

# CommunicAT

FALL 2018



## A GREAT FIRST DAY!

BY PAT DEVINE, SUPERINTENDENT



Our favorite time of year is when we get to welcome students back to school! I hope everyone was able to relax and spend some time with family and friends. We are looking forward to another great year at ISD ONE10 as the 2018-2019 school year begins.

### BIG DECISIONS

During the summer, on July 9, the School Board voted unanimously to place an operating levy question on the November ballot. I will be out in the community doing presentations about the proposed operating levy, with two sessions at Waconia High School and one session in St. Bonifacius. We also have an area on the website dedicated to the 2018 referendum, plus there is more information inside this issue of the CommuniCAT.

### COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

**Sept 24** 6 p.m. @ Waconia High School B107

**Oct 11** 6 p.m. @ Waconia High School B107

**Oct 22** 6 p.m. @ St. Bonifacius City Hall - Community Room

The School Board also approved our Strategic Roadmap. This was developed using the Classroom to Boardroom process and involved a group effort that

included community, staff and administration. The roadmap is a critical guide as we work to help students truly explore their passions and create their success.

### STADIUM SEATING

The stadium seating at the new turf athletic field at Waconia High School is coming along following some delays. The actual construction of the seating was delayed due to spring rains, and we also had to do some soil correction before the footings could be poured. It is still our hope to welcome the community to the new field for the Wildcats Homecoming football game against Orono on Sept. 28th but we may need to push the official opening of the new field to a later date. We will keep everyone updated regarding time lines. This project is one of the last construction commitments from our 2014 Bond Referendum — funds from which can only be spent on construction and not spent on operating expenses.

As I start my fifth year at ISD ONE10, I am so thankful for all the support and partnerships that happen in our school district and community. I cannot think of a better place to work or learn. I love how we put kids' interests first. A BIG thank you to ALL! We look forward to another superb year of working with kids at Waconia Public Schools. We have such amazing kids, excellent parents, fantastic staff and supportive community.

**WE ARE ONE10!!**



## TEACHERS EXPERIENCING THE WORKPLACE AT RIDGEVIEW MEDICAL CENTER

Over the course of a week in mid-August, three high school science and health teachers had the opportunity to explore Ridgeview Medical Center to observe occupations in the medical field that relate to the respective courses that they teach.



The opportunity is the result of a partnership between the Waconia Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Ridgeview Medical Center, and Waconia Public Schools. Waconia is one of four cities in Minnesota participating in this program aimed at addressing a shortage of skilled workers in certain fields.

Each of the Waconia High School teachers — Mel Berg, Roxanne Kuerschner, and Audra Lehrke — were asked about fields that interested them for their course of instruction. The weeklong program was arranged by Ridgeview and included time in many areas, including human resources, IT, infection control, sterile processing, ambulance dispatch, lab, materials management, nutrition, finance, wound clinic, imaging, and rehab.

An important element of the program is to provide teachers with a better understanding of industry standards, skills, and qualifications required to work in health care. Teachers return to class knowing how to enhance their curriculum to meet the demands of the current workforce.

"I was thoroughly impressed with the experience," Audra Lehrke, Waconia High School health education teacher, explained. "It was eye-opening to see all the different careers that I didn't even know existed. Everyone at Ridgeview was more than willing to help, and I was able to double the number of contacts to bring back to my health careers course."

Waconia Chamber of Commerce President Kellie Sites was instrumental in the workforce initiative. "Teachers get to see what's happening and people working in the field can learn what is being taught. When teachers are developing curriculum, they will have more concrete life experience to share with their students and employers will have qualified job candidates coming out of high school/college," Sites concluded.

The teachers spent a day in the rehab area with rehab manager Jessica Hess. She spoke highly of the idea, stating, "This program provides a look at a day in the life of a clinician and brings depth to the high school curriculum."



Rehab is of high interest for students because we have an active population and students are curious about how injuries can affect themselves personally, friends, or family members. The teachers will now be able to better speak about the profession and hopefully be able to answer questions students may have."

Roxanne Kuerschner, a life sciences teacher at Waconia High School, agreed; "Ridgeview offers such a positive environment, and the employees in different departments seem to work well together and like their jobs. I feel that this experience will not only help me to be more knowledgeable in medical science for my 10th grade biology classes, but I also found this to be valuable to help guide students in other areas of interest outside of medicine. The hospital is not just about direct patient care."

