# CommuniCAT

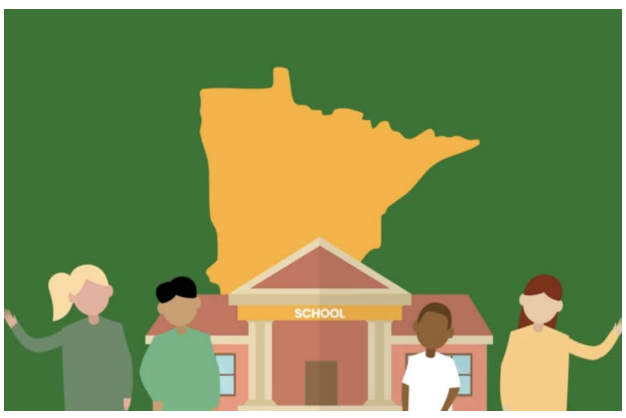
**News and Updates from Waconia Public Schools**

**FALL 2026**


# VOTERS TO WEIGH IN ON MN PERMANENT SCHOOL FUND ON NOV. 3

Residents may have heard that there will be a constitutional amendment on the November 3, 2026 ballot related to something called the Minnesota Permanent School Fund. The proposed amendment would change how the fund is managed and how much money is distributed to Minnesota school districts each year.

Because the Permanent School Fund (PSF) is a relatively unfamiliar topic to many residents, we want to provide some background and answer a few common questions about the proposed amendment. Below are some frequently asked questions regarding the ballot question, what the Permanent School Fund is, how it currently supports Minnesota school districts, and what would change if the amendment is approved by voters.




**WHAT IS THE MN PERMANENT SCHOOL FUND?**

Established in 1858, the PSF is a funding source for public schools built on proceeds from public lands set aside to support public education. It acts as a permanent endowment, continually generating revenue from the state's natural resources.

**WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THE PSF TODAY?**

Because the value of the fund has grown to $2.3 billion, a constitutional amendment will appear on the Nov. 3 ballot to increase the annual distribution percentage to school districts.

**WHAT IS THE OFFICIAL BALLOT LANGUAGE?**

"Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to increase the funding going to all school districts from the permanent school fund, which is a fund that supports school districts without raising individual income or property taxes, effective July 1, 2027?"

**WILL VOTING "YES" INCREASE MY TAXES?**

No! This constitutional amendment only aims to modernize existing fund distributions. The PSF is not funded through property taxes or any other type of taxes on stakeholders.

**WILL PASSING THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT DEPLETE THE FUND QUICKLY?**

No. The proposal was developed in a way to increase support for today's students, while maintaining the fund as a long-term resource.

**HOW WOULD THIS IMPACT THE ISD 110 BUDGET?**

The additional funding would be a welcome investment in public education, but it is important to put the increase in perspective. If this constitutional amendment is passed, the fund's per pupil distribution is estimated to increase by approximately $33 per student. For Waconia Public Schools, that would mean approximately $125,000 in additional funding each year. While this would provide valuable additional resources, it would not significantly change the District's overall financial picture or address the broader challenges facing public school funding.

**IS THIS AMENDMENT SPECIFIC TO WACONIA?**

No. This constitutional amendment was put on the ballot through a bipartisan effort in the Minnesota state legislature. If passed, every public school district in the state would benefit.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF I LEAVE THE QUESTION BLANK?**

Leaving the ballot question blank is the same as a "No" vote. A simple majority is needed to pass the amendment.

**WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS BALLOT MEASURE?**

More information is available online at www.minnesotaPSFamendment.org.

# WHS STUDENTS RECOGNIZED BY NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Three Waconia High School seniors have recently been recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Program for their exceptional academic promise. Seniors Jacob Senne and Mia Tiller have been named National Merit Semifinalists, while senior Madelyn Hartmann has been named a National Merit Commended Student.

Senne and Tiller are two of approximately 16,000 students to be named National Merit Semifinalists this year. They now have an opportunity to compete for one of approximately 6,700 National Merit Scholarships worth around $24 million that will be offered next spring.

More than 1.2 million juniors entered the 2027 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2025 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state.

