



Growing Food, Growing Impact: Clark Street Community School Students Help Fight Food Insecurity



*Olivia Vernon
Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District*

Clark Street Community School students are making a meaningful impact beyond the classroom by growing and donating fresh produce to support local families experiencing food insecurity. Through the school's Garden Lab seminar, students cultivated nearly 15 pounds of fresh lettuce, kale, and basil, which they donated to Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens (MAFPG) on May 21, to distribute to families in need.

The Garden Lab seminar, led by teacher Ross Cohen, gives students the opportunity to engage in project-based learning centered

around agriculture, sustainability, and environmental science.

"Students are not just completing assignments. They are solving problems, building systems, growing food, and contributing to something bigger than themselves," Cohen said. "It has also been exciting to see students who may not always thrive in traditional classroom settings become highly engaged through hands-on work, teamwork, and authentic responsibilities."

Students work in teams on projects including restoring a hoop house funded

Continued on Page 4



Shorewood High School Associate Principal Amanda Jamerson Receives National Honor

Shorewood High School Associate Principal Amanda Jamerson has been named the 2026 National High School Assistant Principal of the Year, an honor presented by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) at the organization's annual National Education Leadership Awards (NELA) event.

Jamerson was one of three high school finalists nationwide, chosen from among state award recipients across the country.

The National Assistant Principal of the Year award celebrates exceptional school leaders whose impact extends far beyond their school buildings. The distinction highlights assistant principals who demonstrate visionary leadership, student-centered innovation, and an unwavering commitment to excellence in education.

Wisconsin High School Associate Principal of the Year

Earlier in the 25-26 school year, the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators recognized Amanda Jamerson as its 2026 Wisconsin High School Associate Principal of the Year. She went on to represent Wisconsin at the National Assistant Principal of the Year Celebration in Washington, D.C., this spring.

As associate principal at Shorewood High School, Jamerson has served as a strong leader in cultivating a restorative, equitable, and innovative school culture that prioritizes the wellbeing and success of every student and staff member. She has also led initiatives that have transformed the school climate, improved student outcomes,



and strengthened collaborative leadership among staff.

"Amanda Jamerson exemplifies the leadership, compassion, and innovation that define Wisconsin's most outstanding assistant principals," said AWSA Executive Director Jim Lynch. "She empowers students and staff at Shorewood High School to thrive, and we are honored to recognize her as our 2026 High School Associate Principal of the Year."

During her tenure as associate principal, Jamerson helped design and implement a Restorative Actions Framework that reduced office discipline referrals by 69

Continued on Page 18

THANK YOU TO OUR ADVERTISERS FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

UW Stevens Point • Dream Flight STEM Shuttle • University of Minnesota Crookston • UW Milwaukee
UW Platteville • Well Adjusted Students • WI Institute of Certified Public Accountants • Carthage College
Marian University • Bellin College • EdEvents/CESA 11 • eCYBERMISSION

ONLINE TEACHER LICENSING ACCELERATED CERTIFICATIONS



Program Benefits

- Course completion for licensure in 2 years.
- 100% online, with the exception of in-person clinical experiences.
- Master's in Education can be completed with an additional 3 credits.
- Free Foundation of Reading Test workshops and online training.

Ideal for those who have a **non-teaching bachelor's degree** and are either teaching with a license with stipulations (emergency license), or want a career change to impact students.



Available Programs

- Elementary Education
- Family and Consumer Sciences
- Special Education



University of Wisconsin
Stevens Point

Learn more:
uwsp.edu/teachingtoday

TEACHING
TODAY WI™

PUBLISHER/EDITOR: Renee Feight

EDITOR: Andria Reinke

PAGE COMPOSITION: Andrew Clausen

WEBMASTER: Scott Bayerl

SPECIAL ASSISTANT: Allie Zacharias

Please direct articles, advertising, questions or comments to:

Teaching Today WI™
PO Box 1704
Eau Claire, WI 54702
Phone/Fax 715-839-7074
www.teachingtodaywi.com

Please direct all inquiries to:
renee@teachingtodaywi.com

Teaching Today WI™ is an independent publication for educators.

The opinions expressed in Teaching Today WI™ are not necessarily the opinions of Teaching Today WI™. We reserve the right to edit any and all materials submitted due to grammar, content and space allowances. Articles, photos and artwork submitted to Teaching Today WI™ are assumed to be released by the submitter for publication.

Teaching Today MN™
Transportation Today WI™
Manufacturing Today WI™

In this Issue of Teaching Today WI™

Sunset Ridge Elementary School and Middleton High School Partner to Keep the Greenhouse Going Over the Summer	Page 4	Interactive Financial Simulation Preps Hamilton Seniors For Life After High School	Page 14
Hands-On Environmental Education at the E. B. Shurts Center	Page 6	Beloit Memorial High School Awarded \$25,000 State Grant to Build On-Campus CNA Lab for 2026–2027 Launch	Page 16
Lakeview Second Graders Dig into a Community Garden Project	Page 6	School Nurses Help Keep Students Healthy . . .	Page 17
Suring Market and Agricultural Center	Page 7	What If the Missing Piece for Your Struggling Students Was Inside Your Building?	Page 18
Granton's Agriculture Program Continues to Evolve	Page 8	Wisconsin's 2026 Outstanding Educators Recognized by Herb Kohl Educational Foundation	Page 20
Problem Solving Super Learners	Page 10	Five Educators selected as 2026–27 Teachers of the Year	Page 22
At MPS STEAM Fair, 750-plus Students' Experiments and Engineering Rule the Day	Page 11	Announcing Wisconsin's 2026 Principals of the Year	Page 25
Shuttles Span Generations	Page 12	Parkside Elementary Earns Prestigious 2026 National Gold Star Award	Page 26
Two Middleton High School Students Receive Governor's Financial Literacy Award for Their Finance Class for Middle Schoolers	Page 14		

Coming this fall:

We invite you to submit articles, sharing what's happening in your schools. Our next issues will focus on:

- ✓ **Transportation:**
Automotive, Aviation
- ✓ **Manufacturing:**
Welding, School/Student-run Businesses, Manufacturing Programs
- ✓ **Construction:**
Students building . . . houses, sheds, and more
- ✓ **STEM**
- ✓ **Awards & Honors**

Teachers, watch for a special email coming soon to your inbox.

Please contact:

Andria: andria@teachingtodaywi.com | 715-360-4875

Renee: renee@teachingtodaywi.com | 715-839-7074

TEACHING
TODAY WI™

TRANSPORTATION
TODAY WI™

MANUFACTURING
TODAY WI™

Herb Kohl Foundation Awards



Herb Kohl
Educational
Foundation, Inc.

Herb Kohl Teacher Fellowship and Principal Leadership Awards recognize excellence and innovation in PK–12 Wisconsin schools.

Applications for the 2027 Award Cycle Teachers and Principals opens on Monday August 3, 2026. The deadline for all applications is January 5, 2027 at 5PM Central Time.

Please visit our web site for deadlines, information and nomination process.

www.kohleducation.org



Sunset Ridge Elementary School and Middleton High School Partner to Keep the Greenhouse Going Over the Summer



Carrie Brooker, Public Relations Specialist
Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District

Sunset Ridge Elementary School and Middleton High School are teaming up to take care of Sunset Ridge's greenhouse this summer.

It's the school's first full year of maintaining the greenhouse — an effort led by Library Media Specialist Mr. Ren Schwab and a team of Sunset Ridge teachers, students and parent volunteers. This summer, they'll get additional support from Mr. Ben Shrago and his science class at Middleton High School to automate the greenhouse's watering system.

"We loved the idea of bigger kids working

with littler kids," Schwab said. "We talked through what we needed, what was possible, and set the students loose on creating something that worked for their class project in high school."

High school students are programming computers to sense moisture levels and run a watering system. They're putting the finishing touches on the moisture-sensor system and set up a temporary timer to help with watering in the interim.

Planting, weeding, watering, and harvesting will be handled this summer by a team of Sunset Ridge staff, students and family volunteers.

"We are hoping it is a gathering spot for families in the summer for some wholesome device-free community time," Schwab said.

Teachers incorporated the greenhouse into their curriculum throughout the school year.

"We examined the water cycle with third grade classes, and second graders grew and measured beans and sunflowers connected to understanding bar graphs in math and life cycles in science," Schwab said. "Fourth graders planted a 'legacy garden' in which we hope to grow tomatoes, chili peppers, and garlic for salsa and sambal oelek, an Indonesian salsa of sorts."

He said the greenhouse has helped students understand how food is grown and what healthy food can taste like.

"It has also helped them learn how to work with a community to make democratic decisions that are fair, community-oriented, and



responsive to the needs of others," Schwab said, noting connections to the mindsets and foundations of a Cardinal's Journey.

Schwab emphasized that the greenhouse has been a community project with support from the District; Sunset Ridge staff, students, and families; the school's PTA; and the larger community.

"Some community members donated seeds and starter plants; the PTA donated funds for soil and soil conditioners, lights, and heating mats; and staff and students have been har-

vesting, planting, and bringing home items," Schwab said.

The project has grown throughout the school year, and the water-management partnership with Middleton High School students is another step in the greenhouse's evolution.

"It's been pretty fun to be a small part of this endeavor, and we hope it continues to grow and change!" Schwab said.

www.mcpasd.k12.wi.us



Clark Street Community School Students Help Fight Food Insecurity

Continued from Page 1

through a grant from the MCPASD Education Foundation, operating hydroponic grow towers, starting seeds under grow lights, and propagating houseplants for a plant sale. Throughout the course, students research, plan, problem-solve, collect data, and reflect on their work through presentations and discussions.

The hydroponic grow towers were funded through partnerships. Clark Street Community School received two hydroponic Flex Farm systems during the 2024-25 school year.

"Part of our mission is to help advance STEM education and health equity in our local communities," said Chris Zais, senior group leader of Biophar maceuticals in the Clinical Research Group of one of the partnering businesses. "The donation of the vertical gardens has enabled students to use hands-on tools to learn about climate-smart agriculture and sustainable food production, along with empowering them to be

farmers and future leaders who can act on various causes that mean the most in their communities."

The towers allow students to grow fresh produce year-round while learning science and engineering concepts through hands-on experiences. Students grew lettuce, kale, and basil this year, donating 14.77 pounds of produce, nearly double last year's 7.5-pound donation total.

The produce will be distributed through Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens, which works to increase access to nutritious, culturally meaningful produce throughout Dane County. In 2025, MAFPG distributed more than 158,000 pounds of produce to nearly 40 organizations, including local food pantries, community meal programs, and backpack food programs.

"Partnerships like the one between MAFPG and Clark Street have facilitated a new pathway to meet this increased demand, giving more pantry shoppers access to the

nutritious fruits and vegetables they desire," said Matt Lechmaier, Partnerships Manager for MAFPG.

Lechmaier added that partnerships with schools help provide fresh produce to the community and create meaningful learning opportunities for students.

"The impact of a partnership can't be measured solely by the pounds of food produced," Lechmaier said. "Students learn science concepts and may develop a sense of empowerment, teachers have a new teaching tool, we can offer more produce to pantry partners, and someone receives fresh, healthy food as a result of this partnership."

Brian Arndt, board president of Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens and an MCPASD parent, said the collaboration highlights the power of schools, businesses, and nonprofit organizations working together toward a common goal.

