

School Pages

Fall 2024-25



A Message from Superintendent Eric Melby

Transition and Change

Proposing to repurpose a long-standing elementary school is never easy, especially for the students and families directly affected. We empathize with Washburn students and families, both present and past.

It's clear Washburn has a profound impact on families and has been a cherished part of our community. The dedication of staff and the nurturing environment created by a generation of outstanding educators, support staff and principals are irreplaceable qualities that mean so much to students and families.

Repurposing Washburn Elementary School brings a mix of emotions for the community. For the families of current students, there's a deep sense of heartache and loss as they prepare to leave behind a school that has been a cornerstone of their children's education and daily lives. The bonds formed with teachers, classmates, and staff, and the familiar hallways, will be difficult to part with.

At the same time, for our preschool and early childhood families, Washburn represents a new chapter filled with

excitement and opportunity. The vibrant space will offer young learners a nurturing environment designed specifically for their growth, providing a strong start to their educational journey.

Balancing these two realities is key. Acknowledging the sadness of transitions while embracing the joy of new beginnings.

To help ease the transition, we are committed to honoring the outgoing students and their families. We are forming a team to plan special events to celebrate their time at Washburn, where they can reflect on cherished memories and milestones along with opportunities for families to connect and offer their gratitude to the dedicated staff.

By recognizing the importance of their time at Washburn, we hope to provide a sense of closure while supporting their move to new schools who have equally dedicated staff and welcoming environments.

It's this dedication to fostering a sense of belonging and community, even during difficult transitions, that makes Bloomington Public Schools so special for all families.

Acknowledging the sadness of transitions while embracing the joy of new beginnings.

Kindergarteners thrive here!

You want the best for your child? So do we.

Our neighborhood schools welcome kindergartners to a positive and caring experience as the first step on their pathway to school success. Kindergarten offers a nurturing atmosphere for all students to learn and grow with strong academics, enriching activities and a supportive school community.

Children turning five years old on or before Sept. 1, 2025 are eligible to enroll for the 2025-26 school year. A district-wide virtual kindergarten preview is scheduled from 6-7:30 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 4. Families can learn more about program options, important dates, school boundaries, and kindergarten open house events on our website. Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/bps-kinder.

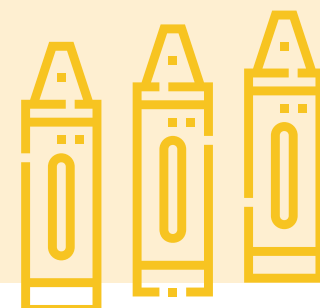


SCAN ME

For currently enrolled preschool students, early learning staff are available to help with registration and answer any questions families may have.

Hillcrest Community School is an Artful Learning school open to all Bloomington families. Parents interested in having children attend Hillcrest are required to register during the month of November, and select a transfer from their boundary school to Hillcrest.

Hillcrest, 9301 Thomas Rd., will hold a School Choice Lottery & Information Night at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 29.



Right Sizing the Budget (RSB)

In today's evolving educational landscape, school districts across the Twin Cities metro area are faced with the challenge of balancing fiscal responsibility with the growing needs of students, staff, and communities.

School districts continue to work through fiscal challenges as a result of state funding that fails to keep pace with inflation, evolving student needs, declining or flat enrollment, and rising operational costs.

As Bloomington Public Schools plans for the 2025-26 school year, district leaders have prepared a series of budget reduction recommendations totalling \$5 million. This is the second year of a multi-year Right Sizing the Budget (RSB) process to align our financial resources with the district's new strategic plan priorities to ensure that every dollar is used effectively to enhance student outcomes.

By making strategic adjustments now, the district is setting the foundation for long-term sustainability, ensuring it can continue to support programs and services that matter most to our community.

In this edition of *School Pages*, we provide the difficult, but necessary budget reduction proposals. And, as is our practice of being both transparent and inclusive, we've included a series of staff and community questions, responses, and relevant RSB information.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Community members are encouraged to refer to the Frequently Asked Questions on the Right Sizing the Budget web page for more detail and context. Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/bps-rsb.



Can the budget reductions be put off for another year?

Any decision to delay or push the cuts into the FY 2026-27 budget will result in a \$17 million to \$20 million or greater reduction in order to balance the budget.

How do we justify this budget cut when the district plans to spend millions on the new high school stadiums?

Funding for upgrading the high school stadium sites comes from existing funds dedicated for deferred maintenance and construction projects (Long-term Facility Maintenance and operating capital). These funds, by state law, cannot be used for day-to-day District operations (salaries, utilities, supplies, etc.). The Capital Projects funds are used to ensure our sites are safe, quality learning environments.

