

February 2026

WS Newsletter

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Letter from Superintendent Ryan

Connection and Community

I hope everyone stayed safe and warm during the last two weeks of January, as we experienced some dangerously cold winter weather. Living in Wisconsin, we know it's only a matter of time before a true Wisconsin winter shows itself, and this one certainly made its presence known. During times like these, I'm reminded how important it is to look out for one another, check in on neighbors, and lean on the strength of our community.

Recently, I had the opportunity to

attend the State Education Convention in Milwaukee. It was a valuable time to listen, learn, and reflect. One story in particular stayed with me because it speaks not only to schools, but to communities like ours.

Keynote speaker Anne Marie Anderson shared a deeply personal story about her son, who struggled throughout much of his early school years. Diagnosed with ADHD, he often felt disconnected, unsure of where he belonged, and uncertain about his place in the world. That changed during his

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February Newsletter

School District of West Salem

freshman year of high school when he joined the water polo team. For the first time, he felt seen. He felt valued. He felt like he mattered.

When the season ended, however, something important was missing. His grades slipped, his behavior changed, and it became clear that what he had lost wasn't simply a sport; it was a sense of belonging. One caring adult, who happened to be both his case manager and coach, noticed. Instead of giving up on him, that adult leaned in, had an honest conversation, and reminded him that someone believed in him.

That conversation mattered. With determination and support, Anne Marie's son worked his way back. He regained eligibility, rejoined his team, and eventually earned a Division I scholarship for both his academic achievements and his athletic talents.

This story is a powerful reminder that while schools play an important role, belonging doesn't stop at the classroom door. It is built in gyms, on teams, at community events, in workplaces, and in everyday moments when someone takes the time to notice another person.

As a community, West Salem has always taken pride in looking out for one another. This February, I encourage all of us to reflect on who might

need someone in their front row. It may be a student, but it may also be a neighbor, coworker, teammate, or friend. A simple conversation, a kind word, or a moment of encouragement can make a lasting difference. In the words of an inspirational woman, Maya Angelou, "People may forget what you said or what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

I was reminded of this recently when I reconnected with a former elementary student at a wrestling meet. That brief interaction was one of the highlights of my week and a powerful reminder that relationships, no matter how small they may seem at the time, often last far beyond the moment.

Alongside the important work of connection and community, I'm pleased to share that our district construction projects are moving forward well, even in the midst of winter conditions.

At the elementary school, the new gymnasium project is progressing nicely. All walls are up, the roof and roofing are in place, and interior work will soon begin. It's exciting to see this space taking shape for our students and community.

At the high school, the project is also moving ahead, with the retaining wall now in place and backfill underway. While the recent frigid temperatures slowed work for a couple of days, we

School District of West Salem

are happy to report that overall progress remains strong and on track.

These projects represent more than bricks and mortar; they reflect our community's commitment to students, families, and the future of West Salem. When we collaborate, care for one another's well-being, and invest in spaces that bring people together, we continue to grow into the strong, supportive community that we are all so proud to call home.

I wish you all a Happy Valentine's Day, along with the hope of warmer weather and the opportunity to enjoy winter in Wisconsin!

Ryan Rieber
Superintendent

Calendar of Events February

Athletic Events

Monday, February 2, 2026

- 6:00pm Ice Hockey: Girls Varsity Game vs. Medford @ Simek Recreational Center
- 8:00pm Ice Hockey: Girls JV Game vs. Medford @ Simek Recreational Center

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

- 5:45pm Basketball: Girls JV Game vs. Tomah @ West Salem High School
- 5:45pm Basketball: Boys C-Team Game vs. Black River Falls @ Black River Falls High School Sam Young Gym
- 5:45pm Basketball: Boys JV Game vs. Black River Falls @ Black River Falls Fieldhouse
- 7:00pm Basketball: Girls Varsity Game vs. Tomah @ West Salem High School
- 7:00pm Basketball: Boys Varsity Game vs. Black River Falls @ Black River Falls Fieldhouse
- 7:00pm Ice Hockey: Boys Varsity Game vs. Avalanche @ West Salem Panther Den Arena

Thursday, February 5, 2026

- 5:45pm Basketball: Girls JV Game vs. Westby Area High School @ Westby High School
- 7:00pm Basketball: Girls Varsity Game vs. Westby Area High School @ Westby High School
- 7:00pm Ice Hockey: Boys Varsity Game vs. La Crescent-Hokah @ La Crescent Ice Arena

Friday, February 6, 2026

- 4:00pm Wrestling: Boys & Girls Varsity Conference Tournament vs. Arcadia, Black River Falls, G-E-T/Mel-Min, Viroqua & Westby Area High School @ Arcadia High School
- 5:45pm Basketball: Girls JV Game vs. Luther @ Luther High School
- 5:45pm Basketball: Boys C-Team Game vs. G-E-T @ West Salem Middle School
- 5:45pm Basketball: Boys JV Game vs. G-E-T @ West Salem High School
- 6:00pm Gymnastics: JV/Varsity Meet vs. G-E-T/Mel-Min/CFC & Westby-Viroqua @ G-E-T High School
- 7:00pm Basketball: Girls Varsity Game vs. Luther @ Luther High School

Calendar of events continues on next page...

