at bit.ly/bps-enroll-report-2023.

For years, we made budget reductions - some large that were felt by staff and families, and many smaller cuts with little noticeable impact - to balance our operating budget. These annual budget adjustments were shelved when the pandemic hit in part because of the one-time federal pandemic relief funds.

A portion of those funds, in combination with our fund balance, allowed us to avoid significant cost containment measures for three years. The COVID-19 relief funds are not an on-going source of revenue. In fact, they are winding down next year.

So what does this mean for Bloomington Public Schools? Simply, a budget shortfall for the 2024-25 school year, and the foreseeable future.

We are projecting an initial \$4 million budget adjustment as part of a multi-year right sizing the budget process.

While the specifics of the budget adjustments have not been finalized in order to allow for staff and community feedback, our goal is to minimize the impact on any one school, grade level or department.

We welcome your questions and ideas via Let's Talk, bit.ly/bps-lets-talk.

The fiscal outlook for 2024-25 school year is challenging.

Living the Plan

Bloomington Public Schools is moving into the next phase of its Strategic Planning process, living the plan. Our initial strategic planning work resulted in a new mission and vision, identified five actionable goals and corresponding strategies.

Our five Goal Action Teams have been meeting for the past few months to develop strategies for implementation, identify success measures and key performance indicators. These are critical pieces for the next important step of preparing first-year action plans for each of the five goals. We are forming Implementation Teams consisting of staff and community stakeholders to create the action plans.

We invite you to follow along with our progress. Coming soon is a data dashboard to track key performance indicators that measure the success of our Strategic Plan. Watch for the dashboard online at bit.ly/bps-strategicplan.

Direct questions related to the strategic planning process to commrelations@isd271.org.



2024-25 Calendar Approved

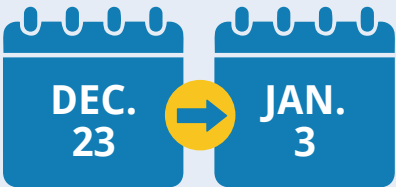
The school board has approved the calendar for the 2024-25 school year. Key dates include:



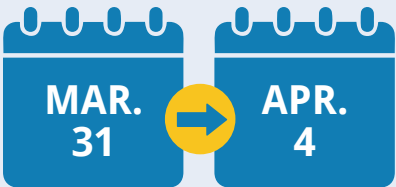
First Day of School 6-12



First Day of School K-5



Winter Break



Spring Break



Last Day of School

View the full calendar on our website:
bit.ly/bps-calendar

Minnesota’s Computer Science Leader



We celebrated Computer Science Education Week (CSEdWeek) Dec. 4-10, an exciting time for Bloomington Public Schools as Minnesota’s leader in K-12 computer science education.

MN Department of Education Commissioner Willie Jett visited Indian Mounds Elementary to see our Computer Science Immersion program in action. The program provides immersive experiences centered on skill-building through creative exploration. Over the past five years, the program has expanded from two to six BPS schools.

Also during CSEdWeek, Dr. Alexandra Holter, computer science coordinator, traveled to Washington, D.C. on behalf of the Computer Science Teachers Association. Holter was one of 10 teachers and the only Minnesotan invited to attend an event at the White House discussing inclusive approaches to artificial intelligence (AI) education in computer science.



The City of Bloomington proclaimed December 4-10, 2023, Computer Science Education Week in Bloomington, highlighting the district’s focus on increasing access to computer science, and providing students at all levels with computational and critical thinking skills necessary for the modern digital era.

Learn more about our computer science programs at bit.ly/bps-cs-programs.

Valley View Middle leaders swap roles

Valley View Middle School’s principal and assistant principal are flip-flopping roles for the remainder of the school year.

Principal Megan Willrett requested the switch in November to focus on specific areas where she could contribute more effectively to the school’s continued success. Willrett said the shift “allows for a more targeted approach to the aspects of school administration that I am most passionate about.”

Assistant Principal Anthony Sicoli will serve as the interim principal. Sicoli became assistant principal of Valley View Middle in July 2022. Previously he served as an administrative dean in Chaska, a middle and high school math teacher, and a professional development plan coordinator and equity lead in Minneapolis. Sicoli holds a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction - learning technologies and is working toward a Ph.D. in educational policy and leadership.

The district will oversee a principal selection process in the spring to consider internal and external candidates for the role.



Powered by Solar

Oak Grove Elementary joins four other district schools to generate clean energy through solar panels on its roof. The solar array went live in October.

The panels directly power the school when there is a need. Energy generated when power is not needed offsets the load on the power grid. In return, the district receives credits on its energy bills.