Is the decision to repurpose Washburn set in stone? Is Washburn for sure going to no longer be an elementary school in 2025?

The repurposing of Washburn is currently a recommendation. The School Board is supportive of the difficult, but necessary recommendation to right size the district budget. The School Board will take a final vote on all of the RSB recommendations at its Oct. 28 meeting. The Board hosts a listening session to hear from residents and staff on the second Monday of each month.

Why was Washburn chosen and not another elementary school?

We commissioned a capacity study of all BPS schools. Among the study's key findings: Over 2,000 seats are available across the district's 10 elementary schools, with Washburn having the most capacity (and lowest enrollment) than the other elementary schools, and enrollment is not expected to increase for the foreseeable future.

What will happen with Pond and Southwood?

Pond is likely to be demolished to allow for an expansion of parking spaces for Kennedy High School and Activity Center, and the new stadium. Current parking spaces do not meet City of Bloomington ordinance for a facility of this size. No decision has been made with respect to Southwood.

I have major concerns about increasing class sizes. Large class sizes make it difficult for teachers to manage behaviors and teach students with varying academic levels.

Excluding special education classes, which vary widely from district to district, BPS has the:

- 6th lowest average class size of the region at 25.5 students/class.
- 2nd lowest average class size for elementary, with an overall average of 20.2 students/class.
- 2nd lowest average class size for middle school at 24.2 students/class.
- 19th in terms of average class size at high school with 28.6 students/class on average.
- Special Education class sizes on average are: 6.4 Elem, 10.0 Middle, and 11.6 High school.

STREAMLINING SUCCESS

ADJUSTMENTS MAY SHAPE SCHOOL DAY

Finding ways to reduce expenses without compromising essential educational services may include streamlining bus routes which is likely to alter school start times for students across the district.

Running our own fleet of buses, while relying on contracted bus services due to a shortage of drivers, has steadily increased costs. BPS transportation officials believe consolidating bus routes may save \$400,000.

With more than 80 percent of its students transported daily, school start times would need to be adjusted to accommodate the reconfigured bus schedules. A staggered schedule allows us to maximize our buses and drivers across multiple routes. By adjusting start times, we can run more efficient routes with fewer buses.

Transportation officials are finalizing several proposals to share with the public for review and comment.



MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Middle school principals and district leaders continue to develop models for revising the middle school schedule. This work is part of the district's budget reductions for the 2025-26 school year, ensuring we remain fiscally responsible while maintaining a balanced and effective timetable that meets the needs of all students and staff. The team is committed to creating a schedule that supports both academic success and a positive learning environment.



SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

We welcome questions and feedback from our community, staff, students and families. Questions and feedback can be shared via a Google Form. Scan the QR code or visit: bit.ly/bps-rsb-feedback



Challenging times, difficult decisions

2025-26 BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS | TARGET: \$5 MILLION

The following table provides the current proposed budget adjustments by level with the corresponding savings. Budget adjustments are recommendations at this point. Additional adjustments continue to be studied, and final details may not be known or become public until early 2025. The School Board is expected to approve the final RSB 2025-26 plan on Oct. 28.

EARLY CHILDHOOD & ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

TOTAL: \$1.38M

DESCRIPTION	FTE*	SAVINGS	IMPLICATIONS
Kindergarten staffing ratio increase 0.5 Grades 1-3 staffing ratio increase 0.5 Grades 4-5 staffing ratio increase 0.5	3.0	\$390,000	Kindergarten Ratio = 25 Gr. 1-3 Ratio = 28 Gr. 4-5 Ratio = 30
Repurpose Washburn Elementary School as a new Early Learning Center	TBD	\$990,000	Consolidate Pond & Southwood early childhood programs to Washburn. Washburn students relocated to Normandale, Poplar Bridge and Valley View elementary schools

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

TOTAL: \$0.78M-\$1.2M

DESCRIPTION	FTE*	SAVINGS	IMPLICATIONS
Staffing Ratio	6.0-10.0	\$780,000 -\$1.2 M	Adjust MS schedule

HIGH SCHOOLS

TOTAL: \$0.49M

DESCRIPTION	FTE*	SAVINGS	IMPLICATIONS
Staffing ratio increase 1.0 (not class size)	3.77	\$490,000	Ratio = 29.65