School District of West Salem

7:00pm	Basketball: Boys Varsity Game vs. G-E-T @ West Salem High School		vs. Superior @ Panther Den Hockey Rink
7:00pm	Ice Hockey: Boys Varsity Game vs. De Forest @ West Salem Panther Den Arena	3:00pm	Ice Hockey: Boys Varsity Game vs. Menomonie @ West Salem Panther Den Arena
Saturday, February 7, 2026		Monday, February 9, 2026	
9:00am	Wrestling: Girls Varsity Invitational vs. Belmont, Blair-Taylor, Boscobel, Dodgeville, Lancaster, New Lisbon, North Crawford, Notre Dame Academy, Onalaska, Oregon, Prairie du Chien, Richland Center, River Valley, Royall, Viroqua & Westby Area High School @ Richland Center High School	4:30pm	Wrestling: Girls Varsity Invitational vs. Aquinas, Arcadia, Black River Falls, Blair-Taylor, Brookwood, G-E-T, Holmen, Lancaster, Logan, Onalaska, Prairie du Chien, River Falls, Sparta, Tomah, Viroqua & Westby Area High School @ Holmen High School
9:00am	Wrestling: Boys JV Invitational vs. Belmont, Boscobel, Dodgeville, Lancaster, North Crawford, Onalaska, Oregon, Richland Center, River Valley, Viroqua & Westby Area High School @ Richland Center High School	4:30pm	Wrestling: Boys JV Invitational vs. Aquinas, Arcadia, G-E-T, Holmen, Logan, Onalaska, Sparta, Tomah, Viroqua & Westby Area High School @ Holmen High School
11:00am	Ice Hockey: Girls JV Game vs. Superior @ Panther Den Hockey Rink		
1:00pm	Ice Hockey: Girls Varsity Game		
		Tuesday, February 10, 2026	
		5:00pm	Ice Hockey: Girls JV Game vs. Stevens Point Area Senior @ KB Willett Ice Arena
		5:45pm	Basketball: Girls JV Game vs. Arcadia @ Arcadia High School Wanek Center Arena

School District of West Salem

5:45pm	Basketball: Boys C-Team Game vs. Richland Center @ West Salem Middle School	River Falls Girls Hockey Co-op @ Panther Den Arena
Friday, February 13, 2026		
5:45pm	Basketball: Boys JV Game vs. Richland Center @ West Salem High School	5:00pm Wrestling: Girls Varsity Regional vs. Aquinas, Brookwood, Cashton, G-E-T, Holmen, Logan, Onalaska, Sparta & Tomah @ Holmen High School
7:00pm	Basketball: Girls Varsity Game vs. Arcadia @ Arcadia High School Wanek Center Arena	5:45pm Basketball: Girls JV Game vs. Viroqua @ Viroqua High School
7:00pm	Basketball: Boys Varsity Game vs. Richland Center @ West Salem High School	7:00pm Basketball: Girls Varsity Game vs. Viroqua @ Viroqua High School
Tuesday, February 17, 2026		
7:00pm	Ice Hockey: Girls Varsity Game vs. Stevens Point Area Senior @ KB Willett Ice Arena	5:45pm Basketball: Girls JV Game vs. New Richmond @ West Salem High School
7:00pm	Ice Hockey: Boys Varsity Game vs. Onalaska/Central/ Logan @ West Salem Panther Den Arena	5:45pm Basketball: Boys C-Team Game vs. Arcadia @ Arcadia High School
Thursday, February 12, 2026		
5:00pm	Ice Hockey: Girls JV Game vs. Black River Falls Girls Hockey Co-op @ Panther Den Arena	5:45pm Basketball: Boys JV Game vs. Arcadia @ Arcadia High School Wanek Center Arena
5:45pm	Basketball: Boys C-Team/JV Game vs. Westby Area High School @ Westby Area High School	7:00pm Basketball: Girls Varsity Game vs. New Richmond @ West Salem High School
7:00pm	Basketball: Boys Varsity Game vs. Westby Area High School @ Westby High School	7:00pm Basketball: Boys Varsity Game vs. Arcadia @ Arcadia High School Wanek Center Arena
Thursday, February 19, 2026		
7:00pm	Ice Hockey: Girls Varsity Game vs. Black	5:45pm Basketball: Girls JV Game vs. Onalaska @ Onalaska High School