See Academic Calendars  
for 2018-2019 and  
High School Activities Calendars  
**visit [isd110.org](http://isd110.org)**

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On November 6, 2018, residents of ISD110, Waconia Public Schools, will be asked to vote on a request to increase local school funding through an operating levy. If approved by voters, the funding would be used to continue providing quality education for our students.

Just this past school year, the class of 2018 at Waconia High School demonstrated, once again, how the quality of education at Waconia Public Schools impacts lives.

Of the 286 graduates, 157 students received academic awards, 63 seniors took college-level classes, and 51 seniors were members of the National Honor Society. This type of success is something that is developed throughout the educational journey of each student and becomes a source of pride for the entire community.

FUNDING NOT KEEPING PACE

The vast majority of funding for school district operations – 85% – comes from the state of Minnesota. The rest comes from federal funding, property taxes and other local sources. State funding has not been keeping pace with inflation or increasing costs, which has created a gap in funding.

COVERING THE GAP

Waconia Public Schools has been spending down its fund balance to cover that gap but this practice is no longer sustainable.

Many other school districts across the state have made up for the lack of funding by asking voters to approve an operating levy.

The comparison chart on this page shows surrounding school districts and the funding per student operating levy dollars that their voters have approved.

Waconia is one of the only school districts in the area without a voter-approved operating levy. Waconia Public Schools is asking voters to consider an operating levy that would generate about \$525 per student in additional funding. The levy would provide critical funding for classrooms, instruction, and other operating costs.

FUNDING REQUEST

The proposed operating levy would generate approximately \$2.2 million in annual school funding to support student learning. The estimated tax impact for the average homeowner in the district (\$300,000 home value) would be about \$23 per month. For those who want to calculate the tax impact on their home or business, there is a tax calculator on the website at: [isd110.org](http://isd110.org).

FUNDING FACTS

- › For the past 15 years, state education funding has not kept pace with inflation or increasing costs, putting pressure on school budgets across the state.
- › The special education programs that we are required to provide also cost more than we receive each year, putting additional pressure on the operating budget.
- › Overall, our school district is in the bottom 1% of all Minnesota school districts for general education funding, ranking 328 out of 331.