"As a MCPASD parent myself and family medicine physician passionate

about supporting a vision of a nourished Dane County where everyone has equitable and abundant access to highly desirable produce, it's been great to play a small part in this collaboration between local businesses, schools, and non-profit organizations coming together to help make this vision a reality," Arndt said.

For Clark Street Community School students, the project demonstrates how classroom learning can directly benefit the broader community. By growing and donating fresh produce, students are helping support neighbors, classmates, and families throughout Dane County while gaining valuable real-world skills along the way. The project also reflects MCPASD's ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship, sustainability, and hands-on learning opportunities for students.

www.mcpasd.k12.wi.us





UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PLATTEVILLE

SCHOOL of AGRICULTURE



Being a part of the School of Agriculture offers you:

- Engaging hands-on experiences for each of our students
- Majors in high-demand areas of agriculture
- Strong alumni and industry connections
- Experiences beyond the classroom with undergraduate research, study abroad and internships
- A living and learning laboratory at Pioneer Farm



To learn more, visit: uwplatt.edu/department/school-agriculture or contact soa@uwplatt.edu | 608-342-1393



Hands-On Environmental Education at the E.B. Shurts Center



School District of Waukesha

Building an Adaptable Learning Ecosystem

As educators, we are constantly searching for ways to make abstract concepts tangible. At the E.B. Shurts Environmental Education Center—operated by the School District of Waukesha—we have turned our outdoor footprint into a fully accessible classroom.

Expanding Our Footprint

The E.B. Shurts Outdoor Garden was established in the spring of 2020 with a clear

objective: provide an experiential environment to analyze where food comes from. What started as basic agricultural plots has grown into an adaptable learning ecosystem where, this year, we welcome 7,900 students, 140+ teachers & support staff, 335 adult volunteers and over 65 general public community members into our learning garden space! And when the growing season was done, almost 500 pounds of fruits, vegetables, grains, and root crops were grown at EB Shurts. Incredible!

What began in the spring of 2020 as a modest footprint of just four traditional garden

plots has scaled into an expansive, multi-zoned outdoor learning laboratory. We systematically expanded our footprint, reaching a major milestone in the summer of 2021 with the construction of our adjacent greenhouse facility. This significantly extended our growing season, giving students hands-on learning opportunities during the cooler months of the academic calendar. Alongside this physical growth, we also advanced our curriculum by deliberately integrating agroforestry—the practice of blending trees and shrubs into agricultural landscapes. Central to this approach is our dedicated willow area, where students study the ecological benefits of woody perennials. Our students then have the opportunity to build structures (nicknamed “wigloos”) for their classrooms using our harvested willow.

A Unified & Collaborative Approach

The success of the garden relies entirely on the collaborative partnership between our school district’s classroom teachers and dedicated environmental education staff. Rather than treating the garden as a passive field-trip destination, environmental educators work hand-in-hand with core classroom instructors to facilitate standards-aligned curriculum modules directly in the field and allows for environmental educators to also visit classrooms as guest teachers. This unified approach bridges traditional classroom theory with applied field science, ensuring a structured, high-impact learning experience for every student group.

Designing for Accessibility and Inclusion

One of our main goals was to provide a safe and inclusive space for all to interact with our garden. The physical layout features wide, hard-packed, flat pathways that allow smooth navigation for wheelchairs and assistive mobility devices, alongside custom-built raised beds engineered at accessible heights so all students can plant, tend, and harvest side-by-side with their peers. The space features dedicated sensory garden areas specifically designed to engage the five senses. Students explore tactile variety through ultra-soft plants like lamb’s ear, olfactory stimulation from aromatic herbs like rosemary and mint, and visual engagement through bright, textured varieties of sunflowers, marigolds, and leafy greens. Complete with specialized adaptive toolkit, this inclusive infrastructure removes traditional structural barriers, transforming the garden into an equitable, active learning space where every student has the autonomy to engage directly with agricultural science.

Looking Ahead

As we look ahead, our goals focus on expanding this inclusive infrastructure by adding braille plant markers, tactile signage, and auditory learning stations. We are also adding in sustainable practices such as solar energy and sustainable irrigation practices.

sdw.waukesha.k12.wi.us



Lakeview Second Graders Dig into a Community Garden Project



Dan Bader

School District of South Milwaukee

The students have explored what the soil is made of, what’s living in the

ground, what kind of plants should go there, and asked if those plants would be safe for local wildlife. It’s not uncommon to hear big words like “decomposition”

and “ecosystem” used by these seven- and eight-year-olds.

Landscape Designer Carrie Hennessey was pleasantly surprised when she held up a photo of a plant, and a wave of recognition rippled across the entire second grade.

“Cup Plant!” called out a handful of students. “It’s the tallest!” one added.

Hennessey smiled and nodded.

She visited Lakeview Elementary’s second grade to talk about her job at Johnson’s Nursery and talked about thoughts on the second grade’s project to landscape the area around the school’s flagpole.

It’s called a cup plant, she said, because “it literally creates a little cup” from its leaves. “Insects and birds will come and drink from it.” They’re neat, for sure, but Hennessey explained, she might not choose to put them in a small garden.

While the project is small in terms of square footage, it’s having a large impact in the classroom, said second grade teacher Christine Henneberry. Both her class and teacher Natalie Manthe’s second-grade class have worked all year digging into every aspect of the project.

“They have learned so much,” Henneberry said, gesturing around the room. “We have talked so much about soil. Last week, they were out digging and cleaning up that area, and they were very excited to share that they had found some subsoil.”

The students have explored what the soil is made of, what’s living in the ground, what kind of plants should go there, and asked if those plants would be safe for local wildlife. It’s not uncommon to hear big words like “decomposition” and “ecosystem” used by these seven- and eight-year-olds.

“The big reward for me was when I heard the kids using the language naturally,” Manthe said.

“We tie everything to the standards. If you expose them to the language, and you have the bar high, they are going to aspire to that.”

In between the students’ own observations, they get to hear from experts like Hennessey, who, on this day, showed the students her architectural drawing of the Lakeview project.

Continued on Page 7



Suring Market and Agricultural Center (SMAC)



Mary E. Smith, Ag Education & Suring
FFA Advisor
Suring Public Schools

Just imagine . . .

Teaching future generations how to grow and harvest. Letting them preserve and prepare their own produce and meat. Imagine kids learning how to market their produce and cook their food to put on their family table. And what if we ran it as a self-supporting business where students could put into practice the employability skills they will need in life.

This is the dream of the SMAC.

Suring Public School built a first-of-its-kind center to promote hands-on,

practical education that students will find useful throughout their lives. With community input and inspiration of community-minded teachers, administrators, and school board members, this dream is coming true!

The SMAC center houses three main areas:

The Market — the storefront is managed year-round by the business department. Business students help make decisions related to marketing, social media, inventory (goods sold) and overall profitability. Students and community volunteers currently work at the market with plans to add Youth Apprenticeship soon. The goods produced by the students

and community members to support our local economy currently include:

- Beef and Pork products of 4-H and FFA kids
- Garden vegetables grown by local families and students
- Lettuce grown hydroponically in the greenhouse
- Hanging baskets and bedding plants
- Honey and Maple Syrup
- Local Crafts and Soaps
- Repurposed and crafted items made by the Tech Ed and Art departments or local crafters
- and more with plans to include firewood, mums and Christmas trees

The Greenhouse — this 30 x 40 space is being used by Suring students of all ages to learn the basics of horticulture/plant science specifically focusing on hydroponics and microgreens that are sold in the market. The greenhouse can be magical when a student is able to experience the plant stages of germination, propagation and pollination. Students are able to grow it...to know it!

The Classroom — this 30 x 50 space is being used in a multipurpose capacity. It is equipped to house livestock on a temporary basis and serve as a classroom for all ages. Activities and classes in the classroom have included:

- Collaboration of high school students helping elementary students understand where their food comes from through various activities
- Food Science, Wildlife, Forestry, Small

Animals, Animal Science

- Aquaculture, Marketing, Business and Customer Service classes (with a local technical college)
- Incubation of chicken eggs and care of baby chicks
- Wreath making workshop
- Companion planting workshop
- Dahlia workshop
- Trout in the Classroom program with 2 large trout tanks (aquaculture)
- Calf care and feeding
- FFA and FFA Alumni meetings

The land surrounding the SMAC is currently growing blueberries and raspberries with plans to add a strawberry patch, rhubarb and asparagus.

Future plans for the SMAC include:

- Composting and vermiculture/vermicomposting (worms)
- RainWater Collection, Reclamation and Recycling. We will look for uses for a rain barrel, design and implement and maintain a water garden at the SMAC for demonstration.
- Continued care and maintenance of large pollinator garden in front of school
- Duck, rabbit and sheep exhibits
- And sooooo much more!

Continued hands-on education that benefits our students, our community and our world!!!

www.suring.k12.wi.us



Community Garden Project

Continued from Page 6

"Does that look a little bit like what we did today?" asked Henneberry, to a chorus of "yeah" and nodding heads.

Hanging on the wall next to a window is a poster handwritten with the project's purpose. It lists the project's goals, such as "deepen understanding about environmental impacts," "develop communication, critical thinking skills," "explore weather patterns," and "foster a sense of belonging."

Lakeview has embraced project-based learning, principal Christopher Sepersky said.

"Two years ago, the entire school thought deeply about and worked very hard on ideas and plans for the former Everbrite lot near the school," he said. "Learning about and having an impact on our school and neighborhood is a deeply connecting experience. Our second grade has an opportunity this year to not just learn and plan something, but to actually do it. This learn-

ing experience will stay with them for the rest of their lives."

Hennenberry and Manthe said the enormity of what their students are working on in this small garden space is not lost on the students.

"They know it's not just a second-grade garden. This is meant for everyone," Hennenberry said.

"The students know that part of their learning goal is to create a sense of belonging. They're not saying this garden is my garden; they say it's our school's and our community's garden."

www.sds.k12.wi.us





Granton's Agriculture Program Continues to Evolve



*Katie Reider, Agriculture Educator and
FFA Advisor
Granton Area School District*

For students in the Granton Agriculture Program, learning often happens outside the traditional classroom. Whether tending hydroponic lettuce for the school lunch program, conducting research in the school forest, or mentoring elementary students, agriculture students have opportunities to apply what they are learning through real-world experiences.

The Granton Agriculture Program serves students in grades 7–12 and offers 24 agriculture courses that introduce students to the many facets of agriculture. Courses include animal production, forestry, food science, landscaping, aquaculture, wildlife, agricultural affairs, leadership, and more. Students

can also take advanced agriculture courses, enroll in three science-equivalent courses that satisfy graduation requirements, and earn dual credit through the local technical college.

Hands-on learning is at the center of the program. Students have access to a variety of learning spaces, including an 18.5-acre school forest, a greenhouse, a hydroponic growing system, an aquaculture system, an orchard with more than 20 apple trees, a community garden with raised beds, flower beds, an outdoor classroom, and a kitchen laboratory. These facilities allow students to explore agriculture in authentic settings while building practical skills they can use beyond high school.

The program continues to evolve as new opportunities arise. Recent additions include a

misting system in the greenhouse to improve plant production, accessible raised garden beds that make the community garden more welcoming for all participants, and hydroponic lettuce production that will supply fresh produce for the school lunch program. Additionally, a partnership with the Granton Community Library created a reading trail through the school forest, encouraging families to enjoy the outdoors while promoting literacy.

