

CommunicAT

SPRING 2018



ENVISIONING OUR FUTURE, TOGETHER

When Waconia Public Schools asked parents for help in the strategic planning process, the response was incredible.

With the help of about 100 parents, community members, and district staff, the school district recently kicked off a Strategic Planning process by reflecting back on the historical trends and events that have shaped the district's growth. The Strategic Planning process is identifying strengths and needs, as well as a clear set of priorities to guide district leaders in ensuring students, staff, and families have the kind of experience in our schools that they want and need now, and into the future.

“Of those we invited to the session we had 75 percent of them in attendance and another 15 percent contacted us to let us know they wished they could come but had a conflict. That says so much about the kind of parents and community members we have in our district.”

PAT DEVINE

Superintendent, Waconia Public Schools

“What we're doing is looking at all the great things that are happening in our schools and identifying strategic ways of making it an even better experience for all of our students,” Devine stated.

Over the next few months, outside facilitators will guide school-based teams of staff, parents, and district leaders through a series of workshops, exercises, and input sessions in a classroom-to-boardroom planning process. With input from these groups, leadership will identify the experiences our students, families, and staff want and expect in Waconia Public Schools, as well as develop an operational plan to get there.



A random-sample phone survey will be held this spring to ask what residents value and support in their schools. The survey will also inform the work of the strategic planning teams as they develop goals and identify district needs and priorities.

Some of the questions this planning process will answer include:

- › Is the district organized efficiently and effectively to fulfill its mission?
- › Do schools and departments have the staff, capacity, and knowledge they need to accomplish their goals on behalf of our students?

UNIFIED BASKETBALL

By: Emily Chinault, senior, Waconia High School

Unified basketball is a great experience for students, parents, children, and the entire community. It is an awesome event to show the true value of each person attending.

“I've never seen so many smiles at a basketball practice or game in my life.”

CHARLIE GOVE

Senior Wildcat Basketball Player

Unified Sports began with the Special Olympics Unified Movement. This movement gives students with disabilities a chance to make friends and feel like they are part of a group.

Waconia High School students participate in unified basketball. It takes place during the school days in January and continues through April. Students of all abilities play basketball together on the same team, promoting inclusion, relationships, friendships, and acceptance. It also builds confidence by participating in an activity that a lot of other general education students play. Finally, it gives players a sense of

belonging. Students with special needs are often in their own part of the school that fits their needs. With unified basketball, it brings everyone together and there are a lot of smiles that happen during these games and practices. Waconia hosts practices and a tournament each year, but the kids travel to other schools for games as well. The season ends with a large tournament held in the Twin Cities. Our WHS unified basketball team is a two-time champion of this event! The best memories from the past years are the state tournaments and Waconia High School hosting unified basketball invitationals.

Unified basketball is an awesome experience that not every school has to offer. We are so lucky here to have this event going on at our school. As a general education student at Waconia High School, I am proud to hear the great things about the Unified basketball events in the halls. There is never anything bad said about it and it makes me proud to live in a community that is so welcoming to unique and different events that go on during the school year. I wish I would have gotten involved in it when I was a freshman, because I know I would have loved it. It is insane to see all of those smiles happen during the games and practices.

In order to get involved, you need to get in touch with Kari Klein who is a special education teacher at Waconia High School. Do not hesitate to get ahold of Kari and get involved. It is a great experience for both special and general education students and it gives you a time to be grateful and happy for the little things in life.



DID YOU KNOW

Waconia Public Schools has more than tripled since 1986 - from 1,175 students in the mid-1980s to 4,020 students today?

Over the course of the last four decades, our district and community have seen dramatic changes. We have kept pace with those changes through professionalism, innovation, and collaboration, all while remaining fiscally responsible.

Now is the perfect time to reflect on our past and plan well for our students' future.

- › Do schools have adequate funding to support the educational programs that students and families expect?

Our school community is growing. Being strategic about planning and growth will help us maintain the quality—and the momentum—that we provide to each student, every day. #WEareONE10

Learn more about the Strategic Planning process at www.isd110.org.

See Academic Calendars
for 2018-2019 and
High School Activities Calendars
visit isd110.org

WILDCAT MEDIA PRODUCTIONS

Members of Wildcat Media Productions, a group of Waconia High School students who have a passion for visual storytelling, have helped Superintendent Pat Devine up his communications game by producing a regular video blog for Devine. You can check it out on the website under “About Us” and then click on “Superintendent's Blog.”

There's a recent installment about Unified Sports and Devine's personal connection to the cause.

The Wildcat Media Productions team consists of three seniors at Waconia High School. Emily Compaan, Erick Valenzuela, and Grace Johnston are mentored by Paul David, who is the director of communications in the district. All of their



work can be viewed on the Waconia High School's page on the district website.

