

School Pages

Winter 2024-25



A Message from Superintendent Eric Melby

Mid-Year milestones and New Year hopes

As we turn the page on the calendar and enter the second half of the school year, I'm filled with excitement and optimism for what lies ahead. A mid-school year reflection is also a time to pause and reflect on where we've come over the last four months.

The dawn of the new school year began with the excitement and anticipation of a fresh start. On my visit to schools, I was greeted by the buzz of laughter and joyful reunions of students reconnecting with friends and new classmates. Teachers and staff radiated enthusiasm, embracing the promise of new opportunities, and together we stepped forward with renewed energy, ready for another journey of learning, discovery and growth.

The first half of the school year was not without its challenges. We faced the difficult task of making budget reduction decisions to bring our spending in line with revenues. These decisions are never easy, and I want to thank our community, staff, and families for your patience, understanding, and commitment during this process.

I am inspired by the resilience and creativity displayed across our schools.

While such challenges test us, they also reveal the strength of our shared dedication to providing the best possible education for our students and families.

At the same time, there is much to celebrate. I am inspired by the resilience and creativity displayed across our schools. Our students continue to shine in their academic achievements, attendance, extracurricular pursuits, and acts of kindness. I've seen firsthand how our staff go above and beyond to create engaging learning environments and support students in reaching their goals. These moments remind me of the strength and heart of our schools and the importance of the work we do together.

As we begin the new year, I am filled with hope and determination. The next five months present opportunities to continue building on our successes, addressing challenges head-on, and ensuring every decision we make serves the best interests of our students and community.

Thank you for your ongoing support and helping to make our schools a community where connection, learning, and growth thrive.

Bright Futures Begin Here



We look forward to welcoming our next kindergarten class. Enrollment for the 2025-26 school year is now open for all children who will be 5 years old on or before Sept. 1.

Join us at a kindergarten welcome event to learn about your school, meet the principal and staff, and hear how we support students and families on their school journey. All events are 6-7 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

Hillcrest Community School
Feb. 11

Poplar Bridge Elementary
Jan. 28

Indian Mounds Elementary
Jan. 30

Ridgeview Elementary
Feb. 6

Normandale Hills Elementary
Jan. 23

Valley View Elementary
Jan. 23

Oak Grove Elementary
Jan. 23

Westwood Elementary
Jan. 30

Olson Elementary
Jan. 23

New Code Academy
Jan. 30 (virtual)
12:30-1:30 p.m. and
6-6:30 p.m.

The Journey to Kindergarten Begins in Preschool

Registration for Fall 2025 preschool opens Jan. 22 at 8 a.m.

We offer half-day preschool for children who will be 3 or 4 years old by Sept. 1; Step into Preschool for children with fall and winter birthdays, and Preschool SAFARI for optional childcare before- and after-preschool.



A Community People Choose to be Part Of

Our schools are a community, a home - where everyone is welcomed, supported, loved, and proud to wear their colors and express themselves.

OUR SCHOOLS

2

Early Childhood Centers

10

Elementary Schools

3

Middle Schools

2

High Schools

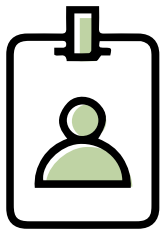
2

Alternative Learning Centers

1

K-12 Online School

OUR STAFF



1,874

Total number of EC-22 licensed and non-licensed staff



Teachers with Advanced Degrees

749

EC-22 casual/reserve staff

79%

Master's

1,352

Female (72%)

6%

Advanced/PhD

522

Male (28%)

16.4%

Percentage staff of color (of total EC-22 staff)



Attendance Trending Up

The district continues to see progress in improving student attendance as the latest data shows 71.3% of students attended 90% or more school days during the 2023-24 school year, up from 68.6% the previous year. The increase corresponds to a reduction in chronic absenteeism for more than 250 students.