Hartmann is one of approximately 34,000 students nationwide to be recognized as a National Merit Commended Student. She earned this distinction by scoring among the top 50,000 students who took the PSAT/NMSQT, placing her in the top 4% of all students who took the test.

*Mia Tiller*

*Jacob Senne*

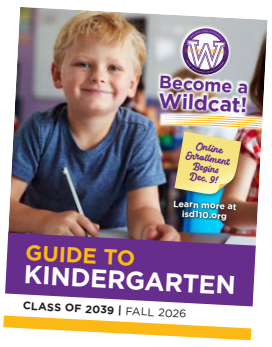
*Madelyn Hartmann*

# WACONIA KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT OPENS DECEMBER 8 FOR CLASS OF 2040

Do you have a child who will turn five on or before September 1, 2027 and will be eligible to start Kindergarten in the Fall of 2027? We are beyond excited to welcome the Class of 2040 of Wildcats to our elementary schools next August!

Kindergarten enrollment is an online process in Waconia that will open to families on Tuesday, December 8, 2026. More information will be sent to families in the coming weeks, including the District's printed Kindergarten Guide as well as information about Kindergarten Preview Nights at the three elementary schools.

More information about the Kindergarten experience in Waconia can be found online at isd110.org/academics/kindergarten-waconia.





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# 2025-26 SURVEY RESULTS HIGHLIGHT STRONG SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The results of Waconia Public Schools' 2025–26 end-of-year surveys provide an encouraging look back at the experiences of students, parents, and staff across the District. The survey results reflect a strong and supportive school community, with high levels of engagement, satisfaction, pride, and positive relationships across our schools.

Ninety-six percent of parents said their child feels safe and supported at school, while 96% said their child feels welcomed, respected and heard. Ninety-two percent of students say they are engaged and involved in their school, and 93% say they know their teachers and staff respect and care about them. Among elementary students, 94% say their teachers challenge them in their learning and provide help when they need it.

Families also expressed strong satisfaction with the educational experience their children receive. Ninety-one percent of parents say their child is receiving a high-quality education, and 92% say they are satisfied with their child's educational experience. These results reinforce the important role that strong relationships, supportive learning environments, and high expectations play in helping students thrive.

Staff members also continue to express a strong connection to their work and the District. Ninety-nine percent say they are engaged and productive in their positions, while 95% say they are proud to work in District 110. Together, these results provide encouraging evidence of a school community where students are supported, educators are engaged, and families feel confident in the education their children are receiving.

While we celebrate these encouraging outcomes, we also recognize that survey results are an important part of an ongoing process of listening and improvement. As we move through the 2026–27 school year, Waconia Public Schools will continue to use feedback from students, families, and staff to identify areas of strength, understand opportunities for growth, and make decisions that support the educational experience of every student.

# WACONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS HONORS 2026 ESSENCE AWARD RECIPIENTS

The District's 2026 Essence Award recipients were honored at this year's Back-to-School Kickoff Event in August.

The Essence Awards were created to celebrate those employees behind the scenes – people who may not otherwise receive much public recognition. These are the employees who work day after day to continue building the vibrant learning community we have here at Waconia Public Schools.

*Essence Award Winners from left to right: Julie Kendrick (Bayview), Brittany Rider (Southview), Jen Deming (Laketown), Carly Haskins, (WMS), Chris Thole (Koch Bus Co.), Michael Peterson (WHS)*

# THREE WACONIA EDUCATORS NAMED 2026-27 AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Waconia Education Association has announced that Nick Hansberry, Ali Weber, and Corey Wedge are the 2026-27 recipients of the Accomplished Waconia Educators Award. The three recipients will now go on to represent Waconia Public Schools in the 2026-27 Minnesota Teacher of Year program this year.

Hansberry is a music and band teacher at Waconia High School who has taught in the District since 2021. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Hansberry directs two of the high school jazz bands, the pep band, the fall musical pit, and the Waconia High School Marching Band.