School District of West Salem

- 5:45pm Basketball: Boys
C-Team Game vs.
Onalaska @ West
Salem Middle School
- 5:45pm Basketball: Boys JV
Game vs. Onalaska
@ West Salem High
School
- 7:00pm Basketball: Boys
Varsity Game vs.
Onalaska @
West Salem
High School
- 7:15pm Basketball: Girls
Varsity Game vs.
Onalaska @ Onalaska
High School
- Friday, February 20, 2026**
- 5:45pm Basketball: Boys
C-Team Game vs.
Viroqua @ West
Salem Middle School
- 5:45pm Basketball: Boys JV
Game vs. Viroqua
@ West Salem High
School
- 6:00pm Gymnastics: JV/
Varsity Conference
Tournament vs.
G-E-T/Mel-Min/CFC
& Westby-Viroqua
@ Westby High School
- 7:00pm Basketball: Boys
Varsity Game vs.
Viroqua @ West
Salem High School

Band Events

- Friday, February 6, 2026**
- 6:30pm Boys Basketball vs.
G-E-T

Elementary School Events

- Wednesday, February 4, 2026**
- 12:20pm Early Release
Students dismissed at
12:20pm
Buses depart at
12:30pm
- Tuesday, February 10, 2026**
- 8:45am Kindergarten to
Viterbo Play
- Friday, February 13, 2026**
- 8:45am Kindergarten to
Children's Museum
- Friday, February 20, 2026**
- All Day No School-Teacher
Inservice
- Monday, February 23, 2026**
- 8:30am Kindergarten to the
OEC
Grams & Passehl
- Tuesday, February 24, 2026**
- 8:30am Kindergarten to the
OEC
Wheeler &
Christianson
- Wednesday, February 25, 2026**
- 8:30am Kindergarten to the
OEC
Hickey & Wagner

School District of West Salem

Middle School Events

Wednesday, February 4, 2026

12:20pm Early Release
Students dismissed at
12:20pm
Buses depart at
12:30pm

Thursday, February 5, 2026

8:30am 5th Grade to the OEC
Kjos, Ringlien &
Schrader

Friday, February 6, 2026

8:30am 5th Grade to the OEC
Fantz, Fink & Folkers

Thursday, February 12, 2026

3:30- Parent-Teacher
7:00pm Conferences

Monday, February 16, 2026

3:30- Parent-Teacher
7:00pm Conferences

Friday, February 20, 2026

All Day No School-Teacher
Inservice

Friday, February 27, 2026

All Day Winter Wellness Field
Trips

High School Events

Wednesday, February 4, 2026

12:20pm Early Release
Students dismissed at
12:20pm
Buses depart at
12:30pm

Friday, February 20, 2026

All Day No School-Teacher
Inservice

2026-2027

OPEN ENROLLMENT

FEBRUARY 2-APRIL 30, 2026

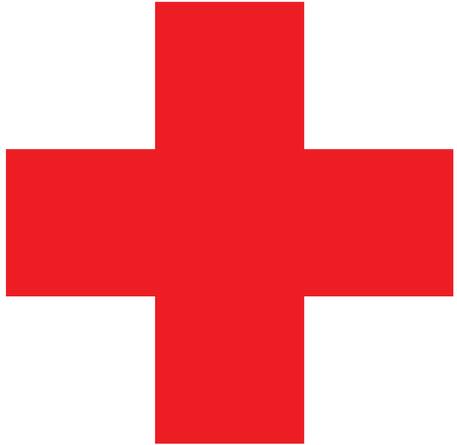
WS | SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WEST SALEM

ENROLL NOW www.bit.ly/WSopenroll

Give blood.

Every 2 seconds someone
in the U.S. needs blood.

American Red Cross



Blood Drive
West Salem High School

Library
490 N Mark St

Monday, March 2, 2026
8:00 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.

Please call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: pantherblood to schedule an appointment.



Scan to be directed to RapidPass®



Give in March for a \$15 Gift Card by email & successful donations get A1C testing! rcblood.org/March



Scan to schedule an appointment.

1-800-RED CROSS | 1-800-733-2767 | redcrossblood.org | Download the Blood Donor App

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Don & Cheryl Brenengen BGC Youth of the Year

Congratulations to WSHS Senior London VanderHorst, who was named the Boys and Girls Club of Greater La Crosse Don & Cheryl Brenengen Club Youth of the Year!

This fall, London will be pursuing a degree in elementary education, and we couldn't be more proud for her to be awarded the full-tuition Viterbo Pathway Scholarship. A huge thank you to Viterbo University for helping expand access to higher education for our local students!