The district is in the early stages of a 25-year solar plan estimated to save \$7 million over that period. Other schools with solar panels include Jefferson, Kennedy, Indian Mounds, and Valley View Middle. Poplar Bridge and Oak Grove Middle School are next in line for solar panels.

In addition to on-site solar, the district participates in solar farms in Dakota County to receive further energy bill credits. Combining the solar energy produced on- and off-site, the district gets about 31 percent of its energy from solar power, a percentage that will increase with further projects.



Looking to the Future

Students gain life-skills through hands-on and immersive experiences in high school electives and career-focused programs offered at Bloomington Career and College Academy (BCCA). Students are also able to earn college credit while in high school to get a head start on their post-secondary education.

This year, a combined 322 students attend classes at local colleges through the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program and nearly 900 students take Advanced Placement (AP) courses at their respective high schools.



ETHAN SCHOENHOFEN

Ethan Schoenhofen is a Jefferson senior taking classes in the Fire Science and IT pathways at BCCA. Schoenhofen says he’s trying two pathways because they complement each other with fire being physical and IT being mental. He plans to pursue a help desk or system administrator job after high school.



Read more:
bit.ly/bcca-spotlight-ethan



LORENZO LARA

Lorenzo Lara is a Kennedy senior attending a Culinary Chef Skills class. He and his team created a mock food truck menu, cooked the food and served it to teachers and staff. This food truck festival highlights the life skills and experiences Lara and his classmates will take with them after high school.



Watch a short video highlighting their delicious creations:
bit.ly/khs-food-trucks



KEHAN CHEN

Kehan Chen is a Jefferson senior who recently received a full-ride scholarship to Princeton through the prestigious Quest Bridge Scholar program. She is earning credits towards her college education by taking four AP and two PSEO courses. Chen says she wants to major in psychology and pursue a career in medicine or research. “It’s hard to believe I will one day be attending a school I wouldn’t have dreamed about when I first entered Jefferson,” said Chen.



Engaging Gifted and Advanced Learners

Gifted and Talented (GT) programs serve the unique needs of learners with highly advanced academic and creative abilities. More than simply differentiating curriculum, our GT programs are designed to enhance the unique capabilities of gifted children through rigorous, integrated curriculum with high complexity and faster pace.

Created nearly 20 years ago and now serving more than 650 students in grades 2-12, in a time when many districts are trimming or eliminating gifted programs, our GT programs are thriving.

Bloomington Public Schools was one of only 11 school districts in the past 10 years to be awarded a U.S. Department of Education Jacob K. Javits grant last year. The \$2.5 million grant provides resources to increase equity and access to gifted and talented programming for underserved elementary students, including students of color, economically disadvantaged, multilingual learners, and children with disabilities.

In the second year of the Javits grant, the district is focused on identifying underrepresented kindergarten and first grade students at Title 1 elementary schools, preparing students for gifted and talented services in second grade, and identifying and supporting grade 2-5 students into full-time gifted and talented programs.

As part of a commitment to continuous improvement and tailoring programs to reflect current needs, the district conducted a comprehensive review and assessment of Gifted and Talented services in the spring of 2023. The findings and recommendations can be found on the district website at: bit.ly/bps-gifted-talented

The overall goal is to align instruction to meet learner needs to prepare all students to be future ready. To ensure all students have access to specialized instruction, GT staff work with students and staff at every level to support differentiated instruction and options for advanced learning and enrichment.

Join us for a kindergarten open house

Kindergarteners thrive here! Children who turn five-years-old on or before Sept. 1, 2024 are eligible to register for kindergarten for the 2024-25 school year. Come see your student’s new school and learn more about the kindergarten experience at our upcoming open house events. Dates and times are listed below. Visit our kindergarten webpage to learn about program options, school boundaries and important dates. bit.ly/bps-kinder



Hillcrest Community School
Feb. 6, 2024
6 - 7 p.m.

Indian Mounds Elementary School
Jan. 25, 2024
6 - 7 p.m.

New Code Academy (Online School)
Feb. 8, 2024
6 - 7 p.m.

Normandale Hills Elementary School
Jan. 25, 2024
6 - 7 p.m.

Oak Grove Elementary School
Jan. 30, 2024
6 - 7 p.m.

Olson Elementary School
Jan. 25, 2024
6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

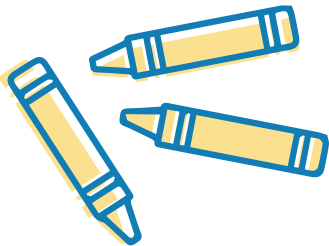
Poplar Bridge Elementary School
Feb. 1, 2024
6 - 7 p.m.

Ridgeview Elementary School
Feb. 1, 2024
6 - 7 p.m.

Valley View Elementary School
March 7, 2024
6 - 7 p.m.