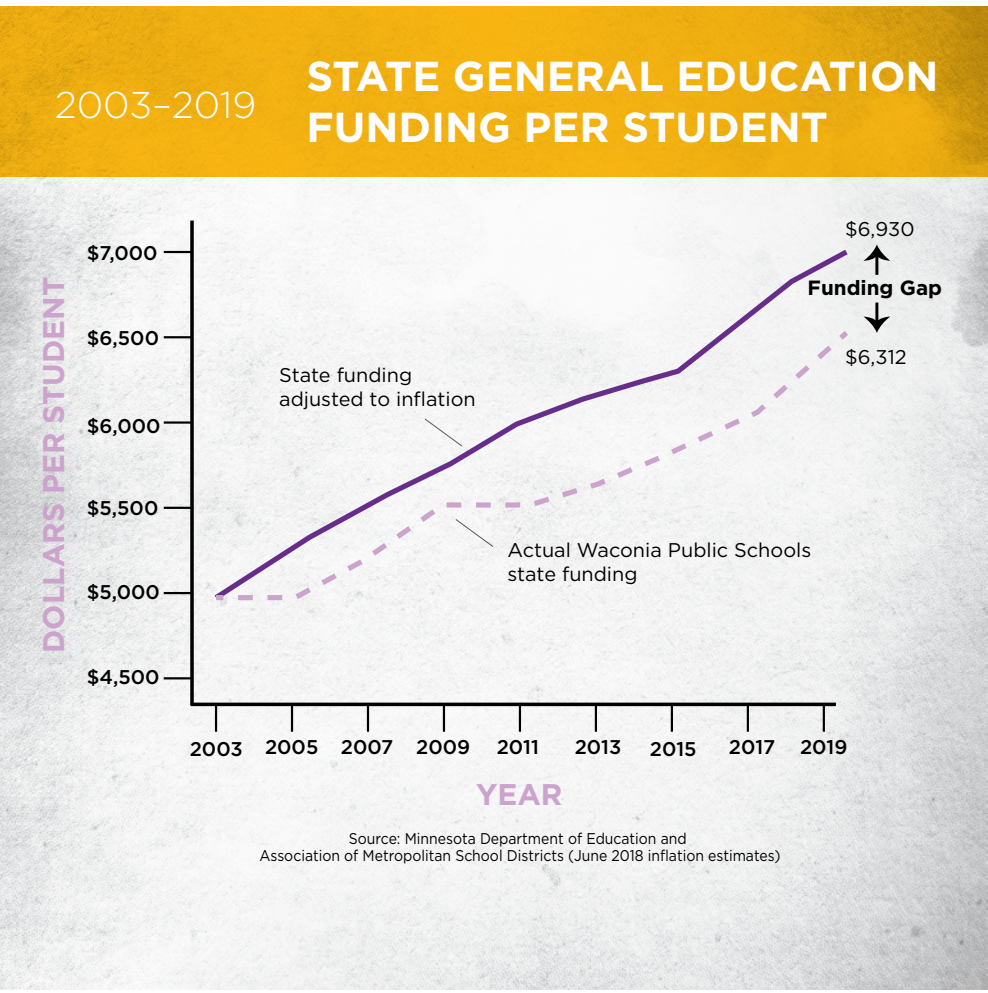
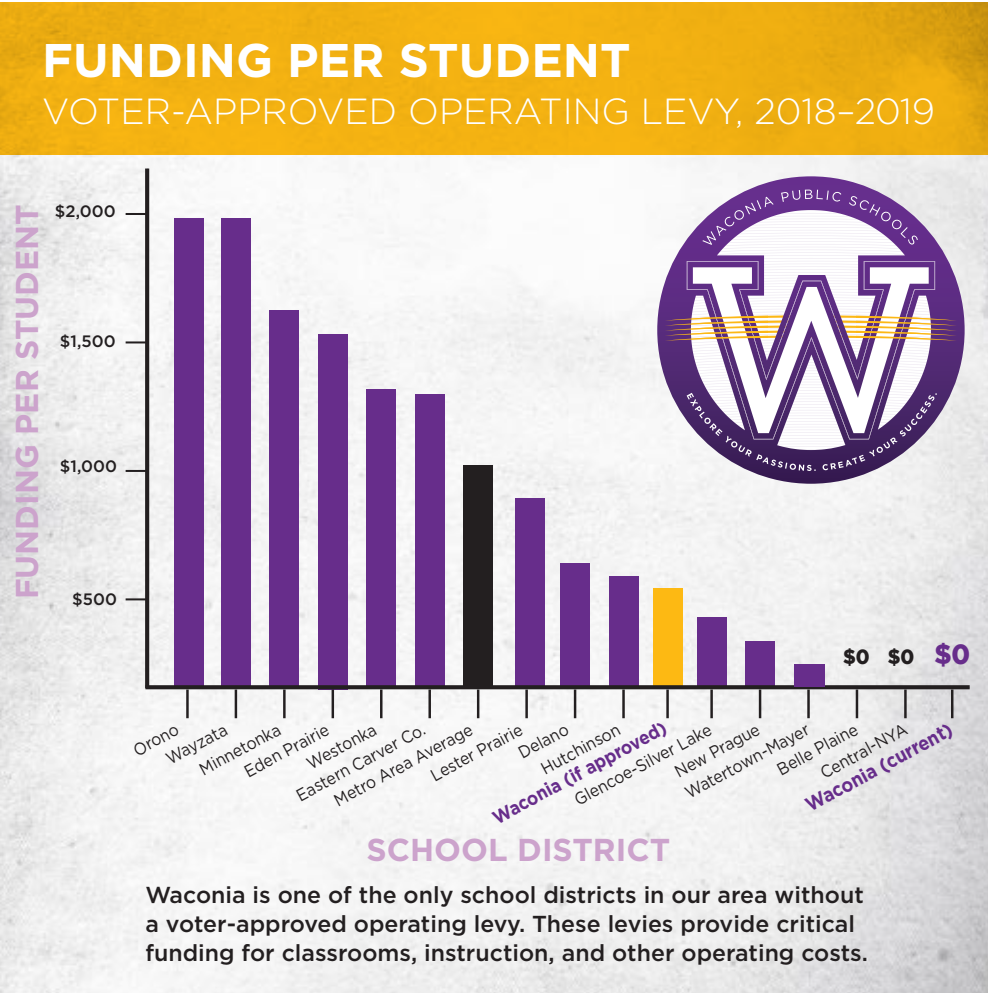
POPULAR SCHOOL DISTRICT

Since the 1990s, Waconia Public Schools’ enrollment has tripled. During that same time, how teachers educate students has also changed. New technology, new research about how children learn, and new methods of teaching are all changing what happens in classrooms.