Students develop a wide range of technical skills throughout their agriculture courses. Depending on the class, they may learn greenhouse production, hydroponics, orchard management, veterinary suturing, soil and water testing, food preservation, surveying, landscaping, forestry management, agricultural business, or agricultural research. Just as important, these projects provide opportunities to practice communication, teamwork, leadership, problem solving, and critical thinking.

Career exploration is another important component of the program. Every high school agriculture student maintains a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), giving students the opportunity to gain experience through entrepreneurship, research, or agricultural placement. Some students also participate in Youth Apprenticeships, conduct National FFA AgriScience Fair research, manage portions of the greenhouse, orchard, or hydroponic systems, or work for local agricultural businesses.

Community partnerships help connect classroom learning to experiences outside of school. The agriculture program and FFA chapter work with organizations including the local technical college, the Community Green Team, Granton FFA Alumni, the Clark County Christmas Angel Project, the Ronald McDonald House, the Clark County Humane Society, local churches, the Granton Fall Festival Committee, and elementary classrooms. These partnerships provide learning opportunities for students while also allowing the agriculture program to support the surrounding community.

Being an affiliated FFA chapter, membership is free to any Granton student who is enrolled in an agriculture course for the year. Service learning is incorporated throughout the year for both agriculture students and FFA members. Students help maintain school and community gardens, improve landscaping projects, and care for school forest trails.

FFA members package Christmas meals for approximately 100 local families and sponsor gifts for nearly 60 children through the Clark County Christmas Angel Project, mentor elementary students through the Partners in Active Learning Support (PALS) program, donate blankets and pet toys to local organizations, and host children's activities during community events.

Several projects have become annual traditions that students look forward to each year. Agriculture students and FFA members organize a Haunted Forest, deliver thank you bags to local farmers during harvest season, and assist with the Granton FFA Alumni Dairy Breakfast. These experiences allow students to connect classroom learning with meaning-



ful service while building relationships within their community.

Looking ahead, the Granton Agriculture Program plans to continue expanding hands-on learning opportunities, strengthening partnerships with local businesses and organizations, and creating additional career exploration experiences for students. As agriculture continues to change, the program will continue looking for ways to provide relevant, engaging experiences that help students discover new interests and prepare for future opportunities. While every student's path is different, the goal remains the same: to provide meaningful experiences that help students build practical skills, explore careers, and develop a better understanding of the role agriculture plays in their communities and everyday lives.





UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
CROOKSTON

Small Campus. Big Degree.
THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS.

*120 Years of
Agriculture History*

#1

**AGRICULTURE
COLLEGE**

in Minnesota

Ranked by Niche



100+

livestock on campus
including horses, cows,
sheep, and goats



20+

**Agriculture and
Natural Resources**
programs to
choose
from!



Only 4-year
HORTICULTURE
degree
in MN



Only 4-year
AGRONOMY
degree
in MN

Our
animal science
program garners a

90%

acceptance rate into
**Veterinary
School**



<<< Check out our 75+ majors

Scan the QR code or visit: www.umcrookston.edu/academics



Problem Solving Super Learners

K-12 STEM Programs Prepare Students for Careers in Industries Now and in the Future



School District of South Milwaukee

Programming, designing, collaborating, prototyping, and redesigning — that’s what happens in labs and design studios in the tech industry. It’s also happening in South Milwaukee’s STEM labs.

An acronym for science, technology, engineering, and math, STEM is a hands-on way to look at the world that combines all those disciplines.

“I think STEM is the future,” said Julie Barnett, the Middle School STEM teacher. “By allowing our students into STEM and getting them exposed to the vocabulary, the productive struggles, and other pieces



of just what we do in STEM class, we’re opening them up to the possibility of things that they can do in their future.”

Thinking about the future is what the School District of South Milwaukee is doing with its STEM program — something made possible in part by the Safe, Supported, Successful referendum, which was overwhelmingly passed by voters in 2024.

“A number of years ago, we had the opportunity to think about how we wanted to expand programming, and we had a number of our high school and middle school students interested in pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and math, which we call STEM in schools,” Superintendent Deidre Roemer said. “And every one of our students experiences high levels of skill development in varying ways, from K-4 all the way up through 12th grade.”

There are three elementary STEM teachers serving the district’s four schools. Similar to library, physical education, and music class, students now attend STEM class.

“In a lot of ways, what’s great about elementary STEM is that students can shine in ways that they can’t necessarily in the regular classroom. STEM is very hands-on. First of all, they are building and constructing, and it’s also often connected to some kind of tech,” elementary STEM teacher

Jennifer Haynor said.

“We’ve been doing some hands-on building activities and really watching them when what they’re trying to build is not successful, and coming together with their partner or their group to try and problem solve that,” added Rawson STEM teacher Katy Casleton.

That cooperation and team troubleshooting is a skill in and of itself that job seekers need to be successful in their adult lives.

“The younger students are where I notice the biggest impact,” agreed Jolene Wasilewski. She teaches STEM at both Blakewood and E. W. Luther schools. “They come in with the mindset of like ‘I’m going to need your help.’ But then something happens between winter and spring, and they start to kind of blossom. And next thing you know, you just kind of look around the room, and they’re no longer asking you for help. Just that hum in the classroom of like, kids critically thinking and working together.”

In high school, students start realizing how those skills translate into what they might want to do with their lives.

“One of my favorite things about teaching at the high school is that I am reaching learners who are really starting to think about what the rest of their life looks like,” High School STEM teacher Karen Matthews said. “Students really have a



chance to get in and practice the skills that they may potentially use later on in their careers.”

For students, learning about what someone wants to do, or doesn’t want to do with their lives, is part of a public education, Roemer said.

“Right now, for our youngest learners, we’re preparing them for careers that don’t yet exist,” she said.

www.sdsm.k12.wi.us



Did you miss an issue of *Teaching Today WI™*?
Access previous issues at

www.teachingtodaywi.com





At MPS STEAM Fair, 750-plus Students' Experiments and Engineering Rule the Day

Milwaukee Public Schools

The inspiration for tomorrow's scientists and engineers might be lurking in plain sight at home, or it might come from a simple remark that piqued the interest of a curious mind.

It's all fair game for the young creators of the hundreds of projects at the annual Milwaukee Public Schools STEAM Fair, which this year drew more than 750 students from 50-plus schools.

Reel Osman, who is in the 7th grade at IDEAL School, heard a teacher warn against using AI for research projects because it can be unreliable. Reel observed that artificial intelligence will supply incorrect answers but do it with great confidence.

The result: her project, "AI: Confidence vs. Accuracy," which won 1st place in the grades 6 to 8 science division at the fair, held May 21.

Testing Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini

Reel wanted to test AI's accuracy and its confidence in its answers, so she tested three models — Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini — across five areas: history, English language arts, math, science, and logic.

She asked each model the same series of 250 questions across the five subjects and asked each model to score how confident it was in each answer, on a scale of 0 to 100.

The result: ChatGPT, the most used model, had the largest overconfidence gap — that is, very confident in its answers even when the answers were incorrect. Claude had the smallest overconfidence gap and also had the highest accuracy rate.

Reel correctly hypothesized that ChatGPT would have the most errors (because it is the most used). Reel also hypothesized that the subjects with the most errors would be logic and math because of the wording and difficulty, but the most error-prone subject for AI turned out to be history. "I think this is because of historical debate," she said.

The STEAM Fair was a great experience for Reel, who participated last year in the engineering division. (Her brother, Abubakr, a freshman at Reagan College Preparatory High School, also won first place this year, in the high school engineering division. For his project, "Talking Hands," he programmed a robotic hand and arm to sign the alphabet.)

"I wanted to raise more awareness" about AI and have her project serve as a precaution, particularly as various cheating scandals involving AI surface, Reel said.

She's hoping to participate in the STEAM Fair again next year. Ultimately, her dream is to become a radiologist, but she said, "I'm really drawn to math" and is open to other



career opportunities — "something that can really test my brain."

A Mechanism for Cats and Doors

Olof Knox, a 7th-grader at Golda Meir School's upper campus, noticed his two cats "trying to wiggle open doorknobs but just failing," he said. He wondered if he could

develop a mechanism that would allow them to open doors that have trickier-to-operate knobs (instead of the easier levers).

Olof made multiple prototypes, and the first two worked, to an extent. "I learned that opening doorknobs is actually something that

Continued on Page 12

Transform Your Classroom with REAL-WORLD STEM

eCYBERMISSION is a free, virtual STEM competition for 6-9 graders. Students form teams of 2-4, led by an adult Team Advisor, and select a community problem to investigate with science or solve with engineering. Register today at www.ecybermission.com!



eCYBERMISSION Supports Teachers

Teaching Resources

Access free teaching resources on our website, including lesson plans, videos, activities, and more.

STEM Professionals

Students have access to Mission Mentors, STEM professionals available to help with projects.

Mini-Grant Funding

All teachers are eligible to receive up to \$26/student to support the cost of project supplies and as a professional stipend.

Shuttles Span Generations



When the STEM Shuttle (STEM Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) arrived at the Lodi Elementary School last spring, the visit marked more than a day of hands-on science learning. It also brought together two generations of the unique education program.

Dream Flight Wausau began in 1990, when Sharon Ryan, then an elementary teacher in the Wausau School District, helped turn

a discarded yellow school bus into a space shuttle and developed a curriculum centered on experiential STEM learning.

For 10 years, the shuttle traveled to elementary schools across the district and occasionally to other Wisconsin districts. In the program's first year, parents, grandparents, and volunteers made blue flight suits for the students who served as astronauts.



Other students filled mission support roles, working as television and print reporters, medical staff, security guards, and radio operators in mission control.

After the district program ended, Ryan continued the concept by creating the Dream Flight USA Foundation and its STEM Shuttle, a full-size motor coach converted for hands-on learning opportunities. For the past 20 years, the STEM Shuttle has visited schools across the state, typically docking for one to three days at a time.

The connection came full circle in May of this year at the Lodi Elementary School, where

the father of two students was among the original Dream Flight crew members in 1990. During the STEM Shuttle visit, his wife, the school psychiatrist, wore the same uniform her husband wore decades earlier. (See pictures)

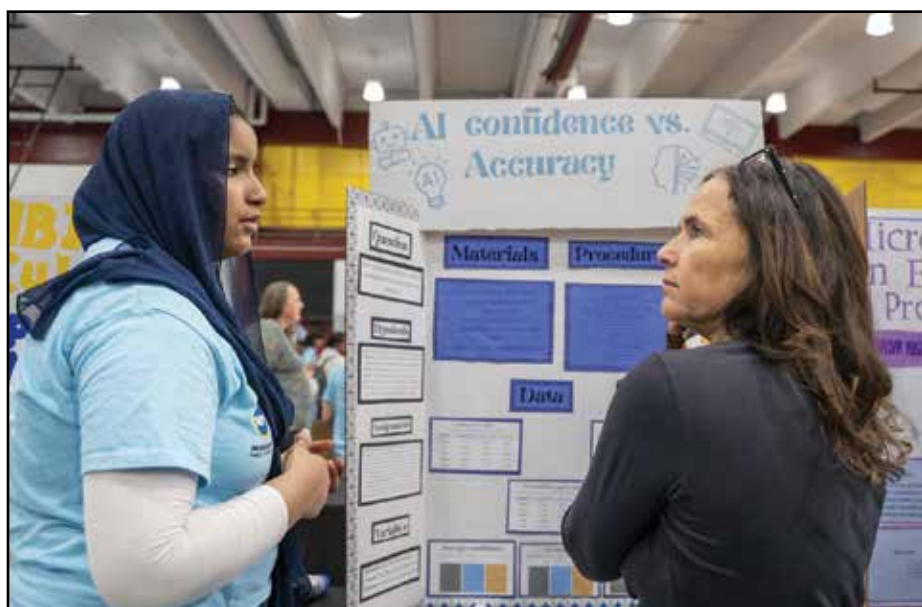
Also pictured are the STEM Shuttle, and the original shuttle with one of its student crews from 1990.