District Announcements



Learning in a Winter Wonderland

Before the intense cold hit, twelve of our 7th grade students, along with Mr. Baker and Mrs. Olson, headed north to Eagle River for their annual Trees for Tomorrow trip. While they were there, they focused on learning all about winter ecology, measuring snow depth, learning about different species, and even getting a chance to feed some chickadees by hand. In addition to classroom learning, they also had a chance to enjoy the snow by cross country skiing and snowshoeing while learning about how all the parts of an ecosystem interact during the winter months in northern Wisconsin. This trip is always a highlight for our students and next, they will have the opportunity to teach their peers at our own school forest later this winter!



School Board Members

- Catherine Griffin, President ~~~~~(608) 769-1714
- Erik Peterson, Vice President ~~~~~ (608) 792-5370
- Trish Harman, Treasurer ~~~~~(608) 332-9222
- Caitlin Wilson, Clerk~~~~~ (608)780-3836
- Bob Minard, Director~~~~~(608)786-9998
- Ben Garbers, Director~~~~~(608) 498-9510
- Jennifer Hatz, Director~~~~~(608) 317-3115

Board meetings are held the second and fourth Monday of every month

District Announcements

Heider Center



Art Gallery

“Worlds Reimagined” -
Exquisite Drawings, Prints and
Handmade Books by Jessie
Solberg & Chase Gentry
Runs January 19-February 27

Box Office Hours
(608) 786-2550
Monday &
Thursday: 1:30 to
4:00 p.m.
www.heidercenter.org

Seraph Brass

Saturday, February 14, 2026
7:30 p.m.

Tickets: \$28/\$26/\$10

Founded by trumpet soloist Mary Elizabeth Bowden to showcase the excellence of women brass players and highlight musicians from marginalized groups, both in personnel and in programming. Winners of the American Prize in Chamber Music, Seraph Brass performs a diverse body of repertoire, ranging from original transcriptions to newly commissioned works and core classics.



Looking for Important Dates?

The district school year calendar, as well as individual building events and athletic events can all be found on our district website. Go to www.wsalem.k12.wi.us and navigate to the top right corner and click on the calendar icon. From here, you can view the school year calendar, Coulee Conference Athletic calendar, Mississippi Valley Athletic calendar, and individual building events.



Breakfast & Bowling

Our 4K friends recently warmed up on a chilly morning by sharing some breakfast and bowling together at Features! Families were able to enjoy a breakfast buffet and then students showed off their bowling skills with their friends! It was a great time for families to connect and have fun together in our community!





REFERENDUM PROJECT UPDATES

What is Happening with the Construction Projects?



Our referendum projects continue to take shape across the District. Our construction crews are making visible headway on both the elementary and high school projects. We are excited to continue to see progress being made on the spaces that will benefit our students, staff, and community for years to come.

Elementary School Work Completed

Our project site has been busy, and we're excited to share the progress our community's support is making possible. Recent work includes:

- » Building the CMU fire wall, an important step in creating a safe and secure learning space.
- » Setting new structural steel columns and beams that outline the future shape of the building.
- » Installing precast wall panels that bring the project's design to life.
- » Advancing site utility work to support everything the new spaces will need to function.



Elementary School Work Ongoing

Construction crews continue to make steady progress with steel joists and decking being installed to shape the building's future structure. Work is also underway on the biopond, an important feature that will help manage stormwater at and around the site. Each step of work brings us closer to the new gym addition at the elementary site.



Elementary School Work Upcoming

Upcoming construction efforts at the elementary school will focus on several key steps that continue shaping the building's exterior. Crews will be installing roof drains, beginning exterior framing and sheathing, adding exterior wood blocking, and starting roofing work. These activities mark an exciting phase as the project becomes more defined and the future learning spaces start to take form.

To stay up to date on the current project site, the District and KA have set up a time-lapse camera to catch all day-to-day updates on site. This is located on the District webpage which can be found at bit.ly/WSconstruction. Check it out!



School District of West Salem

School District of West Salem Regular Board Meeting Minutes

November 24, 2025

Marie Heider Meeting Room

7:00 p.m

Convene

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by presiding officer, Caitlin Wilson. The meeting was noticed to the Coulee Courier, La Crosse Tribune, WLSU Radio 89 FM, WXOW TV-19, WKBT-TV, WKTY, Union State Bank, First Community Credit Union, Village of West Salem, posted at each school, district website, and district office on November 20, 2025.

Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag
Heidi Horton led everyone in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and Ben Wopat recited the District Mission Statement.

Roll Call

Present: Jennifer Hatz, Trish Harman, Caitlin Wilson, and Ben Garber. Also in attendance – Administration: Ryan Rieber, Alex Hubing, Alyssa Harlan, Heidi Horton, Ben Wopat and Shawn Handland; Recording secretary: Jennifer Larson.
Excused: Catherin Griffin, Erik Peterson, Bob Minard, Justin Jehn, Lydia Jothan, and Zeke Hyer.