IF VOTERS APPROVE THE OPERATING LEVY REQUEST

The additional funds would enable the district to:

- › Maintain quality education programming currently offered
- › Develop additional business partnerships that prepare students for work or college after high school through authentic learning experiences
- › Strengthen student support systems
- › Provide students with more voice and choice through personalized learning
- › Support the commitments outlined in the community-developed strategic roadmap
- › Explore new academic and activity programs



EXPLORE WILD IDEAS

Starting this fall, ISD110 will launch a program that empowers staff to submit innovative ideas that lead to lasting improvements in the daily student experience.

“We talk a lot about the idea of innovation in education, but many of the ideas are being cultivated from the top down,” shared Kathy Oliphant, director of teaching and learning. “This model turns that process on its head.” The model is based on InnovateK12 ([innovatek12.org](http://innovatek12.org)), used by school districts and businesses nationwide.

“It’s an interesting process that is also fiscally responsible. It will help us uncover some areas of improvement and, the best part, is the group decides what we will pursue. Some of the ideas may be as small, and easy, as adding an extra trash can somewhere to much bigger ideas. But, just because they are big, does not mean they have to be expensive.”

PAT DEVINE  
Superintendent, Waconia Public Schools

Devine offered the example of what happened at Stillwater High School. Faculty recognized the need for more social-emotional support for students. But, the district was not able to hire additional social workers or guidance counselors. A student innovation team came up with the solution to use therapy dogs at little to no cost to the district.

“We are going to first get this rolling with staff and then we will invite students to join us,” Oliphant explained.

Optum, a health services company, is providing its crowd-sourcing software at no cost, and Waconia Public Schools is working with and learning from other districts around the state who have already implemented this program.

Beginning in October, all district employees will be able to submit and evaluate ideas through the crowd-sourcing software. Finalists will be chosen and the winning ideas will be creatively implemented in the spring.



IF VOTERS DO NOT APPROVE THE OPERATING LEVY REQUEST

The district would face budget cuts of more than \$2 million, which could result in these actions:

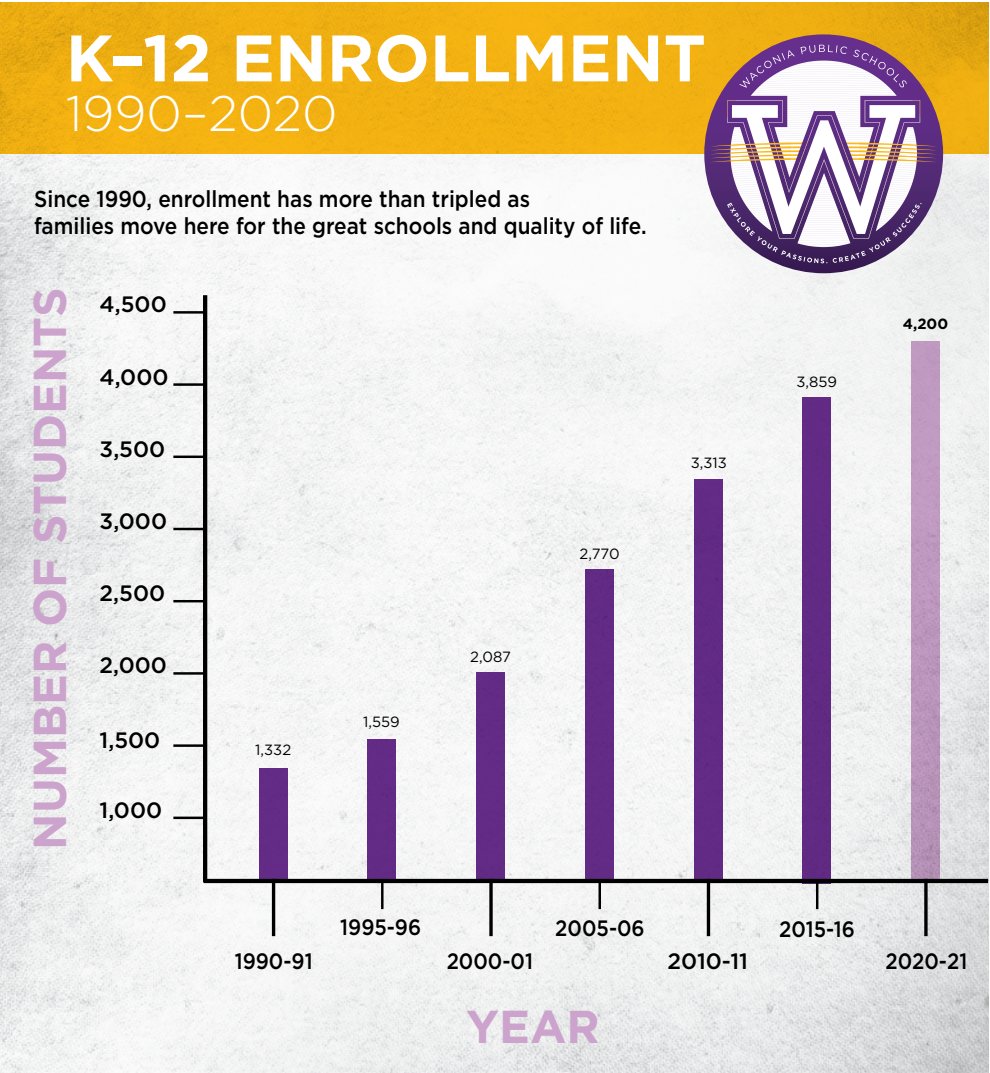
- › Reduce teaching and administrative staff
- › Increase class sizes at some or all grade levels
- › Reduce and/or eliminate some athletics and extracurricular activities
- › Reduce support staff
- › Reduce world language offerings
- › Reduce music and art programs
- › Increase some student fees