The student's grandparents, Wausau residents Frank and Kathy Rubino, made the 2-day visit to Lodi possible by their donation to the Dream Flight USA Foundation.

To learn more about the STEM Shuttle and its mission, please visit www.stemshuttle.com



At MPS STEAM Fair, Experiments and Engineering Rule the Day Continued from Page 11



humans can uniquely do very well," he said. "The human body itself is actually stronger than machines trying to do the same action."

Plants and Music

Meanwhile, Lionel Cansino, who is in the 7th grade at H.W. Longfellow School, decided to investigate whether exposure to music

affects plants' growth. "My mom always liked listening to music while cleaning, and she loved plants. She always had a lot of plants. I was curious if it truly affected the plants' growth, the type of music you play," Lionel said.

He exposed one plant to classical music and the other to rock music; he suspected the

plant exposed to classical music would do better. By Day 5 of Lionel's experiment, the classical music plant was already showing signs of sprouting, while the rock music plant was not. "By Day 30, you can see that I have a lot of flowers on the classical music plant, and the rock music plant didn't have as many. My hypothesis was correct," Lionel said. He added that his online research found other experiments showing that gentle music appeared to stimulate growth, while harsher sounds appeared to stress plants.

In addition to conducting experiments and testing prototypes, students researched their topics and constructed their displays for the 19th annual MPS STEAM Fair, celebrating science, technology, engineering, art, and math.

The fair this year was held in the fieldhouse at Harold S. Vincent School of Agricultural Sciences, 7501 N. Granville Road. While at Vincent, STEAM Fair participants toured the agricultural buildings and checked out kinetic art, glow art, rockets, and drones.

This year, students completed more than 270 projects in science and engineering. (Many of the students worked in teams on projects.)

Roaming Judges

Judges who roam the fair to examine the exhibits and quiz the students are checking to see how well students followed the processes — incorporating background research plus experimenting and testing to make their claim, come to their conclusion, or solve a problem.

The judges also consider a project's connection to the real world and whether the project furthers research on its topic.

Ashley Hughes, an MPS Office of Finance employee who has been volunteering as a STEAM Fair judge for about 10 years, said of students, "I like the excitement they all have and the interest they have in their own projects when they're talking about their projects."

Tomorrow's SHeroes Winner

One student was chosen for the Tomorrow's SHeroes in STEAM award: Az Zariyah Taylor of Westside Academy. The award is presented each year to a female student in grades 5 to 7. It honors former K-8 science instructional coach Lisa Martin and Ms. Martin's work to build the STEAM Fair and other STEAM opportunities for female students in MPS.



The STEM field trip that comes right to your school!



Combining Space, STEM, and Hands-on Workstations, this unique learning opportunity is designed to motivate students to learn.



Bring this unique hands-on STEM learning opportunity to your students.

- Developed for grades 4–9.
- Up to 60 students a day, 12 students per session, are challenged by the hands-on workstations on this unique mobile classroom.
- Two veteran Shuttle Teachers guide students through a series of hands-on STEM work stations.



"From an engineer's point of view, the designed tasks the kids take part in are very thought provoking and exciting to watch."

—Jon Kukuk, engineer and school board member.

Check us out at
www.stemshuttle.com

**To schedule the STEM Shuttle for your school during the Fall, please contact us at:
stemshuttle@gmail.com or text/phone 715-845-6392.**



Two Middleton High School Students Receive Governor's Financial Literacy Award for Their Finance Class for Middle Schoolers



*Carrie Brooker, Public Relations Specialist
Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District*

Middleton High School juniors Sophia Chen and Sophia Pientka were honored as recipients of the 2025 Governor's Financial Literacy Award in a ceremony at the Wisconsin State Capitol on April 10. Of the 21 award recipients, Chen and Pientka were the only students.

They were recognized for their Finance for Life project, which helps middle school students in Dane County increase their financial literacy. They teach middle schoolers how to create budgets, make smart spending choices, and see how compound interest helps money grow over time.

Their peer-to-peer model has reached more than 450 students and their aim is to reach 1,000. They've taught classes at Kromrey Middle School, Glacier Creek Middle School, Middleton Public Library and Beloit Memorial High School, with plans to expand across Dane County and statewide.

Chen and Pientka are members of Middleton High School's chapter of the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). Their Finance for Life project is now their FBLA chapter's official community service project. FBLA advisors Mr. Bill Boehm and Mr. Brian Zimdars attended the awards ceremony.

"Sophia Pientka and Sophia Chen's recognition with the Governor's Financial Literacy Award highlights their leadership and the measurable community impact of their work improving financial literacy for middle school students in Dane County," said Bill Boehm, Middleton High School teacher and FBLA advisor. "This honor validates the quality of their project, strengthens the Finance for Life initiative, and reflects

positively on Middleton High School and our FBLA program."

Boehm and Mr. Brian Zimdars, another FBLA advisor, attended the awards ceremony too.

Mr. Boehm, Sophia Chen, Sophia Pientka and Mr. ZimdarsThe award honors individuals and organizations for their efforts to help Wisconsinites build their financial literacy and capability skills. Honorees are selected by the Governor's Council on Financial Literacy and Capability.

"We are incredibly honored to be recognized by Wisconsin's Governor for our work," Chen said. "This recognition was unexpected, which makes it even more meaningful. We're excited to continue expanding our program across the state and reach more students. Being recognized at this level allows us to show youth that they truly can achieve anything they set their minds to. Behind every award is a great deal of hard work and dedication, so it's an amazing feeling to see that effort acknowledged."

www.mcpsd.k12.wi.us



Interactive Financial Simulation Preps Hamilton Seniors For Life After High School



Hamilton School District

Hamilton High School seniors had the opportunity to participate in the CB's Real Life 101 Personal Finance Simulation on May 21 in the school gymnasium. The goal of the experience was to help students apply personal finance concepts in a fun, realistic and eye-opening way as they prepare for life after high school.

"We are always looking for engaging ways to bring real world experiences and decision making skills to life for our students," explains Hamilton High School Associate Principal and Extended Learning Coordinator Marqueea Goike. "The Personal Finance Simulation was such a great experience for our oldest students who are only a

few short weeks away from graduating. The lessons they learned about budgeting and financial planning will undoubtedly stick with them as they transition to this next step in their journeys."

The interactive personal finance simulation provided students an opportunity to pretend to live for one month in the real world and make financial decisions related to housing, transportation, insurance, childcare, groceries, utilities, entertainment and more. Each student was assigned a career, a salary and a family scenario. They spent approximately one hour, rotating through 20 different stations, conversing with parent volunteers and staff about various financial scenarios.

School Resource Officer Deputy Leah Estes contributed to the simulation by issuing fictitious citations to students, providing a valuable lesson in budgeting for unexpected expenses.

"This event was an incredible success," said Goike. "Many of the scenarios provided students with eye-opening experiences that highlighted the realities and responsibilities of adulthood. It was rewarding to see meaningful learning taking place in real time as students developed critical thinking, budgeting and decision-making skills. We are excited to con-



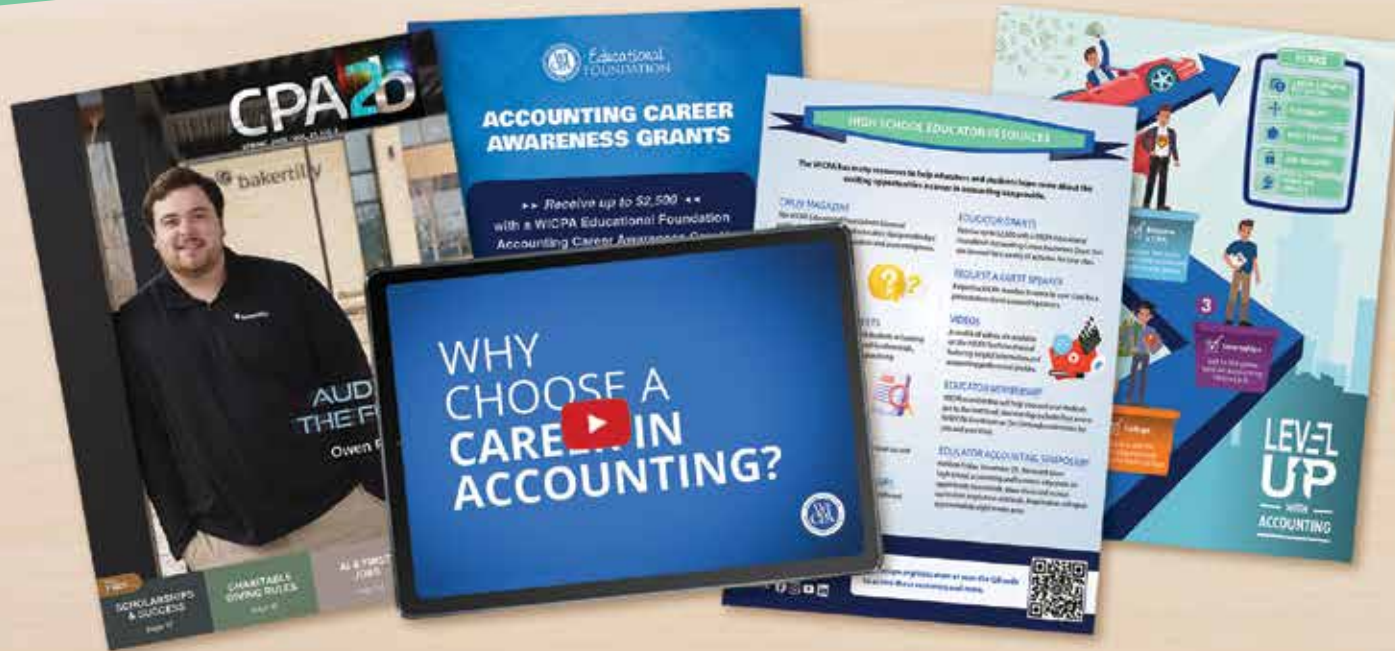
tinue building on this experience and hope to make it an annual opportunity for our seniors."

www.hamilton.k12.wi.us





Accounting Resources



Get the tools, ideas and resources you need to enhance the classroom experience to help students learn more about the exciting career opportunities in accounting.

1. CPA2b Magazine For Students & Educators

2. Explore Accounting Videos

3. Accounting FAQs & Worksheets

4. Level Up Guide & Career Planning Brochure

5. Request a Guest Speaker

6. Educator Membership

7. High School Educator Accounting Symposium

8. High School Educator Grants

9. Free High School & College Student Membership

10. College Directory

For more information, contact Lily Keller, WICPA Membership Outreach Coordinator at 262-785-0445, ext. 4511 or lily@wicpa.org. Access resources and learn more at wicpa.org/educators.





Beloit Memorial High School Awarded \$25,000 State Grant to Build On-Campus CNA Lab for 2026–2027 Launch



Jeff Stenroos, Director of Secondary Education, CTE, and Alternative Education School District of Beloit

Beloit Memorial High School (BMHS) is officially moving forward with the construction of a new Medical Careers Lab over the summer and fall months, targeting an opening date of January 2027.