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PURPOSEFUL USE OF TECHNOLOGY DRIVES LEARNING

by Christina Catron, Contributing Writer

Kindergartners through high schoolers in ISD 110 are delving into all kinds of technology to develop skills for future jobs. As shopping aisles give way to apps and drones do deliveries, “We’re preparing students for jobs that have yet to be created,” Jeff Jeska, director of technology, Waconia Public Schools, said. “We’re helping them develop skills to allow them to flourish today and into the future.”

Geo-Inquiry

“Our kids are digital natives, and they know how to play with social media . . . and when asked if they know technology, students will say yes. But they don’t necessarily know how to use it effectively or responsibly,” said Michele Melius, Waconia Middle School social studies teacher.

Melius knows a lot about applying tech beyond the buzzwords. Melius collaborated with Mandy Bellm, Waconia Middle School media and digital learning



coordinator, to create an innovative Geo-Inquiry/Minnesota Landscapes semester class for seventh-graders. The class merges the best of field trip research, storytelling technology, online topography maps, and spatial design software with a hands-in-the-dirt experience.

Students were challenged to explore how countries with growing populations and a limited amount of land incorporate sustainable growing practices.

The class kicked off with a University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum field trip, where students learned about native plants and bees’ roles in apple formation. While there, they completed a mini photography and videography boot camp to create Flipgrid productions, movies that allow for adding visuals, such as emojis.

Students continued the semester’s exploration by learning about which plants would grow in each of the different Minnesota biomes through a HyperDoc that Bellm created. HyperDocs are digital lesson designs, embedded with all sorts of pieces, such as videos.

In the end, students used Adobe Spark to create a persuasive presentation about actual construction funding. “This helped some of them realize they could do this for a job,” Bellm said. “And it helped them practice, over and over, their presentation skills.”

Wider choices available with digital tools

Technology is enhancing many different district classrooms, but Erik Olson, Waconia High School Spanish and technology integration teacher, really sees it benefitting students in his language classroom. The tools he uses enable quicker feedback for students on tests, collaborations on Spanish story creation, and consistent growth in Spanish-speaking confidence.

Olson says he has students collaborate using Schoology to create stories in Spanish, read others’ work, and build upon the stories—a strong exercise in comprehension, applied language, and collaboration.



“A lot of people like to think of technology as dividing—that it’s making kids go off on their own, that they’re not able to talk and communicate with one another,” Olson said. “But I think technology is bringing my classes together because they’re able to communicate and share with one another as they’re using this technology.”

Coding sparks learning

Computer coding is occurring at all levels in the district, to expose students to various forms of “computational thinking.” Computational thinking makes use of patterns, sequencing, loops and repeaters, and eventually even functions, when one command stands for three different actions.

SAFETY AND SECURITY IN WACONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Waconia Public Schools is working with one of the leading voices in the nation on crisis management. For more than 20 years, Rick Kaufman has worked with hundreds of schools, colleges, and law enforcement and emergency management agencies throughout the United States to improve safety and security measures. Among the first to arrive on scene at the Columbine High School tragedy (April 1999), Kaufman provided emergency triage and rescue operations before assuming leadership of the Jefferson County Public Schools’ Crisis Response Team, where he was employed. He now does community relations and emergency management for Bloomington Public Schools.

Kaufman is currently working with Waconia Public Schools on a comprehensive safety and security plan. He facilitated conversations with school staff and parents, and conducted security audits at each school site last year.

Kaufman provides guidance in the development and training of crisis response teams, standard response protocols to school emergencies, and a comprehensive crisis communications plan.

“Rick is training us on how to implement the incident command system and response during a crisis,” Pat Devine, superintendent of Waconia Public Schools, explained.



It is our hope that we will not have to put these plans into action but, it is important that we are prepared to mitigate the situation by maximizing safety and minimizing any potential threat.”

PAT DEVINE

Superintendent, Waconia Public Schools

The district is also working with local first responders and emergency personnel.

“Maintaining open lines of communication among all involved during a crisis is critically important,” Devine added. “We are bringing everyone to the table to look at how we can all best work together to be the most effective when dealing with any potential crisis.”

The school security audit recommendations are being implemented in each building.

Devine concluded, “This is an ongoing process and one that is never totally done. As situations change, we will act and respond. This is all about providing a safe and secure environment for our students to thrive, and we are committed to practicing, assessing, and adapting.”

WACONIA LEARNING CENTER HAS NEW HOME

Students and staff at the Waconia Learning Center (WLC) are settling into their new home near Waconia High School. The learning center serves students from several surrounding communities, including Glencoe-Silver Lake, Lester Prairie, Watertown, Norwood Young America, and Waconia.



The students were just giddy when they walked into school for the first time.”