Washburn Elementary School
Jan. 25, 2024
5 - 6 p.m.

Westwood Elementary School
Jan. 25, 2024
6 - 7 p.m.



Points of Pride



Read full details at
bit.ly/BPS-News



Oak Grove Middle School 8th grade student **Kaylee Von Ruden** set a new school record for the Kennedy Girls Swim and Dive team at the Section 2A Finals in November. Von Ruden, Kennedy's first female swimmer to qualify for state since 2013, finished the 100-yard backstroke with a time of 1:00.92 at the section finals, breaking the school record previously set in 2001. She placed 20th at state. bit.ly/khs-swim-record

Normandale Hills Elementary teacher **Jennifer Hadden** received the Inclusive Educator Award for her work to support unique learners in her school. The award is given by Intermediate School District 917, which provides specialized programming to member districts. bit.ly/bps-inclusive-educator



Kennedy Girls Swim and Dive head coach and Oak Grove Middle School physical education teacher **Todd Walsh** earned Section 2A Coach of the Year honors from the Minnesota State High School Swim and Dive Coaches Association. bit.ly/khs-swim-record

Jessica Martinez, equity specialist in the Office of Educational Equity, recently received the City of Bloomington's 2023 Omar Bonderud Award. The award is presented by the Human Rights Commission to a person or organization that has made significant contributions to ensuring the rights of people in Bloomington. bit.ly/bps-jessica-martinez



Kennedy Theatre Company's fall production of **'Newsies'** received 20 honors from Spotlight Education, a program of Hennepin Theatre Trust. The production and individual students earned nine outstanding recognition awards, eight honorable mentions, and three evaluator shout-outs. bit.ly/khs-newsies-spotlight

Superintendent Dr. Eric Melbye was named a 2023 Superintendent to Watch by the National School Public Relations Association, one of 25 superintendents from around the country selected for the honor. bit.ly/bps-supt-to-watch



Brea Copeland, a Check and Connect paraprofessional in the Beacon program at Kennedy High School, was recognized by the National Society of High School Scholars, and received a \$500 grant to create inclusive spaces and innovative learning experiences. Copeland helps students who need extra academic support by creating a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion. bit.ly/bps-brea-copeland

Kennedy High School junior **Addison Wendt** qualified for the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) National Tournament, a first for a member of the school's debate team. The tournament is scheduled for June 2024 in Des Moines, Iowa. bit.ly/khs-debate-nationals



Megan Schrooten and **Zachary Harris** (Jefferson) and **Macie Miller** and **Sonte Lajeunesse-Wood** (Kennedy) are this year's Excellence in Community, Education and Leadership (ExCEL) Award nominees. The award recognizes high school juniors for their involvement in school activities, volunteer efforts and leadership qualities. bit.ly/bps-excel-23-24

The Jefferson Boys Cross Country team finished the regular season winning its first Section 3AAA Championship in 39 years. The team placed fifth at state. bit.ly/jhs-cc-state2023

In the Know

New Stadiums On Hold

Plans for new on-site stadium facilities at Jefferson and Kennedy High Schools are temporarily on hold while the district completes a detailed sound impacts study, an issue raised by the Bloomington Planning Commission in October. The district is working with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) on a process to apply for a sound/noise variance. If the MPCA variance is granted, the stadium plans will be refiled with the City of Bloomington for approval. District officials hope to begin construction in Fall 2024 with a completion date in 2025.

School Security Assessments

In our ongoing approach to maintain safe and secure school environments, the district begins work this month with the National School Safety and Security Services (NSSSS) to conduct assessments of each school and facility housing students and staff. The work includes a review of emergency plans, physical security measures, preparedness and response practices, and crisis communications strategies. A report of observations and recommendations focused on evidence-based best practices will guide updates to the district's Emergency Operations, Response and Recovery Plan.

Chemical Health Grant

Hennepin County awarded Bloomington Public Schools a \$255,000 grant for chemical health awareness through prevention, intervention, and support. The grant provides ongoing funding for the district's Chemical Health Plan, which outlines a series of goals to meet student needs through ongoing staff development, school-based counseling and support, and consultation and care coordination with licensed professionals, free of cost to all students in an effort to eliminate barriers to our students who need support.

Free Tutoring with Study Buddies

Free tutoring is available for K-12 students who need help with reading and math through our Study Buddies program. Families can sign up their students for 30-minute sessions at Penn Lake Library, 8800 Penn Ave. S. on Tuesdays, 4-5 p.m. and Oxboro Library, 8801 Portland Ave. S. on Thursdays, 3:30-4:30 p.m. through April 23. Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/study-buddies-signup to sign up for a session.

Interested in becoming a tutor? Contact Volunteer Connection at 952-681-6383 or egagnon@isd271.org



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