Approval of Agenda

B. Garbers moved, T. Harman seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Written and Oral Reports

District Strategic Initiative updates from the Superintendent's Management Team and the Superintendent were reviewed.

Board Grant Review Committee – C. Wilson reported on the agenda items.

Director of Instruction Alyssa Harlan presented the school report cards for 2024-2025.

Connection with the Community

Board reports by high school student representatives – None.

Correspondence – None.

Public Comments – None.

Consent Agenda

J. Hatz moved, B. Garbers seconded to approve the

following Consent Agenda items:

- a. the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of November 10, 2025;
- b. the invoices to be paid;
- c. to accept the administration's co-curricular recommendations for head 8th grade girls' basketball-Whitney Folkers, head 7th grade girls' basketball-Lauren Lovely and assistant 7th grade girls' basketball-Heidi Propson;
- d. to hire: Justin Parr as the 1.0 FTE Director of Technology
- e. to accept the donations from Amanda Bahl donated cleats to the district for a child in need; Knights of Columbus donated towards children in need of winter gear; Knights of Columbus donated towards West Salem special education; Ashley for the Arts donated to the Cross Country Team and Dance team; Cynthia and William Innes donated to the Random Acts of Kindness Fund.
Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action Items:

T. Harman moved, B. Garbers seconded to approve the second reading of Po 6236 Community Services Fund (Fund 80). Motion carried unanimously.

J. Hatz moved, B. Garbers seconded to accept the Board Grant Review Committee's recommendation and approve the following Board Grants:
Kimberly Volden-Building a Final Project - \$1,200
Quenten Brown-Cameras for Kids - \$2,300
Angie Hemker and Tyler Shrake-Xtool for Crossing the Curriculum - \$6,500
Motion carried unanimously.

The list of to do items / information requests was reviewed. No action was taken.

Adjournment

B. Garbers moved, T. Harman seconded to adjourn at 8:04 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Trish Harman, Acting Clerk

School District of West Salem

School District of West Salem Regular Board Meeting Minutes December 8, 2025

Marie Heider Meeting Room

7:00 p.m.

Convene

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by President Catherine Griffin. The meeting was noticed to the Coulee Courier, La Crosse Tribune, WLSU Radio 89 FM, WXOW TV-19, WKBT-TV, WKTY, Union State Bank, First Community Credit Union, Village of West Salem, posted at each school, district website, and district office on December 4, 2025.

Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag

Bob Minard led everyone in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and Zeke Hyer recited the District Mission Statement.

Roll Call

Present: Bob Minard, Trish Harman, Catherine Griffin, Caitlin Wilson, Ben Garbers and Jennifer Hatz. Also in attendance – Administration: Ryan Rieber, Justin Jehn, Alex Hubing, Ben Wopat, Alyssa Harlan, Heidi Horton, and Shawn Handland; Student representative: Lydia Jochen and Zeke Hyer. Recording secretary: Jennifer Larson. Excused: Erik Peterson.

Approval of Agenda

C. Wilson moved, B. Garbers seconded to approve the agenda as presented.
Motion carried unanimously.

Written and Oral Reports

District Strategic Initiative updates from the Superintendent's Collaborative and Management Team and the Superintendent were reviewed.

Connection with the Community

Lydia Jochen, Student Representative, reported on: Last week, the band and choir students, along with some community members, headed down to Florida to spend the week at Disney and Universal. The band performed in Magic Kingdom, making that the seniors' last parade. The choir performed several Christmas songs in Disney Springs where senior Breanna Smith killed some amazing solos. Overall, students said they had tons of fun and especially liked that this trip allows freedom of choice. Each day there were suggested places to go but students had the option to go, eat, or explore anywhere as long as they stayed on Disney property. The bus rides were long, but students stayed busy and enjoyed that we stopped in Tennessee instead

of driving straight through. And other than one stop for a popped tire, and some traffic, the drive went well. Everyone that I've talked to had a blast and had tons of stories to share!

This past weekend, the gymnastics team had its first meet in Mankato. There, Olivia Maki set the school record on vault with a 9.5 and placed 3rd in vault. Overall, the gymnastics team took 3rd of 8 teams.

The choir concert was this weekend where they performed their Christmas songs. Right after the show choir had its first performance. Singstations, the coed show choir performed their show Storm, and Vivace, the girls show choir performed their show Coffee shop. Overall, both performances went very well.