DISTRICT/ESC

TOTAL: \$1.5M

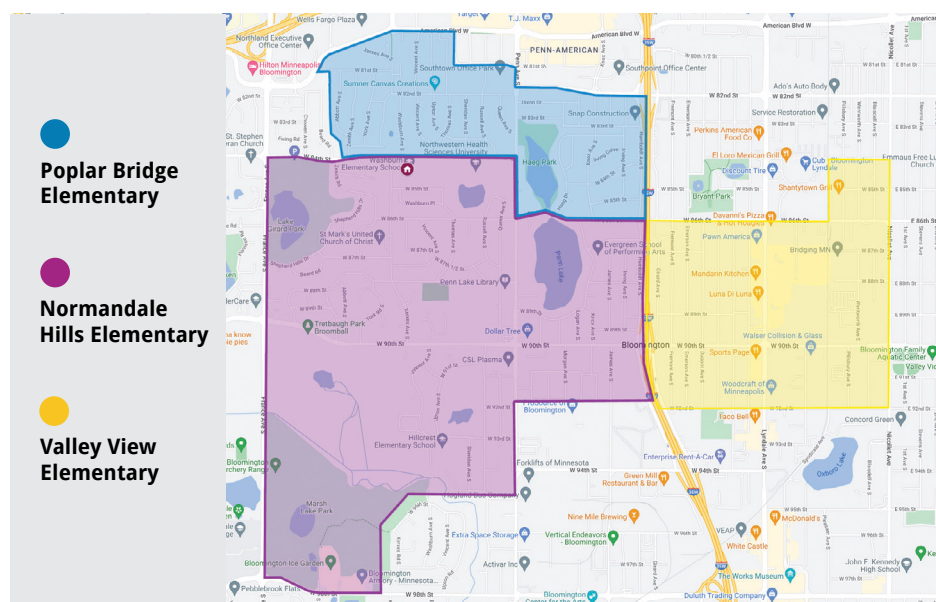
DESCRIPTION	FTE*	SAVINGS	IMPLICATIONS
Revise Transportation Routes	N/A	\$400,000	Move from 3-tier to 5-tier routing results in change to school start times
Additional budget reductions under study	N/A	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational structure Departments Attrition/Retirements ESC

*FTE is based on a licensed employee's salaries and benefits

TOTAL: \$4.57M

Repurpose Washburn Plan

PROPOSAL TO CONSOLIDATE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS



One of the more difficult decisions in the district's right sizing the budget process is a proposal to repurpose Washburn Elementary School into an early childhood center to house Pond, Southwood and all of the district's early childhood programs. This plan is part of a broader effort to maximize district resources while continuing to provide high-quality early childhood education to our youngest learners.

Beginning in fall of 2025, Washburn students will join the elementary school communities of Normandale Hills, Poplar Bridge and Valley View. This move requires expanding the enrollment boundaries for those three elementary schools, as follows (refer to map):

- **Normandale Hills:** East of France Ave.; south of 84th St.; west of Penn Ave. S.; south of 86th St.; west of 35W; north of 92nd St.; west of Penn Ave S.
- **Poplar Bridge:** East of France Ave; south of American Blvd. W.; west of 35W; north of 86th St.; east of Penn Ave. S.; north of 84th St.
- **Valley View:** East of 35W; south of 86th St.; east of Pillsbury Ave.; south of 84th St.; north of 92nd St.

- Washburn students currently attending through an intra-district transfer (outside their BPS home attendance area) will be placed in their neighborhood school at the conclusion of the 2024-25 school year, unless a new transfer request is completed. This excludes students in the Renaissance and center-based special education programs who will relocate with their programs (see info below).
- Families of current out-of-district open enrolled Washburn students will need to complete an inter-district enrollment request for a new school placement for 2025-26. Requests to attend another BPS elementary school may be made by email enrollment@isd271.org or 952-681-6555.
- Washburn families may request a transfer to another BPS school during the intra-district transfer period, Nov. 1-30. No intra-district transfers are permitted for the current school year.

PROGRAMS SHIFT TO NEW SITES

As part of the district's efforts to optimize educational resources, several programs previously housed at Washburn, Pond and Southwood will be relocated to other schools and facilities for the 2025-26 school year.

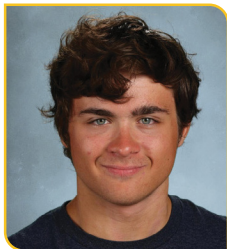
The relocations have been carefully planned to ensure the educational needs of students are met with minimal disruption. The transition process has been designed to provide continuity of learning while maintaining the same level of academic and student support.