COMMUNITY-BASED DECISION

In addition to reviewing district budget options, the School Board engaged our community through a strategic planning process and a community survey before unanimously deciding to ask voters to consider increasing our local school funding through an operating levy. The goal is to maintain educational quality while being financially responsible.

BONDS ARE FOR BUILDING, LEVIES ARE FOR LEARNING

In 2014, voters approved building bonds for major renovations to our school buildings. Bonds provide funding for construction costs and cannot be used for school district operations. This 2018 request is to increase our operating levy, which funds school operations by paying for educational programming, teachers and other staff, classroom materials, utilities, and transportation costs.



# VOTE!

TUESDAY, NOV. 6

Strong Schools = Strong Communities

### LEARN MORE

On the web:  
**isd110.org**

Email:  
**referendum2018@isd110.org**

Call:  
**(952) 442-0611**

### VOTING INFORMATION

**Tuesday, Nov. 6**  
**7 a.m. - 8 p.m.**

*Early voting/absentee ballots available in late September*

**Voting Questions**  
**www.mnvotes.org • (952) 856-4514**



BUILDING COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

Waconia Public Schools is enhancing its community footprint by partnering with local businesses for some real-world learning. There are internship opportunities for students, they can go on site visits at local companies, and guest lecturers are brought into the classroom. “We want to give students as many authentic experiences as possible,” Pat Devine, Waconia Public Schools superintendent, said. “We are building a foundation to create an even greater number of opportunities for students whether it’s internships, independent study projects, or partnering with local organizations.”

Students in Mary Mitchell’s high school business class recently created a website for a nonprofit organization. “The best part about that connection for the students was communication. They had to articulate ideas at actual meetings and the email correspondence had to be appropriate. It was a true lesson in professionalism,” Mitchell explained.

Mitchell also helped connect one of her students, Megan Forster, with Ivory Isle Designs — a global wedding stationery design company that’s located in Waconia.

Josie Helmstetter, CEO and founder of Ivory Isle Designs, worked with Megan throughout this past school year. “Having Megan come into our office each day was mutually rewarding. She helped breathe new life into our daily routine and it made us re-think some of the work that we were doing,” Helmstetter commented.

In the coming school year, high school students in Lee Moen’s Start Your Own Business course will be working as entrepreneurs within five local businesses. They will be working with Mackenthun’s Fine Foods, Everson’s Hardware Hank, Sport Clips, Waconia Food Shelf, and Waconia Performing Arts Center, helping them troubleshoot and solve issues and/or develop ways to enhance the customer experience.