"Mr. Hansberry fosters an environment where every student feels valued, regardless of musical ability or role within the ensemble. His energy, enthusiasm, and genuine care for students make him both inspiring to watch and joy to work alongside," one nominator said. "His classroom reflects both high expectations and heartfelt compassion, balancing structure and excellence with fun and encouragement. Students leave his program not only as stronger musicians, but as thoughtful, hardworking young adults prepared to contribute positively to their communities."

Weber is a special education teacher who works with students with developmental cognitive disabilities at Southview Elementary School and has taught in the District since 2022. She has also helped organize and lead Unified Program activities at Southview.

"Ali is one of the most dedicated and passionate teachers I know. Year after year, her classroom is full of students that have high needs and even bigger personalities, all of which she handles with grace and patience," one nominator said. " Ali has also been a big leader in the Unified Program at Southview, always making sure students are included, celebrated, and given the spotlight. She finds new ways to engage her students, creative ideas on a new learning opportunity, and does so with a smile on her face."

Wedge is a fifth grade teacher at Laketown Elementary School who has taught in the District since 1996.

"What truly sets Mr. Wedge apart is his ability to connect with students while maintaining high expectations and supportive boundaries. For many students, fifth grade becomes their favorite year because of the encouragement, care, and confidence he instills in them," one nominator said. "As students prepare for the important transition from elementary to middle school, Mr. Wedge provides reassurance and guidance not only to students, but to parents as well. His thoughtful insight, dedication, and responsiveness help children grow academically, socially, and emotionally during a pivotal stage in their development."

Chosen annually by the WEA, the Accomplished Waconia Educator Award recognizes educators who represent excellence in education and who motivate and inspire students for a lifetime. ISD 110 parents, students, and staff are invited each year to nominate educators they feel embody these qualities and make a lasting impact on the Waconia school community. A list of past recipients of the Accomplished Waconia Educators Award can be found on the District's website at isd110.org/about-us/staff-recognition.

# WACONIA HIGH SCHOOL TOOK THE STAGE WITH *LEGALLY BLONDE,* OCTOBER 8-11

The Waconia High School Theater Program presented its fall musical, Legally Blonde, with five performances over four days, October 8-11.

Congratulations to the entire cast, crew, pit band, and directors for providing plenty of laughs, music, and courtroom drama as we followed Elle Woods, Bel Air's favorite pink-clad blonde, and her Chihuahua, Bruiser, to Harvard Law School.

**Legally Blonde Cast:**

Abby O'Boyle.....Elle Woods
Matthew Bronczyk.....Warner
Caleb Hagen..... Callahan
Ginny Arnita .....Paulette
Kora Paulson ..... Vivienne
Jake Weber..... Emmett
Gwenyth Pufahl..... Brooke Wyndham
Alaina Bode ..... Enid Hoops
Hezekiah Bergstrom.....Kyle B. O'Boyle
Ryan Peitsch ..... Aaron Schultz

**Greek Chorus:** Lilly Batters, Lyla Diercks, Becca Thomas, Kylie Pogatchnik, Phoenix Wright, and Avery Gelschus

# 2026 WACONIA HOMECOMING

**GO WILDCATS!**

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## HIGH SCHOOL ENGINEERING CLASS PUTS IDEAS TO THE TEST

Could you design a lander capable of safely delivering astronauts to Mars?

That's the challenge facing students in Mr. Jensen's Principles of Engineering class at Waconia High School as they take on a hands-on Mars Lander Engineering Challenge.

Working in teams, students are designing, building and testing their own prototype landers. Their designs must stay attached to a 2-liter bottle rocket during launch, successfully separate in flight and protect their "astronauts" during landing. Along the way, they're collecting data, evaluating their designs and making improvements based on what they learn.

It's more than building a model. Students are putting the engineering design process into action and learning how decisions about materials, weight, shock absorption and cost can determine whether a mission succeeds or fails.

One student in the class summed up the benefits of this type of hands-on learning: "It's more interactive and helps with teamwork and communication skills. You get to bring your own inspiration and ideas to life."

## WACONIA SOPHOMORE RYDER HASKINGS NAMED TO TEAM MINNESOTA GOLF ROSTER

Congratulations to Waconia High School sophomore Ryder Haskings, who has been named to the 2027 Team Minnesota boys golf roster.