CINDY FINKE

Waconia Learning Center Coordinator

The WLC has five classrooms and several smaller breakout rooms for group work and quiet studies. The learning center currently has about 60 senior high students. The WLC exists for students who are not having their needs met in traditional schools and programs.

“It is just beautiful,” Finke added. “Everyone has the space to be successful. This is a great space for kids.”

The WLC was built with funds from the 2014 building referendum. When the learning center moved out of its old space in the Educational Services Center, that area was remodeled to make more room for an ever-expanding early childhood program.

“This just shows that every student matters. Every kid is cared for and appreciated, and we want all of them to succeed,” Finke concluded.

The facility also provides additional storage for sports equipment, restrooms that can be used for sporting events, a large community room for public use, and space for a future concession stand.



Kerry Canfield, media specialist and technology integrationist at Bayview Elementary, has seen coding light a fire in many kids. “The challenge is making tech purposeful,” Canfield said. “I could show students a new app every day and they’d have a blast, but is that purposeful? Is that leading anywhere?”

Even Bayview kindergartners are coding on iPads, learning to build a sequence of commands to make something happen. “What I like about it is that they collaborate with each other and help each other out; it helps with spatial thinking,” said Taylor Pacyna, Bayview kindergarten teacher.

Responsible digital citizenship

Digital citizenship is at the forefront in lessons with media specialists and in classroom teachable moments throughout the year. Monthly topics addressed include responsible use, digital footprint, plagiarism and copyright, and cyberbullying awareness and safety. “We don’t shy away from it with our eighth-graders,” Waconia Middle School’s Mandy Bellm said.

“Having skills to critically seek and evaluate information is an essential 21st-century skill that we embrace with well-directed digital instruction at all levels.”

MANDY BELLM

Middle School Media and Digital Learning Coordinator

An expanded version of this story is in the “District News” area of our website, www.isd110.org.

BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE NEWS

Parents with students who are going to be in fifth grade next year—the 2018–2019 school year—will have three options in the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program.

Option 1: Purchase a device through our program in collaboration with Best Buy—there is a \$100 coupon that comes with this option.

Option 2: Students can bring a device of their own as long as it meets standard criteria.

Option 3: Borrow a district-owned device.



Parents of incoming fifth graders will be receiving more information in the coming months about the BYOD program. More information can always be found on the website, www.isd110.org; click on “District Departments” and then “Technology.”

The director of technology, Jeff Jeska, can also answer your questions. He can be reached at: (952) 442-0606, ext. 5006, and jjeska@isd110.org.

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BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS FUEL STUDENT LEARNING

Giving students the opportunity to get out of the classroom and get some real world experience is the idea behind a new effort between Waconia Public Schools and the local business community.

“I had a scientist from the University of Minnesota come to my high school chemistry class back in the 1960s and that sparked my interest in the field,” Gil Overson, owner of TMC Industries, said. “So I see the value in offering high school students opportunities to get some real-life experience.”

TMC Industries has been in Waconia for about 20 years. The company does “custom distillation”. They use this process to make a multitude of products, including essential oils extracted from fruit rinds and fish oil extracted from cod. TMC Industries is just one of the area companies that Waconia Public Schools is talking to about developing an ongoing relationship to benefit students.

“We are in the beginning stages of developing these partnerships with area businesses,” Christine Fenner, business relationship consultant, said.

“We are bringing everyone together – business owners, teachers, administration, Waconia Chamber of Commerce – and we’re looking at how can we create authentic learning experiences for students. Whether they plan to attend a 4-year college, obtain a 2-year degree, or are unsure of post-secondary plans, offering these types of opportunities allows them to explore potential career options.”

CHRISTINE FENNER
Business Relationship Consultant

“If you’re an AP Chemistry student and you’re learning about titrations [quantitative chemical analysis], this is a chance to see how it’s done in the real world,” Tom Gentle, general manager, TMC Industries, said. “I have lots of ideas on what we can do for students. This certainly gives them an advantage.”



The structure will be developed on a case-by-case basis with the goal of meeting the learning objectives of all involved.

Fenner is working with multiple businesses to identify realistic ways to create these new opportunities for students. Businesses that would like to learn more about developing a relationship with Waconia Public Schools can contact Christine Fenner at (612) 850-1961 or fenner.christine@gmail.com.

GO WILDCATS!

ISD 110 BUDGET UPDATE

Every spring, school districts across Minnesota work on their budgets for the following school year. Many factors influence the budget, including state funding, enrollment growth (or loss), utilities and insurance costs, class size goals, and staffing.

Waconia Public Schools has been fortunate to have a solid savings account (known as the fund balance) due to continued enrollment growth and good financial planning. Over the past few years, the district has had to spend down that savings to maintain the great programs and staff that our students and community expect.