To learn more about partnering with the district on a project, plan a site visit, or be a guest lecturer, please contact Chistine Fenner at [fenner.christine@gmail.com](mailto:fenner.christine@gmail.com) or (612) 850-1961. Students who are interested in learning more should contact their high school counselor.





## EDIBLE CLASSROOM THRIVING IN NEW HOME



Plants and lessons have taken root in Waconia's Edible Classroom, the garden plot recently relocated to the south side of Waconia Middle School. A fixture for nearly nine years at the old "Clearwater Middle School" site, the Edible Classroom and nearby orchard have become a thriving farm-to-table classroom.



### TRANSPLANTING AND TROUBLESHOOTING

Middle school social studies teacher Michele Melius and her husband, Tom, have worked over the summer with a small army of volunteers to overcome some logistical issues but the garden now seems to be flourishing.

"It's always a work-in-progress," Michele Melius stated. "The raised beds built by Mr. Kelzer's eighth grade industrial arts class are definitely helping deal with some of the drainage issues we are having."

Despite the tricky transition, sections of the new plot are producing a feast. Raised beds are full of many different healthy vegetables, vertical structures coax tent beans, watermelon and cucumbers upward, and table-like railbeds grow greens. Showcasing art as much as science, the garden features morning glory arbors, student-painted herb and veggie signs, a Girl Scout-made Little Free Library, and an Eagle Scout's well-designed composter that's hard at work making fertile soil. Michele is especially grateful to the high school industrial arts team that created her sharp-looking shed.



### GARDEN THAT KEEPS GIVING

On any given summer day, one may see Kids' Company students weeding, laying landscape fabric, or harvesting peppers to make salsa. Rachel Worm, who leads the visits, says the Edible Classroom offers students the unique experience of seeing where their food comes from. She frequently hears students talking about how they have never seen produce in a garden. For many, it is their first taste of kohlrabi or a chance to use garden cabbage to make coleslaw.

Throughout the year, the garden helps middle schoolers gain an appreciation for our rich local agricultural history. Older students in the Transitions program gain independent skills while maintaining their own plots. All district students regularly get a taste of the garden goodness in their school lunches. The community also benefits as nearly 300 pounds of produce gets donated annually to Waconia Food Shelf.



### A VISION THAT'S STILL GROWING

Michele Melius hopes to expand the garden across the south-side lawn with a meditation labyrinth. She wants to spread more milkweed in the fall (with assistance from local naturalist Jim Gilbert).

Michele and Tom Melius grew up on farms but humbly describe themselves as self-taught. They enthusiastically yet patiently embrace this experiment. "Despite planning for everything and having as much information as possible, it's still a gamble," Michele says. Even with the unpredictability, Tom, who has worked for years as a social worker, always finds therapy in the tangible work of gardening.

The Melius team keeps learning. They reach out to local gardening gurus like middle school teacher Lynn Honnold, experts at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, and Bee Squad legend Marla Spivak. They traveled to Canada this summer to exchange knowledge at a National Geographic conference. Other school districts often reach out to Michele in hopes of replicating the garden in their district.

"To plant a garden is to believe in the future," says a sign greeting the Edible Classroom visitors. The Edible Classroom encourages making mistakes and learning from them, asking deeper questions, and seeking experiences beyond one's own. For more information, visit the garden or follow the Gidget Gardeners on Instagram or the Waconia Edible Classroom on Facebook.

## 2018-2019 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

### SEPTEMBER

28 Homecoming

### OCTOBER

5 2-Hour Early Release (K-12)  
17-19 No School (K-12)

### NOVEMBER

2 No School (K-12)  
21-26 No School (K-12)

### DECEMBER

21-31 No School (K-12)

### JANUARY

1 No School (K-12)  
21 MLK Day: No School (K-12)

### FEBRUARY

8 No School (K-12)  
15 2-Hour Early Release (K-12)  
18 Presidents' Day: No School (K-12)

### MARCH

1-8 No School (K-12)

### APRIL

19 2-Hour Early Release (K-12)  
22 No School (K-12)

### MAY

4 Prom  
26 Class of 2019 Graduation  
27 Memorial Day: No School (K-12)  
30 Last Student Day  
31 Last Teacher Day

See full Academic Calendars  
for 2018-2019 and  
High School Activities Calendars  
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