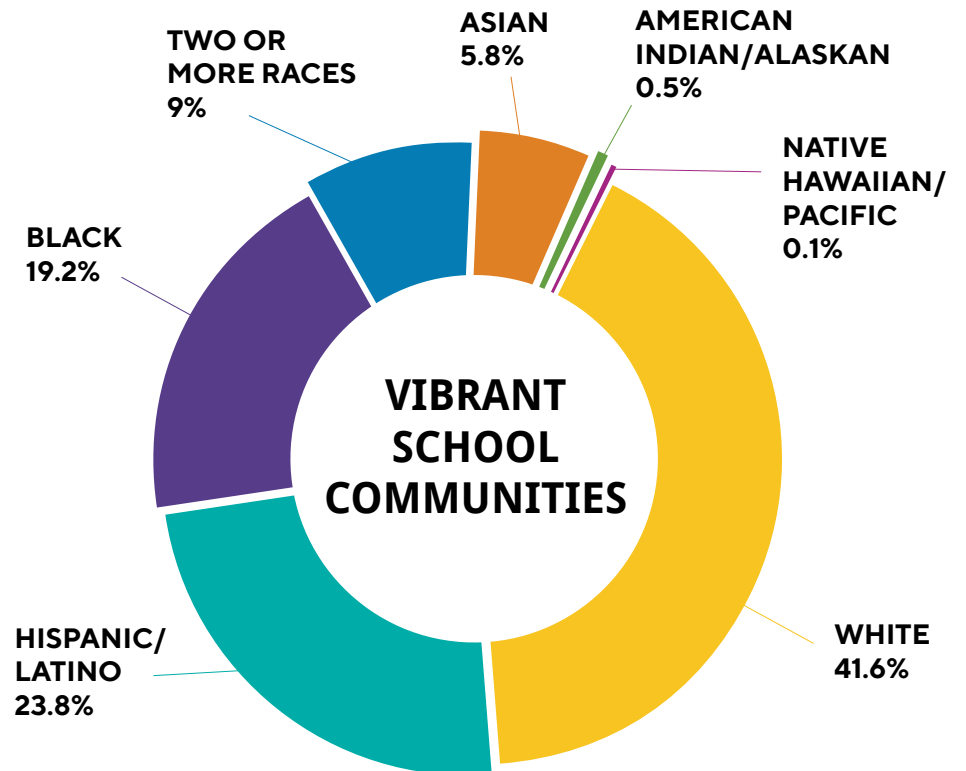
Research shows attendance can have direct impacts on academic performance. In 2023-24, Bloomington students attending less than 90% of school days were less likely to meet grade-level standards, showing proficiency rates of 27.4% in reading and 21.3% in math. By contrast, students with regular attendance saw significantly higher proficiency rates of 49.4% in reading and 46.2% in math.

"Every missed day of school can hinder a student's learning. We're taking proactive steps to improve attendance and support student success," said Superintendent Dr. Eric Melbye.

Activities like establishing bedtime and morning routines, minimizing computer and cell phone screen time, arranging appointments outside of school hours, and having backup plans for getting to school are proven steps to ensure students attend school.

OUR STUDENTS

4,071 + **2,192** + **3,536** = **9,799**
 ELEMENTARY (K-5) MIDDLE (6-8) HIGH SCHOOL (9-12) TOTAL K-12 ENROLLMENT



TURNING ENROLLMENT AROUND

This year's K-12 enrollment exceeded projections and increased for the first time in three years, according to the 2024 Enrollment Report, which is based on the state's official Oct. 1 count. K-12 enrollment increased nearly 120 students from last year, nearly 180 students above projections.

We serve 691 early childhood learners and 201 students ages 18-22, both increases over last year. Open-enrolled students, which make up 10% of the district's enrollment, saw a one point increase. Open enrollment is a sign of high interest in BPS programs and an important source of state funding.

We are actively working to rebuild the enrollment lost during the pandemic, mirroring efforts in many other districts. Enrollment drives district funding, making trend analysis essential for future planning in areas like budgeting, transportation, and class sizes.

Read the enrollment report at bit.ly/bps-enroll-report-2024



Right Sizing the Budget Update

District leaders continue to review proposals to reduce expenses in the 2025-26 school year to offset financial challenges. One significant reduction measure is repurposing Washburn Elementary School into a district early childhood center, at a savings of nearly \$1 million. Adjusting staffing ratios at all levels is expected to save approximately \$1.5 million.

Additional targeted areas include reductions in transportation services and administration/central office expenses. The latest updates and frequently asked questions can be found on our website: bit.ly/bps-rsb

DREAM

Instill confidence for all to explore their *dreams*.

BELIEVE

Empower learners to *believe* in their greatness.

ACHIEVE

All learners *achieve* success together.



Strong Graduation Rates

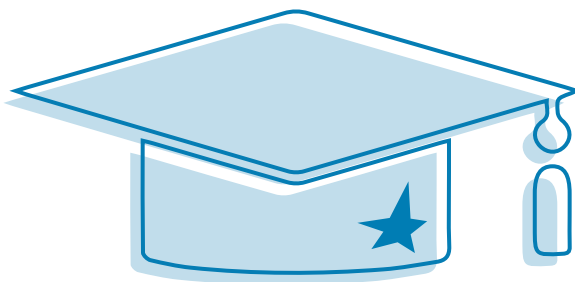
Bloomington's graduation rate dipped slightly in 2023, along with the state four-year rate, a reflection of students whose high school years were disrupted by the pandemic.

However, the seven-year graduation rate remains strong at 90.2%, surpassing the state average of 89.1%. Jefferson and Kennedy high schools' seven-year graduation rate remained strong at 96.3% and 89.1%, respectively.

The seven-year rates for Asian and Black/African American students are 96.3% and 88.5%, respectively, the second highest since 2015.

Bloomington relies on the seven-year graduation rate as a key indicator of how effectively its vision and strategy are preparing students for success in careers and college.

State graduation data for 2024 is expected in March.



90.2%
7-YEAR GRADUATION RATE



Graduation data available on the Minnesota Report Card.

You Belong Here

ARTFUL LEARNING

Hillcrest Community School students use the arts to explore and express what they've learned in Minnesota's only Artful Learning program.



BLOOMINGTON TRANSITION CENTER

BTC is a special education program that's received state honors for helping young adults move from an educational setting to living and working independently in the community.