Thanks to community support in 2014, our school facilities are in great shape. We have a new elementary school, redesigned middle and high schools, a new early childhood center, and improved school security. But each of these facilities brings operational costs, which increase every year. Looking ahead, the district will need to cut costs, increase revenue, or both in order to maintain a balanced budget.

The school board, district leadership, and school principals will spend the next few months reviewing budget options that maintain programs while being financially responsible and transparent. The strategic planning process that is taking place (see related article, “Envisioning Our Future, Together”) will also help inform the budget, by identifying community values and priorities for our schools.

FINANCE FACTS

- › For the past decade, state education funding has not kept pace with inflation or increasing costs, putting pressure on school budgets across the state.
- › Our school district is in the bottom 1 percent of all Minnesota school districts for general education funding.
- › We are one of the only school districts in our area without a voter-approved operating levy; these levies provide critical funding for classrooms, instruction, and other operating costs.
- › Waconia Public Schools is a six-time recipient of the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting award, issued by the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) International, for having met or exceeded high standards for financial reporting and accountability, confirming the district’s commitment to financial transparency.

PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Purchase tickets at isd110.org

» JUNE 1
Jenn Bostic
7:00 p.m.

» JUNE 9
Pink Floyd
Tribute Band
7:30 p.m.

» DEC 8
Simple Gifts with Billy
McLaughlin 7:30 p.m.

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CELEBRATING WACONIA STUDENTS

NATIONAL MERIT AWARDS

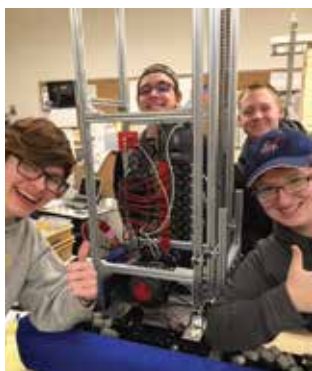


Elizabeth Whalen has been named a National Merit Finalist. Elizabeth is one of only 15,000 students across the country to be recognized as a finalist.

Emily Compaan was named a National Merit Commended Scholar.

Emily and Elizabeth, both seniors, were among the 3.5 million students to take the PSAT test when they were juniors. Elizabeth scored in the top 1 percent and Emily scored in the top 3 percent of those taking the test across the nation.

ROBOCATS



The RoboCats, Waconia High School's robotics team, made it to the world championship for the third time! Of the 63 teams competing recently in Duluth, the RoboCats placed second—earning them a trip to the FIRST Robotics Championship in Detroit in April.

HONOR CHOIR

Twenty-seven students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade were chosen to participate in the State Honor Choir, which is sponsored by the American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota. The students submitted recordings of their singing and were selected on musicianship, tonality, and vocal tone color.



WRESTLING



Tyler Wagener, a senior, repeated as state champion at 152 pounds. Tyler also set the school record for most wins of any Waconia High School wrestler—167.

Cade Mueller, a junior, is also a state champion, wrestling at 160 pounds.

Sophomore Tim Stapleton is a state runner-up at 145 pounds.

Tyson Peitz, Jake Hawkins, and Max McEnelly also made it to state and competed hard for the Wildcats.

The wrestling team was also named the Class AA academic state champions by averaging a 3.83 GPA among the top 10 GPAs on the roster.

GYMNASTICS

This was the first trip ever to the Class A state tournament for Wildcat gymnasts. The team posted their second-highest score of the season, placing



seventh, with a total of 142.425 points.

Katie Fahrenkamp, a junior, placed sixth in the all-around competition and was the state runner-up on the floor exercise. Sydney Shea, a sophomore, placed ninth on the beam and 14th all around. Seventh-grader Lili Raidt made her first trip to state and competed on the vault.

LAKETTES



The Lakettes Jazz Dance team capped an awesome season by earning their first trip to the state competition, held at Target Center.

BOYS BASKETBALL



Boys varsity basketball was named Class AAA academic state champions. They did this by achieving an average 3.69 GPA among the 16-person roster.

GIRLS HOCKEY



The Holy Family/Waconia girls varsity team won the Wright County Conference championship. Their conference record was 9-2-1, with an overall record of 16-8-1.

EXCEL AWARD WINNER



Carson Dock received the ExCEL Award for "Excellence in Community, Education and Leadership." Carson is one of 36 juniors from across the state who were presented the award during the Minnesota State Girls Basketball tournament.

2018-2019 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

AUGUST 2018

22 K-12 Open House
27 First Day of School (Gr. 1-12)
29 First Day of School (Kindergarten)

SEPTEMBER 2018

3 Labor Day (No School K-12)

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

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

See Academic Calendars
for 2018-2019 and
High School Activities Calendars
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GO WILDCATS!