The dance team had their Winter showcase and said it went really well. The event gave all the dancers an opportunity to perform the routines they've been working so hard on over the past few months. The team performed their Pom routine, small-group jazz routine, Senior Ella Owen's solo, and Junior Cailyn Skrede's solo. They also had elementary and middle school dancers take the floor between their performances, to showcase what they have been working on the past week! Overall, it was an amazing way for all of them to celebrate what they've accomplished so far in the season. They will be performing again this Saturday in Little Chute!

The NHS Giving Tree is running right now. There are tags with 25 and 50-dollar gift cards waiting to be filled. There are still 100 tags left, and looking for anyone to grab them!

Zeke Hyer, Student Representative, reported on: Wrestling has had a great start to their season with dual wins over Tomah and La Crosse with the girls' team having exhibition matches with a 11-1 record. The team also had a team win in a tournament in Royall over the weekend with notable first place finishes from Teghan Moore, Lucas Fry, Justice Elam, and Cayden Anderson. The girls team also won the tournament with Sophia Anderson taking first place in her bracket.

The boys' basketball team started their season with a win against Tomah, where Senior Will Schmidt tied the school record for assists in a game with 12. The boys play tomorrow at Luther along with the girls for a doubleheader.

The girls have also started their season with two close losses. They play Luther tomorrow at 5:45

School District of West Salem

School District of West Salem Regular Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2025

Marie Heider Meeting Room

7:00 p.m

with hopes of getting in the win column.

The hockey team started their season as well. They play tomorrow against Viroqua at home.

The seniors have recently completed their research papers and submitted them. These 6-8 pagepapers have been in the process of being made since the start of the school year. I believe I can speak on behalf of the senior student body that everyone is glad this portion of the Panther Portfolio is done with.

Correspondence

A Department of Public Instruction Proclamation declaring Computer Science Education Week, December 8-14, 2025, was read.

A letter from Our Savior's Lutheran Church regarding a donation to Random Acts of Kindness Fund was read.

Public Comments – None.

Consent Agenda

J. Hatz moved, C. Wilson seconded to approve the following Consent Agenda items:

- a. the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of November 24, 2025;
 - b. the invoices to be paid;
 - c. to accept the donations from Culvers of Onalaska to FFA; Brian and Carrie Elsen to Unsung Hero Scholarship; the La Crosse County Community Contribution Committee to the Random Acts of Kindness Fund; Ho-Chunk Nation School-Community Relations Division PreK-12 Grant program to Out of State/Overnight Student travel program; The Community Assistance Fund to the Random Acts of Kindness Fund and The Liuna: Local 140 to the Jane Doe Fund.
- Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action Items:

T. Harman moved, B. Minard seconded to approve the new high school course offerings. Motion carried unanimously.

The list of to do items / information requests was reviewed. One item will be added: To look at the correlation of students who attend summer school and the relation to their success in future

years in school.

Live Streaming of the Board Meeting ended, as noted on the Public Meeting Notice. Live Stream Ends at 7:38 p.m.

Closed Session

C. Griffin welcomed the motion for closed session: The Board will discuss, consider and, if appropriate, take action pursuant to Wis. Stats §19.85(1) (c) "Considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility" regarding the mid-year evaluation of the superintendent.

C. Wilson moved, J. Hatz seconded that the board convene in closed session at 7:39 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Closed Session

Adjournment

B. Garbers moved, B. Minard seconded to adjourn at 8:51 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Caitlin Wilson, Clerk

School District of West Salem

School District of West Salem Regular Board Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2026

Marie Heider Meeting Room

7:00 p.m

Convene

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by President Catherine Griffin. The meeting was noticed to the Coulee Courier, La Crosse Tribune, WLSU Radio 89 FM, WXOW TV-19, WKBT-TV, WKTY, Union State Bank, First Community Credit Union, Village of West Salem, posted at each school, district website, and district office on January 8, 2026.

Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag
Erik Peterson led everyone in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and Caitlin Wilson recited the District Mission Statement.

Roll Call

Present: Bob Minard, Trish Harman, Catherine Griffin, Erik Peterson, Caitlin Wilson, Ben Garbers and Jennifer Hatz. Also in attendance – Administration: Ryan Rieber, Justin Jehn, Alex Hubing, Ben Wopat, Alyssa Harlan, Heidi Horton, and Shawn Handland; Student representatives: Lydia Jothan and Zeke Hyer. Recording secretary: Jennifer Larson.

Approval of Agenda

J. Hatz moved, T. Harman seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Written and Oral Reports

District Strategic Initiative updates from the Superintendent's Collaborative and the Superintendent were reviewed.

Connection with the Community

Lydia Jothan, Student Representative, reported on: After the winter break, classes were right back in action, finishing everything up before the semester ended. One cool class our school offers is the Outdoor Ed class, and I was thrilled to be a part of it this semester. After a few weather cancellations, we finally we just fished our last 2 field trips! For the caving trip, we headed to Eagle Cave in Blue River where we got to explore a cave with no tour guide. We got into some tight areas, having to army crawl through water, and people's true fears came out. Overall, though, everyone had a ton of fun as it was such a unique experience! Today we went on our ice fishing trip on lake Onalaska. A few fish were caught, all were pretty small, but the group had tons of fun grilling out and chatting with classmates.