The facility will drive an expansion of the Health Care pathway within the school's Health, Human, and Education Services (HHES) Academy link. The creation of the high-tech training space was made possible through a \$25,000 Fab Labs Grant awarded to Beloit Memorial High School by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), backed by an additional 50% in matching funds provided by the School District of Beloit. While the physical lab is fully funded and under construction, the district is actively searching for a qualified healthcare educator to lead the program.

As part of our academy structure, we have a HHES Advisory Committee, which contains teachers within the academy and partners from industry and institutions of higher education. This committee meets quarterly to address curriculum, industry trends, and workforce needs.

The Instructor Search: Meeting Wisconsin DHS Standards

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) enforces strict regulatory requirements for Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) instructors. A qualified candidate must be a Registered Nurse (RN) with at least two years of general nursing experience, including at least one year of experience in a long-term care facility or a skilled nursing environment.

Because qualified RNs are in high demand across the state, finding a professional who also holds a passion for teaching high schoolers remains a challenge. By completing construction on this state-of-the-art facility ahead of

schedule using the WEDC funds, the school district hopes the top-tier workspace will serve as a strong recruiting tool to attract a local nursing professional to the classroom in the near future.

Removing Barriers to Quadruple Student Capacity

Historically, BMHS students pursuing a CNA credential had to coordinate classes through outside providers like a local technical college or the CareerTek link. Navigating off-site travel and rigid external schedules limited participation.

"Through our outside providers, we typically have approximately 8-10 students who complete the CNA course," noted the BMHS leadership team. "With our own lab, we look to increase that by three or four times the number of students. This lab space will allow our students to take the course on our school schedule and in our own building, rather than try to fit it in through the technical college or CareerTek."

An Authentic Long-Term Care Training Environment

The state-and-district-funded lab transforms a standard classroom into a simulated healthcare facility, giving HHES Academy students direct access to industry-grade medical hardware. The lab features four fully equipped CNA lab stations that closely replicate modern long-term care environments:

- **Adjustable Hospital Beds:** Medical-grade beds allow students to practice proper patient positioning, side-rail safety, and independent mobility transfers.
- **Resident Room Furnishings:** Matching bedside nightstands, overbed food trays, and professional privacy curtains accurately mirror local skilled nursing facilities.
- **Clinical Care Mannequins:** Full-body training mannequins allow students to safely master essential clinical skills, including vital sign assessment, range-of-motion exercises, and personal care.



Collegiate Mentorship and HOSA Support

Alongside the physical space, BMHS is introducing proposed collegiate mentorship partnerships. College-level nursing and pre-health students will visit the BMHS lab to assist high school students who are learning the ropes of clinical care.

These collegiate partners will also actively support the high school's HOSA (Future Health Professionals) chapter. College mentors will help BMHS students prepare for competitive events, develop leadership skills, and navigate the transition from high school training to advanced medical degrees.

This functioning lab space would help us grow the Health Science pathway in our academy structure with hands-on space for the enhancement of medical science courses, such as Anatomy and Physiology, plus the development of new courses in Athletic Training and courses directly tied to the nursing and health sciences fields. It will also create a space that our industry partners could utilize in conjunction with our high school programs, creating learning and career awareness opportunities. Graduates of the program will be positioned to step directly into high-paying, flexible roles through the Youth Apprenticeship program or move on to higher education to pursue nursing or other health care degrees.



School Nurses Help Keep Students Healthy

The school nurse has a crucial role in the seamless provision of comprehensive health services to children and youth. Increasing numbers of students enter schools with chronic health conditions that require management during the school day. To optimally care for children, preparation, ongoing education, and appropriate staffing levels of school nurses are important factors for success.

—The American Academy of Pediatrics

In the United States, more than 40% of school-aged children and teens have at least one chronic health condition, like asthma, diabetes, seizure disorders, food allergies, or poor oral health. Some students with chronic conditions may miss school more often than others, which can affect their academic performance. For these students, school nurses or health centers offer vital help every day in managing their conditions.

School nurses or other school health services staff may also be the first to identify chronic health conditions in students during routine health exams.

A school nurse can help students and their families:

- Get access to health insurance.

- Coordinate care by communicating between the family and health care providers.
- Educate families on what health care services are available to their child at school.

The benefits of school nurses reach beyond the school walls.

School nurses not only make a big difference for student health and academic achievement, but they can also save money. For every \$1 spent on school nursing, society saves \$2.20.2 These savings come from preventing costly emergency room visits and parents missing time at work to care for sick children.

The roles and responsibilities of school nurses are expanding.

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, school nurses played an important role in keeping schools open for in-person learning, while protecting the health and safety of students and staff.
- School nurses are setting up employee wellness programs to keep teachers and school staff healthy.



- School nurses are learning new skills to provide mental health services and referrals for students and their families.

The National Association of School Nurses and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that school districts provide a full-time school nurse in every

school building.

School nurses promote a healthy and safe school environment. School nurses care for the entire school population—students and staff.

Source – CDC



At Bellin College, you're not just a student. You're part of a community that cares.

"From the moment I started at Bellin, I've felt an incredible sense of pride and belonging. Bellin truly cares about me as an individual—not just as a student—and that feeling extends beyond the classroom to the administration and staff."

-Ashley Williams

Bachelor of Science in Radiation Therapy Student at Bellin College

3-YEAR BACHELOR'S PROGRAMS

- Diagnostic Medical Sonography
- Nursing
- Radiation Therapy
- Radiologic Sciences
- Surgical Assisting



To learn more about our academic programs, schedule a campus visit, or connect with our Admissions team, visit www.bellincollege.edu.

What If the Missing Piece for Your Struggling Students Was Inside Your Building?



Every week, there are kids in classrooms who are doing everything they can just to hold it together. Maybe you have a student who shuts down the moment his routine changes, or a little girl whose anxiety makes it impossible for her to sit still, or a boy who's been handed so many labels that the adults have stopped looking for the deeper why.

And chances are, the adults carrying that child through every hard day could use some support of their own.

There's a solution most schools haven't considered yet, and it's simpler than you think.

61% of public schools report increased staff concerns about student anxiety, trauma, and emotional dysregulation.

Traditional interventions are doing their best, but they weren't designed to address what's happening underneath the behavior.

Chiropractic care supports the nervous

system, which controls how we focus, regulate emotions, and respond to stress. When a child's nervous system is dysregulated, it can show up as defiance, inattention, and behavioral outbursts.

Regular adjustments help the nervous system reset, and when that happens, the effects ripple through the entire school day.

A 2025 peer-reviewed study published in the Journal of Bodywork & Movement Therapies found that weekly school-based chiropractic care produced promising results:

- ▶ 81% of students showed measurable improvement in quality of life and school functioning
- ▶ 35% drop in hyperactivity scores
- ▶ Fewer meltdowns, better attention, and calmer classrooms reported by teachers
- ▶ Improved attendance as students stopped missing class for outside appointments

Teachers and staff who receive care also report feeling less depleted and better equipped to handle the demands of the classroom.

Simple to Implement, Zero Cost to Your District

We know administrators are juggling more than enough, so this model was designed with ease in mind from the start. Well-Adjusted Students is a Wisconsin-based nonprofit, and we handle everything so your staff doesn't have to:

- ▶ Zero cost to the district
- ▶ Certified chiropractors come to your building during regular school hours
- ▶ Students are seen for just a handful of minutes each week with little disruption to learning (Adjustments don't take long).
- ▶ No transportation burden on families, and we handle the paperwork
- ▶ Teachers and staff receive care too, because when your staff feels better physically and is less depleted, it changes how they show up for students every single day
- ▶ Care is documented, and we are available as an additional resource to support conversations happening around student wellness, including IEP meetings

Educators Across Wisconsin Are Seeing the Difference

"Since chiropractic care started in our school, I've noticed kids coming back to class calmer and more focused. It's a non-medication approach that really supports their emotional regulation. Parents love that it happens during the day because it saves time and keeps kids in school."

— Abbey Rao, 4th Grade Teacher

"Attendance improved, and teachers began seeing calmer kids who could focus and follow directions. For some of our students, it's the part of the week they look forward to most."

— Melissa Olson, Principal

"In special education, we see some really extreme behaviors. I had one student who complained of pain every day. After about a month of care, those complaints stopped, and his behavior completely changed. It's made a big difference for our staff too."

— Katie Simonson,
Special Education Teacher

Teachers pour themselves out every single day, and chances are, many of them don't have time to schedule care for themselves. So when we can support them right where they are each day, they also feel the difference - less pain, less stress, and more energy to give to the kids!

Wisconsin Schools Are Already Seeing the Results. Is Yours Next?

Well-Adjusted Students currently serves 400+ students and staff across 16 schools, with over 10,000 adjustments delivered last school year alone. School counselors are referring students directly, districts that started with one school are now requesting expansion, and we are regularly being brought into student wellness conversations.

If you're ready to explore what this could look like in your district, we'd love to start that conversation! You can reach out with any questions to the contact information below. We'd be happy to connect with you.

WellAdjustedStudents.org

715-382-6864

Amanda Jamerson Receives National Honor Continued from Page 1

percent over three years, while deepening student understanding of empathy and accountability. She also co-launched a comprehensive cell phone policy that promotes digital balance and has resulted in improved classroom focus and fewer peer conflicts.

As the school's Building Equity Lead, Jamerson also founded the school's Equity Leadership Team, delivering professional learning and coaching that has helped integrate culturally responsive practices across classrooms. She co-led the African American Youth Initiative, a regional program that supports mentorship, leadership development, and college readiness for African American students throughout southeastern Wisconsin.

"Ms. Jamerson's impact on our school has been extraordinary," said SHS Prin-

cipal Tim Kenney. "Her leadership has shaped a culture where safety, belonging, and achievement go hand in hand. She has empowered both staff and students to lead with empathy and excellence. I am thrilled to see her recognized in this way."

"Amanda Jamerson is an exceptional leader," said Shorewood School District Superintendent Dr. Laurie Burgos. "She elevates student achievement and wellbeing by cultivating relationships built on trust, dignity, and care. As a thoughtful collaborator, Amanda empowers others, strengthens teams, and nurtures a culture in which every student and staff member feels valued. This recognition reflects Amanda's commitment and the positive impact she makes every single day in the Shorewood School District."

The Wisconsin Associate Principal of the Year program recognizes assistant and associate principals whose leadership has resulted in improved student learning, instructional collaboration, and a safe and positive school environment. Nominations are accepted from teachers, parents, principals, and others across Wisconsin. Selection criteria include a commitment to personal excellence, collaborative leadership, personalization, curriculum, instruction and assessment, and serving as an established and respected community member.

"I want to give a major shout-out to my students. My students are by far some of the most amazing kids you will ever meet, and I am just blown away. They worked with our leadership team at the high school to send

me this amazing [congratulatory] video yesterday, and it had me in full-blown tears, and I'm just so proud to be their AP.

I am proud of the work that they do every day. I'm proud that they push me to be my best. They will tell me, "Hey, Jamerson, we need to fix this, we need to work on this." I am so proud, and I want them to know that I absolutely love them and I'm so thankful for the amazing culture that they've helped create at Shorewood High School."

— Amanda Jamerson
for EducationWeek.

shorewood.k12.wi.us



Calmer classrooms and better focus are one conversation away!