Washburn Elementary School based programs relocation plan:

- Renaissance Program to Hillcrest Community School. Renaissance serves students who have traditionally been underserved by gifted and talented programs, and provides a path for students to progress into any of the district's middle school advanced learner options (DA, Nobel, etc.)
- Center-based special education programs to Westwood Elementary
- New Code Academy (elementary school base) to Oak Grove Elementary

Pond & Southwood based programs relocation plan:

- Head Start to Washburn Early Learning Center
- Two additional Pond programs - American Indian Education Office and Health Commons at Pond - continue to be studied for the most suitable location



Kennedy High School students from the Dimensions Academy Class of 2024 earned the AP Capstone Diploma. Graduates **Carter Bain, William Giles, Simon Katan, Kenna Kollwitz** and **Nora Rikansrud** were recognized for their outstanding achievement in the rigorous, multi-year AP Capstone program. bit.ly/bps-ap-capstone-24



Nolan Hultgren (JHS) had a solid showing at the Class AAA Boys State Golf Tournament this past summer, placing in the top half of the field. bit.ly/bps-hultgren-golf

Bode Campbell (JHS) finished his tennis season this summer with a first-round win in the Class AA state tournament and the Section 6AA singles championship. Jefferson boys tennis coach **Tom McNutt** earned the Section 6 head coach of the year honor from the Minnesota Tennis Coaches Association. bit.ly/jhs-tennis-2024



Seniors **Ben Wadzinski** and **Owen Woods** (JHS) and **Mercury Bertram, Arthur Colvin,** and **Emily Kwon** (KHS) are semifinalists in the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program. bit.ly/bps-nm-semifinalists-25

BPS students earned a combined 11 awards in the Minnesota State Fair K-12 Competition, including Jefferson sophomore **Jaired Munar**. bit.ly/bps-state-fair-art-24



Student school board representatives this year are seniors **Jenny Wen** (Jefferson) and **Kenneth Adah** (Kennedy). In his second year as a student rep, Adah is focused on developing a better understanding of how policies affect students, and further growing his advocacy skills. Wen is also excited about giving her peers a voice, and providing a comprehensive and diverse look into her school's student body. Learn more about this year's student Board reps: bit.ly/bps-student-reps-24

School Pages is published by Bloomington Public Schools. It is printed and delivered by mail to 41,000 Bloomington households at a cost of 15 cents per copy to inform Bloomington residents about their public schools.

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ELITE SUCCESS: DISCOVERING THE ABILITY TO ACHIEVE

"In Minnesota History, I had a zero percent. Now I have almost an A- in the class," said **Andy Cortes Genis**. The Valley View Middle School (VVM) seventh grade student explained how he turned his grades around with the help of a group called Elite Success.

Now in its second year, Elite Success was created by VVM teachers **Evan Ziegler, Chris Thompson** and **Adam Haisman** after observing post-pandemic middle school students were missing behavioral and academic skills. They assembled a group of 22 male students in the second half of last school year who could use more support with the goal of redirecting behaviors and performance outcomes.

Similar groups and services can be found across the district to help students who may be performing below expectations or standards. We are proud to employ the best educators who find innovative ways to provide direct support, attention and create inclusive environments for students to gain the confidence and ability to dream, believe and achieve. Watch the video story: bit.ly/vvms-elite-success



SCAN ME

In the Know

Mornings with Melbye

Superintendent Eric Melbye wants to hear from you! Get to know your superintendent and chat with him about issues affecting our schools over a cup of coffee or tea at one of several local establishments this school year. Information on Mornings with Melbye can be found at bit.ly/bps-mornings or look for upcoming dates on our social media pages.

Stay Informed with Chalk Talk

Interested in hearing more about Bloomington Public Schools? Chalk Talk is an e-newsletter for BPS families and residents. It features updates from the superintendent, news, photos and videos of the great things happening in the district. Chalk Talk is emailed the second Thursday of each month during the school year. Parents and caregivers are automatically subscribed. Community members who wish to subscribe, please scan the QR code, or visit bit.ly/bps-subscribe



Make an Impact in Our Schools

We're looking for volunteers to inspire and connect with students. Your time, energy and positive presence as a volunteer will make a world of difference in the lives of every student. Current opportunities through Volunteer Connection include:

- K-12, classroom assistant, general education and special education (duties may vary)
- Lunchroom aides
- Media center assistants
- Study Buddies Tutor: after-school and evenings, October-April

Learn more and apply with Volunteer Connection at bit.ly/bps-volunteer



Enjoy Our Performing Arts

Each year our schools put on spectacular music and performing arts programs featuring talented students and musicians. From theater, band, orchestra, and traditional choir and show choirs, we invite you to attend a show or performance to support the performing arts and our students: bit.ly/bps-performing-arts-2425