The clubs at West Salem have also been busy like the HS Robotics team who kicked off their season this last weekend and finalized a design for their robot today. Tomorrow, they plan to begin building it.

This past weekend, the show choir had a competition, where both the all-girls group Vivace and the mixed group Singasations performed. Vivace placed 2nd in their division, and Singasations placed 6th overall. Additionally, there were four showstopper awards given to West Salem students, including Senior Addie Jehn, Senior Breanna Smith, Junior Mya Peterson, and Junior Kahlan Davidson.

As for drama, the roles for the upcoming play Too Many Detectives at the Murder Mansion have been cast. There are many leads with several people cast who are not in the choir, and many act as famous characters, such as Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery Gang. Everyone is preparing their roles, and they practice 2-3 days a week for their show in February.

Additionally, many clubs have been giving back to the community like NHS who wrapped up the giving tree donating 192 gift cards for a total of \$7200 for families in need within our community. Additionally, the band spread holiday cheer at the Rotary Lights, and many members also assisted in the Rotary Lights tear down. Senior Jaimyn Groth was even interviewed by News 8 during the cleanup. Joining in, interact hosted food drives at Hansen's and rang bells to raise money for the Salvation Army.

As for our winter sports teams, our ski and snowboard team kicked off the season strong. Even though we are a co-op with Aquinas and Onalaska, two West Salem students led both the boys and girls' teams to a first-place finish. In the meet at Mt. La Crosse, junior John Gerke led the boys, finishing first in all three races, and senior London VanderHorst also took first in all three races. Their next meeting is this Wednesday.

Gymnastics is also continuing their season strong with a JV and Varsity first place finish at the Wisconsin Rapids invites. Additionally, Senior Olivia Maki was nominated and won the News 8 Play of the Week for her amazing performance and her recent school record on vault.

Zeke Hyer, Student Representative, reported on: The wrestling team is having a great season, having yet to lose a dual. Wrestlers are also having a

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Marie Heider Meeting Room

7:00 p.m

great season for individuals, with Mason Chambers getting 3rd at Bi-State, along with Kaiden Stello placing 8th, Caden Anderson placing 9th, Teghan Moore placing 10th, and then Justice Elam placing 11th. For the girls, Sophia Anderson placed 3rd with Ihlee Schniepp Duffy placing 12th. For those who do not know, Bi-State is all the top teams in Minnesota and Wisconsin across all divisions. So our Panthers did exceptionally well.

Girls' basketball is having a solid season with a 5-4 record, with their next game being tomorrow at home against Arcadia, who is also undefeated within the conference.

The boys' basketball is having a great season with a 7-1 record, with their only loss coming from DC Everest, a D1 team.

Boys' Hockey is having a slow start to the season with the team having yet to score in the win column, but the team did have a unique opportunity over the weekend that the team will remember as a highlight of their season. This past Friday, the boys played Amery at an outdoor hockey rink in St. Croix for the first-ever Wisconsin Hockey Day. Senior team captain Terryn Boland said, "It was a really cool experience, and it was awesome to be able to be a part of something like that. I think overall the whole team enjoyed it and would love to do it again."

The girls' hockey team is doing slightly better than the boys, with a 2-9-1 record, with their next game being on Friday.

Over this past Weekend Mr. Holter and DECA competed at the 54th annual DECA districts at UW-Stout. Multiple students did exceptionally well in their select competitions. Notable performances came from Junior AJ Holter, placing 3rd in Accounting Applications, and Senior Nadya Sandvick, placing 2nd in Business Services, and lastly, Kynzley Holicky took 1st in Principles of Hospitality and Tourism! These 3 competitors, along with 12 others, will advance to state in February with hopes of then advancing to internationals in Atlanta, Georgia!

Lastly, the Senior class has recently voted on multiple

decisions for graduation. The class speaker is Social Studies teacher Britney Jones, the class song is "Good Riddance" by Green Day, and the class motto is "Sometimes you will never know the true value of a moment until it becomes a memory." - Dr. Seuss

Correspondence - None.

Public Comments – None.