"Kids come back to class calmer and more focused. Parents love that it happens during the day because it saves time and keeps kids in school."

– Abbey Rao, 4th Grade Teacher,
Chippewa Falls School District

"I had one student who complained of pain every day. After about a month of care, those complaints stopped, and his behavior completely changed. It's made a big difference for our staff too."

– Katie Simonson,
Special Education Teacher,
Chippewa Falls School District



Schools across western Wisconsin are seeing more regulated and engaged kids, with fewer disruptive behaviors and fewer visits to the principal's office.

Well-Adjusted Students brings local chiropractors directly into the schools and provides care for 400+ students and staff across 16 schools in western Wisconsin each week.

Simple to implement. Zero cost to your district.

- ✓ Certified doctors of chiropractic come to your building during school hours
- ✓ We handle all credentialing, parent paperwork, and scheduling
- ✓ Adjustments take just minutes, minimal time out of the classroom
- ✓ Teachers and staff receive care too
- ✓ No transportation burden on families

This is a non-medication, whole-child approach that mental health professionals and counselors across Wisconsin have welcomed as another tool in their toolkit.

Backed by a 2025 peer-reviewed study in the *Journal of Bodywork & Movement Therapies*.

81%



81% of students showed measurable improvement in school functioning.

35%



35% drop in hyperactivity scores. Teachers report fewer meltdowns, better attention, and calmer classrooms.

Ready to bring this to your school?

We'd love to start the conversation about what this could look like in your district.

www.welladjustedstudents.org



Wisconsin’s 2026 Outstanding Educators Recognized by Herb Kohl Educational Foundation

The Herb Kohl Educational Foundation has named 115 Wisconsin educators as recipients of its 2026 awards, distributing \$1.4 million to honor exceptional teachers and principals across the state.

One hundred teachers each received a \$6,000 Teacher Fellowship award, and 15 principals each received a \$6,000 Principal Leadership award. Each recipient’s school will also receive a matching \$6,000 grant to support student learning and school initiatives.

The educators were selected from more than 1,200 nominations through a rigorous review process at regional and statewide levels. Recipients come from traditional public, charter and private schools throughout

Wisconsin.

“Education is where every future begins. We know great educators are the ones who make those futures possible,” said JoAnne Anton, president and CEO of Herb Kohl Philanthropies. “Celebrating their work is not just recognition – it’s an investment in the strength of our communities and the promise of the next generation.”

Teachers were recognized for their ability to inspire a love of learning, motivate students and demonstrate leadership both inside and outside the classroom. Principals were honored for setting high standards for instruction, achievement and character while fostering positive school environments.



Herb Kohl
Educational
Foundation, Inc.

Applications for 2027 Award Cycle Teachers and Principals opens on Monday August 3, 2026. The deadline for all applications is January 5, 2027 at 5PM Central Time.



2026 Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Principal Leaders

The Association of Wisconsin School Administrators chooses the Elementary and Secondary Principals of the Year from among the public school recipients.

CESA 1

Theresa Christensen, *Lowell International Elementary*, Milwaukee

Catherine Loss, *Barbee Elementary*, Milwaukee

Justin Nies, *Magee Elementary*, Genesee Depot

CESA 2

Sally Pope, *Monroe Elementary*, Janesville

Jamie Thomas, *Indian Mound Middle School*, McFarland

Cale Vogel, *Lake Mills High School*, Lake Mills

CESA 3

Brad Sturmer, *Winskill Elementary*, Lancaster

CESA 5

Toni Ross, *Saint Patrick’s School*, Mauston

Eric Scheunemann, *Lodi Elementary*, Lodi

CESA 7

Russ Gerke, *West De Pere High School*, De Pere

Jeff Kondrakiewicz, *Cedar Grove-Belgium Elementary*, Cedar Grove

Samantha Meyers, *Chilton Area Catholic School*, Chilton

Lauren Ward, *Gibraltar Elementary*, Fish Creek

CESA 9

Gretchen Smart-Hall, *Northland Pines Elementary*, Eagle River

CESA 10

Jill Lybert, *Medford High School*, Medford

2026 Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Teacher Fellows

Public educators among the 2026 recipients were automatically advanced for consideration in the Wisconsin Teacher of the Year program.

CESA 1

Kimberly Au, *Luther Elementary*, South Milwaukee

Jody Bauer, *Vincent High School*, Milwaukee

Jennifer Bertrand-LaDuke, *Milwaukee Parkside School*, Milwaukee

Corrianne Cain, *Hales Corners Lutheran Schools*, Hales Corners

Jamie Cuzman, *Kettle Moraine Middle School*, Dousman

Katie Dennert, *Hales Corners Lutheran Schools*, Hales Corners

Ivana DiCastri, *Christ King School*, Wauwatosa

Paula Duchow, *Saint Bruno School*, Dousman

Jonathan Etter, *Wauwatosa East High School*, Wauwatosa

Michael Hayden, *Wauwatosa East High School*, Wauwatosa

Lindsay Hendricks, *Ronald Reagan Elementary*, New Berlin

Jaclyn Jecha, *New Berlin West Middle/High School*, New Berlin

Amy Kosmider, *Brookfield East High School*, Brookfield

John Kozicke, *Greendale High School*, Greendale

David Landeros Cortes, *South Division High School*, Milwaukee

Alec Lenczner-Bagdasarian, *Saint Augustine Preparatory Academy*, Milwaukee

Jimmy Litscher, *Saint Thomas More High School*, Milwaukee

Matthew Marino, *Whitnall High School*, Greenfield

Suzanne Milewski, *Reagan High School*, Milwaukee

Jaime Mutz, *Ninety-Fifth Street Elementary*, Milwaukee

Cheryl Panka, *Pewaukee Lake Elementary*, Pewaukee

Christine Perkins, *Park View Middle School*, Mukwonago

Christine Peterson, *Mukwonago High School*, Mukwonago

Mary Piwaron, *Franklin High School*, Franklin

Lisa Plopper, *Divine Redeemer Lutheran School*, Hartland

Sandra Rice, *Catholic Memorial High School*, Waukesha

Leah Rogneby, *New Berlin West Middle/High School*, New Berlin

Nicholas Schueller, *Homestead High School*, Mequon

Wisconsin's 2026 Outstanding Educators

Continued from Page 20

CESA 1 (Continued)

- Jacqueline Shumaker**, *Poplar Creek Elementary*, New Berlin
- Tyler Stephens**, *New Berlin West Middle/High School*, New Berlin
- PJ Uhazie**, *Mukwonago High School*, Mukwonago
- Allison Umhoefer**, *Franklin High School*, Franklin
- Allison Urban**, *Pilgrim Park Middle School*, Elm Grove
- Rachel Weiss**, *Magee Elementary*, Genesee Depot
- Shannon Wysocki**, *Poplar Creek Elementary*, New Berlin
- Enock Yeng**, *Morse Middle School*, Milwaukee
- Robin Young**, *John Long Middle School*, Grafton
- Nicole Zaeske**, *New Berlin West Middle/High School*, New Berlin
- Amy Zientek**, *Atlas Preparatory Academy*, Milwaukee

- Kim Zvara**, *Saint Paul Lutheran School*, Grafton
- ## CESA 2
- Sarah Bowman**, *Verona Area High School*, Verona
- Robert Calvert**, *Harmony Elementary*, Janesville
- Madison Day**, *Savanna Oaks Middle School*, Fitchburg
- Sarah Hall**, *Badger Ridge Middle School*, Verona
- Eric Hartz**, *Madison Metropolitan District Office*, Madison
- Ben Jaeger**, *Memorial High School*, Madison
- Erin Jensen**, *Rock University High School*, Janesville
- Ashley Lowrey**, *Turner High School*, Beloit
- Constance Nielsen**, *Saint Ambrose Academy*, Madison
- Christine Punzel**, *McFarland Primary School*, McFarland
- Julie Rice**, *Leopold Elementary*, Madison
- Brenda Rotunno**, *McFarland Primary School*, McFarland



- Tjark Sattler**, *Parkview High School*, Orfordville
- Matt Scharpf**, *De Forest High School*, De Forest
- Kristen Scott**, *Nuestro Mundo*, Monona
- Coleen Shaw**, *Rock River Charter School*, Janesville
- Jamie Vezina**, *Indian Mound Middle School*, McFarland

- Andrea Waski**, *St. Victor School*, Monroe
- ## CESA 3
- Steve Olenchek**, *Platteville Middle School*, Platteville
- Melissa Sperle**, *Winskill Elementary*, Lancaster

Continued on Page 22



14TH ANNUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 12-13, 2026
KALAHARI RESORT, WISCONSIN DELLS





KATIE BERG: Katie Berg has been supporting students for more than 20 years. In the private sector, public education and now statewide her experiences include providing one on one therapy, classroom teaching, administration, technical assistance, coaching and district and statewide training.



DEVIN SIEBOLD: Teachers will recognize Devin as the hilarious comedian from Tik Tok, Youtube, and Facebook, including headlining the popular Bored Teachers National Comedy Tour. Devin delivers the non-stop laughs, and shows teachers how laughter can not only change their mindset, but also the mindset of those around them.



Join hundreds of your colleagues from around the state and Midwest to learn, relax, network, and gather new ideas and resources.



To access registration and information, go to: edevents.org/conferences

Five Educators selected as 2026–27 Teachers of the Year

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction announced five educators selected as 2026–27 Wisconsin Teachers of the Year. Wisconsin’s State Superintendent traveled across Wisconsin to surprise each honoree during school celebrations alongside students, colleagues, families, and members of their school communities.

“Among more than 60,000 educators across Wisconsin, these five individuals stand out for the extraordinary impact they make in their schools and communities every day,” the State Superintendent said. “Their compassion for education and commitment to helping every student succeed are truly inspiring. They go above and beyond in their roles, not only as compassionate teachers to their students, but also as mentors to their colleagues, leaders within their schools, and changemakers within their communities. It was an honor to celebrate each of them alongside those they have impacted. I am incredibly proud to recognize them as our 2026–27 Wisconsin Teachers of the Year.”

Each year, the Teacher of the Year Program, a partnership between the DPI and Herb Kohl Philanthropies, selects five educators representing elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and special services.

As part of their recognition, each Teacher of the Year will receive a \$3,000 award from

Herb Kohl Philanthropies. One of the five educators will also be selected through an interview process to represent Wisconsin in the Council of Chief State School Officers’ National Teacher of the Year Program.

Congratulations to Wisconsin’s 2026-27 Teachers of the Year!



Jonathan Etter
English Teacher from Wauwatosa East High School, Wauwatosa School District

Jonathan Etter, an English teacher, has taught at Wauwatosa East High School for the past 19 years. He has been instrumental

in expanding access to advanced academic opportunities and dual enrollment programing, helping to create new pathways for student success. Prior to teaching at Wauwatosa, Etter spent 10 years teaching at Sheboygan North High School.

“Mr. Etter is deeply committed to equity in education and works to ensure Wauwatosa East is a welcoming and inclusive environment where every student is set up for success,” said Wisconsin’s State Superintendent during a schoolwide surprise celebration. “His impact extends beyond the school, where he is a leader in the Wauwatosa community and a relentless advocate for public education.”

With 30 years of experience, Jonathan expects the very best out of his students and holds them to high academic standards by actually encouraging them to make mistakes as part of the learning process.