Ryder is one of just 12 boys and 12 girls chosen by a selection committee to represent Minnesota as part of the United States Golf Association's U.S. National Development Program.

Ryder has already built an impressive high school golf resume. As a seventh grader in 2024, he helped the Wildcats finish second at the MSHSL State Tournament while placing 13th individually. He followed that with a 19th place finish at State as an eighth grader in 2025. In 2026, he won the section championship and finished 24th individually at the State Tournament as a freshman.

Team Minnesota provides top junior golfers ages 13-18 with access to development camps, coaching resources, tournament opportunities, and other support designed to help prepare them for college golf and beyond.

## SENIOR SEMINAR PREPARES WACONIA STUDENTS FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Students in Mr. Mark Bullis' Senior Seminar class practiced changing a tire recently in the Waconia High School parking lot.

Senior Seminar is designed to help prepare students for life after high school. The course is divided into four subjects: health, finance, auto maintenance and communication. Students spend approximately 15 days on each subject, rotating from one to the next throughout the trimester, with each subject taught by a different teacher.

Skills learned in the different subject areas include:

**Health:** First aid and CPR and community medical emergency resources.

**Finance:** Budgets, checking accounts, credit, loans, investing and insurance.

**Auto Maintenance:** Basic auto systems maintenance, safety concerns and general car care, purchasing and insurance.

**Communication:** Cover letters, resumes, professional emails, social networking and successful interview skills and techniques.



## WACONIA STUDENT SELECTED FOR HOSA LEADERSHIP ACADEMY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Junior Wren Catron, president of Waconia High School's chapter of HOSA-Future Health Professionals, was selected to participate in the organization's Washington Leadership Academy (WLA) in Washington, D.C., September 19–22.

At this capstone leadership experience, Wren and other HOSA student leaders from across the country met with national leaders, learned about public health policy, and received training in civic engagement, professional skills and healthcare advocacy. She also had the opportunity to meet with legislators to advocate for HOSA and develop her leadership and public speaking skills.

HOSA-Future Health Professionals is an international, student-led organization dedicated to empowering the next generation of healthcare leaders. This is the first year HOSA has been an official club at Waconia High School, with science teacher Mr. Berg serving as the club advisor.

Beyond HOSA, Wren is an active member of National Honor Society, Link Crew, and International Club, and participates in volleyball and track. After high school, she plans to pursue a degree in neuroscience or psychology.

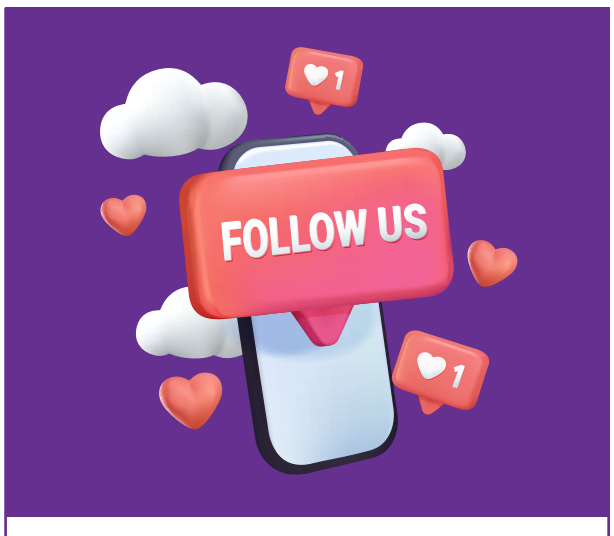
## WACONIA FOOTBALL CELEBRATES KEY WIN OVER CHANHASSEN

Members of the Waconia High School football team celebrate with Wildcat Superfans after the team's 23-14 victory over Chanhassen on September 18. It was the program's first victory over Chanhassen since the 2021 season.

The team has been ranked in the Top 10 of the Class 5A state rankings for a majority of the season and is looking forward to making a run in the section playoffs in late-October.

## RAIN DOESN'T DAMPEN NICKLE DICKLE DAY RACES

It was a somewhat wet and rainy, but still successful Nickle Dickle Day on September 21. Runners of all ages had a good time competing in the 5K, 10K, and half mile Tickle Run events.

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