Consent Agenda

B. Minard moved, B. Garbers seconded to approve the following Consent Agenda items:

- the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of December 8, 2025 and the Closed session meeting minutes of December 8, 2025;
 - the invoices to be paid;
 - to accept the administration's co-curricular recommendations for assistant girls wrestling coaches-Reid Rasmussen and Ian McBride, volunteer wrestling coaches-Tyler Shrake and Cody Peterson, volunteer ASL coach-Jack Reader, head baseball coach-Jamie Olson, head softball coach-Brian Babiash, head girls track coach-Stacy Mitchell, head boys track coach-Justin Stakston, head boys tennis coach-Julie Kamla and head boys golf coach-Tyler Shrake;
 - to approve WIAA co-op agreements for boys' hockey, gymnastics and la crosse;
 - to accept the donations from Julie Kamla to the Jane Doe Fund, Union State Bank to Jane Doe Fund, Whitney Westbrook to two separate elementary families, Ana & Duane Schaper to the Angela Labus Memorial Scholarship, Kelli, Kerri, Patrick & Michael Moran to the Horace and Gladys Moran Memorial Scholarship Fund, Stephen & Deborah Kraus to the Horace Moran Memorial Fund, Cynthia & William Innes to the Random Acts of Kindness Fund, James Michelson to Scholarship funds, Kish & Sons Electric to the Unsung Hero Scholarship, Kwik Trip to West Salem/Bangor Wrestling, GoMacro, Viola, WI to West Salem/Bangor Wrestling and Shane Glynn to West Salem/Bangor Wrestling.
- Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action Items:

Administrator Heidi Horton presented information on the Open Enrollment limits for the 2026-2027 school year for special education.

E. Peterson moved. C. Griffin seconded to approve 13 Open Enrollment seats in special education for the 2026-2027 school year based on the criteria outlined in the Board's Open Enrollment Policy #5113 Open Enrollment Program (Inter-District).

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Open Enrollment Spaces

Early Childhood Program: 0

Cross Categorical Program

K-1: 0

2:1

3:0

4:2

5:0

6:2

7:0

8:0

Emotional Behavioral Disability Program

Elementary School: 0

Middle School: N/A

High School: N/A

Intellectual Disability Program

Elementary School: 2

Middle School: 2

High School: 0

Speech and Language Program

3 year old - Grade 1: 0

Speech and Language Program

Grades 2 - 5: 2

Speech and Language Program

Grades 6 - 12: 0

Occupational Therapy: 0

Motion carried unanimously.

Administrators Ryan Rieber, Alex Hubing and Ben Wopat presented information on the Open Enrollment limits for the 2026-2027 school year for regular education. No action was taken.

C. Wilson moved. B. Minard seconded to allow Ben Garbers to make recommendations and vote as he sees fit at the Delegate Assembly for the 2026 proposals. Motion carried unanimously.

The list of to do items / information requests was reviewed. No action was taken.

Live Streaming of the Board Meeting ended, as noted on the Public Meeting Notice.

Live Stream Ends at 8:15 p.m.

Closed Session

C. Griffin welcomed the motion for closed session: The Board will discuss, consider and, if appropriate, take action pursuant to Wis. Stats §19.85(1) (c)

Considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility regarding nonrenewal/renewal, nonextension/extension, and employment of administrators. The discussion will focus on administrator contract nonextension or extension decisions and related employment terms.

C. Griffin moved, B. Garbers seconded that the board convene in closed session at 8:23 p.m. A roll call vote was taken: B. Minard, Aye; T. Harman, Aye; C. Griffin, Aye; E. Peterson, Aye; C. Wilson, Aye; B. Garbers, Aye; and J. Hatz, Aye. Motion carried unanimously.

Closed Session

Adjournment

C. Griffin moved, B. Garbers seconded to adjourn at 10:00 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Caitlin Wilson, Clerk

School District of West Salem

A Christmas Feast

Before the break, our elementary school students were treated to a Christmas feast for lunch, complete with freshly carved ham, cheesy potatoes, sautéed green beans, dinner rolls, a festive salad bar complete with red and green fruits and veggies, and either Jello or a frosted cookie to complete

the meal! As you can see, our students loved it! Thank you to our wonderful School Nutrition team for providing delicious, and nutritious options for our students and staff as well as our representative from Performance Foods, Don Aspeter who generously carved our ham for us!



COULEE REGION
FARM to SCHOOL
LOCAL FOODS, HEALTHY KIDS

Did You Know?

Cooking with herbs can be a quick way to add interesting flavors to foods without adding salt, sugar, and fat!



Check out videos and photos of the innovative things happening in your student's classroom at our district Facebook page and Instagram page. Our social media features videos of student activities, teacher features, classroom selfie photos, etc...

Check out our Facebook page
[@SchoolDistrictofWestSalem](#)
and
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[@WestSalemSD](#)
and Instagram
[@schooldistrictofwestsalem](#)



For WSHS athletic events, visit our website:

- *click the calendar icon and then
- *click Coulee Conference/
Mississippi Valley Conference
- For WSMS athletic events,
- *click the calendar icon and then
- *Three Rivers Conference

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