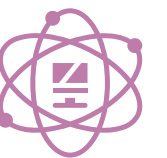
COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Flip through the pages of any Community Education catalog and find hundreds of engaging classes and activities for all ages. Come learn and grow with us.



COMPUTER SCIENCE FOR ALL

Students learn the skills and knowledge to creatively solve any challenge through computer science. We are proud to be Minnesota's leader in K-12 computer science education.



EARLY LEARNING AND PRESCHOOL

Our early learning programs help families actively participate in their child's education, building a foundation for future learning that begins at the earliest ages.



GIFTED AND TALENTED

Bloomington's nationally-recognized Gifted and Talented programs are celebrating 20 years of challenging highly academic and creatively gifted students.



NEW CODE ACADEMY

K-12 students anywhere in Minnesota can access a full-time online school providing a personalized education that meets the same rigorous standards as traditional classrooms.



Students Stay on as District Staff

This year, seven individuals from the Bloomington Transition Center (BTC) program took a big step toward a future of independence. Hired by the district, they now serve as valued members of the team, working as paraprofessionals, custodians and food service staff. It's a testament to the program's success in preparing students for meaningful employment.

Martavis Robinson, a 2023 Kennedy graduate, is one of the district's new paraprofessionals in the early childhood programs. In high school, Robinson participated in a work experience internship at the Pond Family Center. Following high school he attended BTC to further develop independent living and employment skills. Upon completing the program Robinson applied and was offered a paraprofessional position.

"I really wanted to help kids grow so they can have a good future. I love seeing the students' smiles every day and I love seeing them grow as human beings," said Robinson.

By nurturing our students' *dreams* and inspiring them to *believe* in themselves, we're bringing our Strategic Plan to life. This 'grow your own' approach is a testament to our commitment to help students *achieve* personal success.

Read more 'grow your own' stories at bit.ly/bps-gyo-hires



Points of Pride



Read full details at bit.ly/bps271-news



Andrew Larsen (Jefferson), **Marlon Seahorn Jr.** and **Allison Sheehan** (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-2025



Longtime Jefferson girls tennis coach **Lynn Larson** wrapped up her head coaching career on several high notes, including State Class AA Girls Tennis Coach of the Year and Section 6AA Coach of the Year honors. bit.ly/jhs-tennis-coach-of-year



Freshman **Kaylee Von Ruden** (Kennedy) competed in the Class A Girls Swimming and Diving State Meet for the second year in a row, tying for 20th place in the 100-yard backstroke.

Kennedy Theatre Company's fall production of "Seussical" received 17 honors from Spotlight Education, a program of Hennepin Theatre Trust. Top awards include outstanding recognition in **ensemble acting performance**, and outstanding performance honors for **Michael Johnson** and **Indigo Jordan** in their leading roles as Horton and Cat in the Hat, respectively. bit.ly/khs-seussical-awards



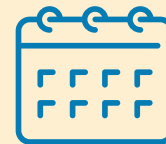
Junior **Molly Miller** (Kennedy) became the first singles player in school history to qualify for the girls state tennis tournament, where she made it to the consolation championship match.



In the Know

2025-26 District Calendar

The School Board approved calendars for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years, which can be found at bit.ly/bps-calendar. Key dates include:



2025-26		2026-27	
SEPT. 2 First Day of School for Grades 6-9	DEC. 22 - JAN. 2 Winter Break	AUG. 31 First Day of School for Grades 6-9	DEC. 21 - JAN. 1 Winter Break
SEPT. 3 First Day of School for Grades K-5 and 10-12	MARCH 16-20 Spring Break	SEPT. 1 First day of School for Grades K-5 and 10-12	MARCH 22-26 Spring Break
	JUNE 5 Last Day of School		JUNE 3 Last Day of School



Twin brothers **Alexander** and **Patrick Altstatt** on the Jefferson Boys Cross Country team had a nearly identical performance at the Class AAA state meet, finishing the 5000 meter run within a second of each other. bit.ly/jhs-cc-state-24

Jefferson High School students from the Dimensions Academy Class of 2024 earned an AP Capstone Diploma. Graduates **Matthew Anderson** and **John Kerwin** were recognized for outstanding achievement in the rigorous, multi-year AP Capstone program. Kennedy AP Capstone Diploma students were recognized in the fall School Pages. bit.ly/bps-ap-capstone-24



Class of 2025 Commencement

High school graduation ceremonies are scheduled for Wednesday, June 4 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Kennedy's graduation will begin at 2 p.m. and Jefferson's graduation at 7:30 p.m.



School Zone Speed Limits

The City of Bloomington implemented school zone speed limits of 20 miles per hour near several schools for the safety of students and pedestrians. New school zone signs and lights have been installed on the main roads outside Oak Grove Middle School, Olson Middle and Elementary Schools, Jefferson High School, and Poplar Bridge Elementary School, flashing yellow warning lights at the start and end of the school day.



Senior **Addison Wendt** (Kennedy) placed first at the Southern MN National Speech and Debate qualifying tournament, and will compete at nationals for the second consecutive year this summer. bit.ly/bps-debate-nationals



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