In order to do that, he creates a safe space within the classroom, welcoming any and all students to express themselves so they can better learn and grow. Jonathan believes what he teaches should reflect the diversity of his students because seeing their identities brings out the best in them.

Etter is also an adjunct professor of English at a nearby UW College, where he

teaches college credit composition and literature courses as part of the College Credit in High School program—a partnership with the Wauwatosa School District that he helped create. He is an award-winning published author and a team manager for Destination Imagination, where he mentors students through collaborative, creative problem-solving challenges.

“It’s an amazing honor, one that I never would have imagined that I would ever get,” Etter said in a phone interview with AOL. “It’s a shock; it’s a treat. Honestly, I would say I don’t know that I’m really deserving of it, but I feel that this award is more, I think, a tribute to the two wonderful school districts that I worked in over the course of my career.”

wauwatosa.k12.wi.us

Continued on Page 24

Wisconsin’s 2026 Outstanding Educators Continued from Page 21

CESA 3 (Continued)

Shawn Zeeh, *Wauzeka Middle School, Wauzeka*

CESA 4

- Natalie Anderson**, *Arcadia High School, Arcadia*
Mariah Bigelow, *Coulee Montessori Charter School, La Crosse*
Heather Stenslien, *Prairie View Elementary, De Soto*

CESA 5

- Nichole Buwalda**, *Randolph Elementary, Randolph*
Joni Feidt, *Grant Elementary, Wisconsin Rapids*
Justin Glodowski, *Marshfield High School, Marshfield*
Leah Keller, *Adams-Friendship Elementary, Friendship*
Tonya Lassanske, *Sauk Prairie High School, Prairie du Sac*
Jessica Mueller, *Baraboo High School, Baraboo*

Scot Neu, *Sauk Prairie High School, Prairie du Sac*

Michelle Puls, *Lodi High School, Lodi*

CESA 6

- Angie Bemowski**, *Janssen Elementary, Combined Locks*
Taylor Grenlie, *Little Chute High School, Little Chute*
Sandra Johnson, *Gerritts Middle School, Kimberly*
Grace King, *Badger Middle School, West Bend*
Jessica Martine, *Spring Road Elementary, Neenah*
Farrell Preston, *Hartford High School, Hartford*
Daniel Robinson, *Lomira High School, Lomira*
Michael Wadel, *Westside Elementary, Kimberly*

CESA 7

Kelsey Allen, *Hemlock Creek Elementary, De Pere*

Sabrina Holden, *Chilton Area Catholic School, Chilton*

Ryan Krippendorf, *Plymouth High School, Plymouth*

Susan Lutz, *West De Pere Intermediate School, De Pere*

David Miller, *Sheboygan North High School, Sheboygan*

Jamie Sheehy, *Holy Cross Catholic School, Green Bay*

Dawn Shimek, *Mishicot High School, Mishicot*

Kaitlin Skarban, *Pulaski High School, Pulaski*

Abbie Van Grinsven, *Hilbert District Office, Hilbert*

Rachel Ziegler, *Southwest High School, Green Bay*

CESA 8

- Shelby Harris**, *Crandon Elementary, Crandon*
Tanya Schallock, *Crandon Elementary, Crandon*

CESA 9

- Patricia Darr**, *Northland Pines, Land O’ Lakes*
Kelly Hoppe, *Minocqua Elementary, Minocqua*
Michael Wojtusik, *Rhineland High School, Rhineland*

CESA 10

- Sarah Faude**, *Medford Elementary, Medford*
Kayla Velasquez, *Osseo-Fairchild High School, Osseo*
Kylie Weiler, *Medford Elementary, Medford*

CESA 11

Kimberly Bassett, *Spooner Elementary, Spooner*

CESA 12

Kaite Bartyn, *La Pointe Elementary, La Pointe*

Courtesy of Herb Kohl Philanthropies

CARTHAGE
COLLEGE



Teach with purpose. **LEAD WITH CONFIDENCE.**

Earn your initial licensure to teach in our Accelerated Certification for Teachers (ACT) program or complete a master's degree in education. Whether you are new to teaching or an experienced teacher ready to take the next step, Carthage is prepared to help you reach your goals!



Learn more
CARTHAGE.EDU/GRAD



Five Educators selected as 2026–27 Teachers of the Year Continued from Page 22



Kristen Scott

Fourth grade teacher at Nuestro Mundo Community School, Madison Metropolitan School District

Kristen Scott, a fourth-grade bilingual teacher at Nuestro Mundo Community School in Madison, was surprised with the prestigious honor — which includes a \$3,000 award — during a schoolwide assembly.

“Mrs. Scott is innovative and determined; she sees challenges as opportunities,” said Wisconsin’s State Superintendent during the assembly. “When she has an idea to improve the school, she will work tirelessly to bring it to life, whether that means securing grants or finding new partners to collaborate with. She is dedicated to making the school a welcoming and inclusive place where everyone feels like they belong.”

With more than 30 years of experience in education, Scott has dedicated her career to supporting multilingual learners and fostering inclusive classroom environments. At Nuestro Mundo, she has played a key role in strengthening family engagement and building connections between students’ home and school experiences.

Kristen has dedicated her professional career to leveling the playing field of public education, particularly for English Language Learners, students of color, and students living below the poverty line. She believes that equity is not achieved through intention alone, but through sustained presence, high expectations, and deep care.

“Kristen’s impact on her students and school community is extraordinary,” Josh Forehand, Nuestro Mundo principal, said. “Her commitment to ensuring every student feels seen, valued and supported reflects the very best of our profession. We are proud to celebrate this well-deserved recognition and grateful for the difference she makes every day.”

Scott has previously been recognized for her work in bilingual education and inclusive practices, having been named the Bilingual Teacher of the Year by the Wisconsin Association for Bilingual Education in 2015, and Educator of the Year by GSAFE in 2018.

“This is a really beautiful honor,” Scott said. “I’m very grateful for this [Nuestro Mundo] community, especially my colleagues. They work hard, they believe in what we’re doing, and they support me so much.”

www.madison.k12.wi.us



Tonya Lassanske

School counselor at Sauk Prairie High School, Sauk Prairie School District

Sauk Prairie High School Counselor, Tonya Lassanske, was named a Wisconsin Teacher of the Year at a surprise pep rally at Sauk Prairie High School. The honor was presented to her by Wisconsin’s State Superintendent. Joining a crowd of students and staff were Mrs. Lassanske’s family, her parents, her high school basketball coach, and many other friends and colleagues.

A dedicated advocate for the whole child, Mrs. Lassanske has served Sauk Prairie High School for 29 years as counselor, registrar, and student services lead. She has played a critical role in bridging the gap between mental health and academic achievement by implementing alternative graduation pathways and universal mental health screening.

As a school counselor, Tonya leads with empathy and builds trust with students in her care to help them with whatever challenges they may face. She doesn’t consider herself a “fixer” of problems, but rather a facilitator of psychological safety. Her deep care for her students’ general well-being takes precedence over trying to patch over specific issues which allows kids to feel empowered and eventually become their own best advocates.

Tonya has led efforts to focus on the systems around students that often let them down in order to make meaningful change in the lives of kids and the community at large. Her hunger for learning and growing is a big reason why she’s had such an impact at Sauk Prairie High School.

Mrs. Lassanske also helped expand Work-Based Learning and Youth Appren-

ticeship Programs, giving students the opportunity to gain real-world experience while earning high school credit.

“Sauk Prairie High School is so lucky to have Ms. Lassanske,” the State Superintendent said during the ceremony. “Even after 29 years as a counselor here, she has never stopped learning, growing, volunteering, and showing up with enthusiasm and compassion every day.”

The State Superintendent commended Sauk Prairie High School for having 14 current Kohl Teacher Fellows on the teaching team — a number she believes is the highest for any one school in the state!

saukprairieschools.org



Devon Calvert

Art teacher at the School District of Milton

Milton art teacher, Devon Calvert, was named a Wisconsin Teacher of the Year at a schoolwide surprise celebration at Harmony Elementary School.

“Mr. Calvert’s passion for teaching and the arts inspires creativity in all of his students,” said Wisconsin’s State Superintendent during the celebration. “He is deeply committed to celebrating every student’s artistic talent, ensuring they have opportunities to share their artwork and collaborate on creative pieces for everyone to enjoy.”

Calvert has spent the past 11 years teaching at Harmony and Consolidated Elementary Schools, where he blends art history and contemporary artists to inspire creativity in his K–3 students. He played a key role in Harmony Elementary School being selected as one of the first schools in the nation to pilot the National Elementary Art Honor Society, providing students with the opportunity to complete service-learning projects within the community.

Devon believes in the power of artistic expression and that all children, regardless of background, ability, or learning style deserve meaningful opportunities to express themselves. He has curated his studio to be a safe space for students to find themselves

on a more personal level and fosters creativity, especially in students who struggle in subjects like math or reading.

Through engagement with parents and other school staff, Devon shares progress of his artists and the creative, exciting work they’re doing in his class. Even the most tentative students leave his classroom more skilled, more confident, and ready to handle whatever challenge comes their way.

As a leader, Devon served as WAEA President and NAEA Elementary Division Director. He has presented/hosted dozens of sessions at state and national conferences, authored numerous articles for NAEA News, Art Times, and SchoolArts Magazine, and mentored a pre-service educator. His honors include WAEA Elementary Art Educator of the Year (2024), WAEA Art Educator of the Year (2026), and Wisconsin Teacher of the Year (2026).

www.milton.k12.wi.us



Allison Urban

Eighth grade special education teacher at Pilgrim Park Middle School, School District of Elmbrook

Allison Urban was surprised and honored during a whole-school assembly as Pilgrim Park Middle School gathered to celebrate being named a 2026 Wisconsin School of Recognition. The celebration became even more memorable when the State Superintendent announced Urban as one of Wisconsin’s Teachers of the Year.

“Allison exemplifies the very best of student-centered teaching,” stated Principal Kelly Szeszterniak. “Her compassion, expertise, and commitment to helping every learner feel valued and capable have made a lasting impact on students, families, and staff. This honor is a testament to her dedication and excellence in the field of special education.”

A veteran Special Education Teacher with more than 16 years of experience, Urban currently serves 8th-grade students

Continued on Page 25

Announcing Wisconsin's 2026 Principals of the Year

Awarded by The Association of Wisconsin School Administrators

The principal of the year program highlights the good things that are being done by school leaders every day, all across the state of Wisconsin. Principals of the Year are asked to share their successes and practices with colleagues in events and workshops during the year.



2026 Wisconsin Elementary School Principal of the Year Catherine Loss

The Association of Wisconsin School Administrators has named Catherine Loss as the 2026 Elementary School Principal of the Year.

Loss serves as principal of Lloyd Barbee Montessori School in Milwaukee Public Schools. Over the past 14 years, she has led the transformation and growth of the school into a thriving K-8 Montessori program grounded in equity, community, and a whole-child approach to education.

Under Loss's leadership, Lloyd Barbee Montessori has grown from fewer than 200 students to more than 420 and has demonstrated strong academic progress. The school currently exceeds expectations on the Wisconsin State Report Card and has shown significant student growth, with value-added scores indicating students are progressing more quickly than their peers statewide.

Loss has also led efforts to support historically underserved students, contributing to improved outcomes and positioning the school to meet all criteria for exiting Comprehensive Support and Improvement status.

"Catherine is a dedicated and compassionate leader who has built a strong, inclusive school community focused on student success," said MPS Superintendent Dr. Brenda Cassellius. "Her commitment to Montessori principles, academic excellence, and supporting the whole child has made a lasting impact on students, staff, and families."

Loss is known for her supportive leadership style and commitment to developing both staff and students. She has strengthened instructional practices through initiatives such as Montessori Reading Acceleration, Orton-

Gillingham training, and professional learning communities, while also prioritizing trauma-sensitive practices and social-emotional learning. Her work has helped foster a positive school climate, with high levels of staff and family engagement and a strong culture of respect and inclusion.

Before becoming principal in 2012, Loss served as an assistant principal, literacy coach, and educator within Milwaukee Public Schools. She holds a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and additional credentials in administrative leadership and Montessori education.

She is also a leader in the broader Montessori community, having served as president of the Wisconsin Montessori Association and presenting at regional and national conferences.

"On behalf of AWSA, I am proud to congratulate Catherine Loss on being named the 2026 Wisconsin Elementary School Principal of the Year," said AWSA Executive Director Jim Lynch. "She has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to students and families, creating a school where all learners can grow and succeed. Her leadership is an inspiration."

milwaukeepublicschools.org



2026 Wisconsin Middle School Principal of the Year Jamie Thomas

The Association of Wisconsin School Administrators has named Jamie Thomas as its 2026 Middle School Principal of the Year.

Thomas serves as principal of Indian Mound Middle School in the McFarland School District. There, she has focused on building a school culture rooted in belonging, equity, and continuous improvement, ensuring every student feels seen, supported, and challenged to succeed.

Under Thomas's leadership, Indian Mound has become one of the top-performing middle schools in Dane County. The school has consistently ranked among the top three in the county on the FORWARD exam in multiple subject areas, with students often perform-

ing more than 20 percentage points above the state average. She has also led efforts to close achievement gaps through the implementation of equitable multi-level systems of support, targeted instructional practices, and a strong culture of data-informed decision-making.

"Jamie is a visionary and compassionate leader who has transformed Indian Mound Middle School into a place where all students can thrive," said McFarland School District Superintendent Aaron Tarnutzer. "Her commitment to equity, student achievement, and building meaningful relationships has had a profound impact on both the school community and student outcomes."

Thomas emphasizes a collaborative leadership approach, empowering staff and students while fostering strong partnerships with families and the community. She has expanded student leadership opportunities, strengthened school-community connections through mentorship and career exploration programs, and created systems that support both academic success and social-emotional growth.

Before becoming principal at Indian Mound Middle School in 2022, Thomas served as principal and associate principal at Badger Ridge Middle School in the Verona Area School District. She began her career in education as a school social worker and has held a variety of leadership roles. She holds a master's degree in social work and additional licensure in educational leadership, curriculum and instruction, and student services.

"On behalf of AWSA, I am proud to congratulate Jamie Thomas on being named the

2026 Wisconsin Middle School Principal of the Year," said AWSA Executive Director Jim Lynch. "She leads with purpose and heart, creating a school environment where students and staff feel valued and empowered. Her work exemplifies school leadership in Wisconsin."

mcfarland.k12.wi.us



2026 Wisconsin High School Principal of the Year Dr. Russ Gerke

The Association of Wisconsin School Administrators has named Dr. Russ Gerke as its 2026 High School Principal of the Year.

Dr. Gerke serves as principal of West De Pere High School in the School District of

Continued on Page 26

2026-27 Teachers of the Year

Continued from Page 24

at Pilgrim Park Middle School. Throughout her career, she has supported middle school students with diverse academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. She brings strong expertise in co-teaching, differentiated instruction, and the development of individualized supports that help students build independence and confidence.

Ms. Urban is widely recognized as a compassionate educator who builds meaningful relationships with students, families, and colleagues. Colleagues describe her as a resilient and dedicated professional who leads with empathy, models effective strategies for others, and consistently creates learning environments where all students feel capable of success.

In addition to her classroom impact, Urban has served as a department chair and mentor to fellow educators, supporting best practices in special education and collaborative instruction. Her leadership reflects a deep commitment not only to her students, but also to strengthening the professional practice of

those around her.

"On behalf of Pilgrim Park Middle School and the entire School District of Elmbrook, we are thrilled to celebrate Allison Urban with this well-deserved honor," said Dr. Mark Hansen, Superintendent of the School District of Elmbrook. "We are incredibly proud of Allison's contributions to our students, staff, and school community."

elmbrookschoools.org



For more information about Wisconsin's Teacher of the Year Program, see <https://www.herbkohlphilanthropies.org/celebrating-excellence-in-education/teachers-of-the-year.php>



Parkside Elementary Earns Prestigious 2026 National Gold Star Award



Parkside Elementary School, part of the Fond du Lac School District, has been named a 2026 National Gold Star School by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). This honor recognizes schools that demonstrate outstanding leadership, innovative instructional practices, and a deep-seated dedication to student achievement. Parkside is part of an elite inaugural cohort, being one of only 57 schools nationwide to receive this distinction, and one of 47 elementary schools.

"This award is a testament to the culture of excellence our staff and students build every single day," said Amy Jahn, Principal of Parkside Elementary. "Being recognized as a Gold Star School validates our commitment to creating an environment where every child feels supported and inspired to reach their full potential."

The National Gold Star Schools program evaluates schools based on the three core pillars:

- **Established Culture: Focus on shared values and family engagement**

Engagement and communication with families and the community were strengthened through a renewed commitment to relationships built on trust, transparency, and shared responsibility for student success. By fostering predictable classroom environments and maintaining consistent communication, Parkside ensured caregivers were partners in learning and growth.

Through clarity of purpose, intentional collaboration, and a steadfast commitment to well-being, Parkside Elementary has established a strong, sustainable culture that

enables high levels of achievement, closes gaps, and equips students with the skills and knowledge to determine their future.

- **Empowered People: Commitment to collaborative teaching and holistic student support**

At Parkside Elementary, empowering people is a cornerstone of our success and sustained improvement. Our growth is driven by intentional systems that promote personalized and collaborative teaching and learning, distributed leadership, and comprehensive support for the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of both students and adults.

"Being recognized as a Gold Star School validates our commitment to creating an environment where every child feels supported and inspired to reach their full potential."

— Amy Jahn

Parkside Elementary Principal

Personalized and collaborative teaching and learning are embedded in daily practice. Leadership team members are intentionally developed to facilitate and guide grade-level teams through the elements of data-

driven instruction, including unit planning and the identification of priority standards. This leadership capacity ensures instructional alignment and coherence across the school. Teams share responsibility for the development and implementation of 90-day plans, creating collective ownership of goals, action steps, and outcomes.

- **Optimal Systems: Strategic use of resources to drive student growth**

Parkside Elementary has established optimal systems that maximize effective teaching and learning by intentionally aligning talent, resources, district support, and community partnerships around what matters most: student growth and achievement. These systems have driven exceptional outcomes, including movement from the 6th percentile on the Wisconsin School Report

Card to the 93rd percentile over four years, with student growth in the 2024–2025 school year exceeding 98.7% of elementary schools statewide.

Parkside redesigned its daily schedule to prioritize collaboration and instructional improvement. Each grade level is provided a protected 70–90 minute weekly data meeting, facilitated by the principal and supported by math, reading, special education, and English language specialists. Weekly data meetings and collaborative team planning meetings are treated as non-negotiable priorities; nothing else is scheduled during these times. This structure ensures consistent focus on instructional planning, data analysis, and targeted responses to student needs.

"We are incredibly proud of the Parkside community," added Matt Steinbarth, Superintendent. "This national recognition reflects the strategic focus our district places on growing leadership at the building level to ensure high-quality learning outcomes for each and every student."

By maintaining a relentless focus on what matters most and aligning systems to that purpose, Parkside Elementary has created an environment where teaching and learning thrive, resources are used effectively, and students achieve extraordinary growth and success. Personalized and collabor-



orative teaching and learning are embedded in daily practice to ensure the needs of every student are met.

NAESP's National Gold Star School® (NGSS) program recognizes outstanding elementary and middle-level schools where learning communities work collaboratively to grow and demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement of performance. For more information about the program go to <https://www.naesp.org/programs/recognition/ngss>

www.fdlisd.org/o/pes



2026 Principals of the Year

Continued from Page 25

West De Pere. With more than two decades of leadership at the school, he has built a strong culture of collaboration, high expectations, and continuous improvement that has driven sustained student success.

Under Gerke's leadership, West De Pere High School has consistently earned an "Exceeds Expectations" rating on the Wisconsin State Report Card and maintains a nearly 100 percent graduation rate. The school has also been recognized by U.S. News & World Report and ranked among the top high schools in Wisconsin.

"Dr. Gerke is an exceptional leader who has dedicated his career to serving students and building a culture of excellence at West De Pere High School," said West De Pere Superintendent Jason Lau. "His focus on collaboration, innovation, and meeting the needs of all learners has had a lasting impact on our students, staff, and community."

Gerke has led the development of innovative programs that expand opportunities for students and support diverse learning needs. These include alternative education pathways, such as West Academy, co-taught "Align" courses that support inclusive instruction, and targeted interventions like Math Seminar to strengthen foundational skills. He has also built strong partnerships with local organiza-

tions and colleges, creating opportunities for students to earn college credit and explore career pathways through programs like the Trades Career Academy and healthcare certifications.

A strong advocate for shared leadership, Gerke established a Faculty Council that empowers teachers to play a central role in school decision making and continuous improvement. His commitment to professional learning and collaboration has helped foster a culture in which staff feel supported, valued, and focused on improving outcomes for all students.

Gerke has served as principal of West De Pere High School since 2004, after previously serving as associate principal. He holds a doctorate and a master's degree in educational leadership.

"On behalf of AWSA, I am proud to congratulate Russ Gerke on being named the 2026 Wisconsin High School Principal of the Year," said AWSA Executive Director Jim Lynch. "His dedication to students, staff, and community, along with his commitment to continuous improvement, exemplifies outstanding school leadership."

www.mcpsd.k12.wi.us





School of Education

Advance your career

as a teacher, administrator,
counselor, researcher or
community leader!

Curious about advancing your career or discovering a new direction? Move forward with a graduate degree from UW-Milwaukee's School of Education. You'll cultivate the professional knowledge and skills needed to pursue your passion and prepare for new opportunities.

EXPLORE OUR GRADUATE PROGRAMS:

- Curriculum & Instruction
- Educational Psychology
- Administrative Leadership
- Cultural Foundations of Education
- Exceptional Education



**Talk with an
advisor today!**
soeinfo@uwm.edu
414-229-4721

UWM.EDU/EDUCATION

MARIAN UNIVERSITY



**Find out
more!**

**Be a leader in a public
or private school.**

Marian University's Educational Leadership program prepares educators for leadership roles in public and private schools through a values-based approach grounded in learning, service, and social justice.

MARIAN UNIVERSITY

45 S. National Ave.

Fond du Lac, WI 54935

adult_online@marianuniversity.edu

marianuniversity.edu/online

Founded 1936 • Sponsored by the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes



Master of Arts in Education **EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

- **30-credit MAE** designed for working professionals
- **3 starts per year**, 7-week format
- Graduates are eligible for WI licensure as a:
 - **School Principal** (WI 5051)
 - **Director of Instruction** (WI 5010)
 - Added opportunity to earn **Alternative Education licensure** (WI 1952)
- Combines leadership theory, **hands-on clinical experiences, and a supervised practicum**
- For more information, visit marianuniversity.edu/online!