

June 2026

WS Newsletter

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Letter from Superintendent Ryan

Celebrating the Journey, Embracing the Future

As the doors close on another academic year, our hearts are full. It is a time of transition, reflection, and immense pride. We look back at where we started and where we stand today, and the progress is nothing short of inspiring.

"It's easy to focus on what's missing, what hasn't gone our way, or what we wish we had. Yet true contentment begins when we pause and recognize the blessings already

present in our lives, big and small, seen and unseen. Gratitude shifts our perspective from scarcity to abundance, from frustration to appreciation. When we embrace gratitude, we find joy in the ordinary... Gratitude is more than a feeling, it's a practice."

To our graduating seniors:

You have reached the finish line of a defining chapter. Today, we don't just celebrate the end of a schedule; we celebrate your resilience and your growth. As you prepare to exit our halls, we do so with the

Letter continues on next page...

School District of West Salem

absolute confidence that you are leaving us college, career, and life ready. High school graduation is often called a "commencement," a beginning, but it is also a powerful culmination. Every step you took across that stage was a step taken on behalf of every teacher, mentor, and staff member who has walked beside you since 4K. From the first alphabet letters learned in our early childhood classrooms to the complex theories mastered in high school labs, your success is the shared harvest of our entire district's labor and love.

"Graduation is the moment where potential meets opportunity. It is the visible evidence of years of persistence, the 'heartbeat' of our community personified."

This milestone matters because it represents the first time you truly hold the compass of your own life. You are the heartbeat of this community, and the pulse of our future. We are eager to see and hear how you will apply the lessons learned here to change the world in ways only you can. As you venture out, carry this truth with you: your worth is not just in what you do, but in who you have become. Though your daily path may lead you away from these buildings, you

will always have a home here. Go forth with courage, Class of 2026. We are so proud of you.

This year has been defined by the idea of "better every day." Across every corner of our district, we have witnessed remarkable growth, achievement, and momentum that reflect the hard work, dedication, and pride of our students, staff, families, and community.

In our classrooms, students continue to raise the bar and demonstrate what is possible when high expectations are matched with strong support. This spring, our high school students earned exceptional ACT results that distinguish them on a national level, while our school report cards showed impressive growth and a continued commitment to academic rigor and excellence at both the elementary and middle school, each receiving a five star rating "Significantly Exceeding Expectations". These accomplishments are a reflection of a culture that believes every student can grow, improve, and succeed.

Beyond academics, our student-athletes reached new heights this year. Their success has not only been measured by wins

and achievements, but also by the character, determination, teamwork, and sportsmanship they display every day. They represent our district with pride and continue to show what it means to compete with integrity and purpose.

At the same time, we have remained focused on building a strong foundation for the future. Our newly revamped 4K program took steps forward going into the 2026-27 school year by offering a full-day program for youngest learners. We are proud of our 4K team for their continued focus on sustaining and promoting their play-based structure, knowing the developmental appropriateness of working with these young learners. We know that investing early creates lasting impact, and we are proud of the momentum we are building for future generations.

Our district also continues to grow in ways that extend far beyond the classroom. From our evolving construction projects in our elementary and high school, we are intentionally creating environments where students can explore their passions, discover their strengths, and become the best version of

themselves. These spaces reflect our communities commitment to preparing students not only for success in school, but for success in life.

As we look ahead, we remain hungry for the future. This year, we took intentional steps to strengthen cohesion across our schools and build better systems that support students, staff, and families. While we celebrate the many accomplishments of this year, we also recognize there is still important work ahead. Our mission remains both simple and profound: to be better this year than we were last year.

None of this progress would be possible without the extraordinary people who make up our district. We believe we have the best staff, and their passion, care, and tireless efforts are the driving force behind our success. Together, we will continue moving forward, growing stronger, aiming higher, and living out the belief that every day is another opportunity to get better.

School District of West Salem

Before we dive into the 2026-27 school year, we hope you take the time to rest and enjoy the season. Summer is fun, time in the sun, friends, extended days, and memories to be made. If you need help with making memories, we look forward to seeing many of you at the pool and at our highly anticipated summer musical, Grease! It promises to be a spectacular showcase of our students' talent.

Thank you for your partnership, your trust, your support and your dedication to our students this past school year! Your help and assistance does not go unnoticed!

Have a safe, joyful, and happy summer!

Ryan Rieber
Superintendent

Class of 2026 Presents Panther Portfolios

At the beginning of May, the Class of 2026 presented their Panther Portfolios, the culmination of months, and for some, even a year or more's worth of hard work.

The Panther Portfolio is an experience unique to West Salem and it consists of multiple parts designed to prepare students to be College, Career, and Life Ready once they graduate. These include a project, speech, and research paper, as well as specific elements they complete throughout the school year like preparing a resume and applying for a job, taking a personal finance course, completing community service hours or obtaining a professional certification.

On Presentation Day, everything comes together and they get a chance to show off their hard work as they present their

speeches to a panel of judges about the project they chose, as well as a research paper on a topic of their choice. From organizing sports camps and events to making items to donate to charity or learning a new skill, it's truly amazing to see what our students can accomplish and the difference they can make in their community.

None of this could happen without our incredible staff members including Mr. Ryan Nelson, our Panther Portfolio Coordinator, Mrs. Kim Volden, ELA Teacher and Mr. Justin Jehn, our High School Principal as well as every high school staff member that has supported our students throughout this process. We also have to thank our community members who graciously volunteered their time to judge presentations. Thanks to everyone's hard work, it was a very successful day!



Wisconsin School Nutrition Association Employee of the Year

Congratulations to Patti Sauter, school nutrition team member at West Salem Elementary School for being named the Wisconsin School Nutrition Association (SNA) Employee of the Year!

Patti was nominated by Kitchen Manager Michelle Evenson for her outstanding service, patience, care, and knowledge of job expectations. She also brings creative ideas to the program, including a breakfast cart display and offering hot chocolate at breakfast to enhance the children's experience. She is known as a role model for fellow colleagues and students alike because of her kindness, willingness to help and commitment to her work. Thank you for serving with passion, Patti!



District Announcements



Learning Where Their Food Comes From

West Salem High School FFA students recently held their annual "Food for America" event where they educate 4th grade students about the origins of their food. Students rotated through several educational stations, including visiting Creamery Creek Farm, and various stations at the La Crosse County Fairgrounds to learn about crops, machinery, and agriculture. They also had the opportunity to interact

with animals such as goats, sheep, pigs, chickens, horses, beef and dairy cattle, and bunnies! It was a great day of hands-on learning for all! Lunch was a delicious meal made up of local ingredients including hamburgers from Brock's Butcher Block,



cheese from Westby Creamery, buns from Linda's Bakery, apple slices from Richland Farms, grilled potatoes from Sno Pac Foods, string cheese from Organic Valley, cheese curds from Old Country Cheese, milk from Prairie Farms, and custard from Culver's! Thank you to our generous donors including Organic Valley, Westby Creamery, Culver's in Onalaska, Old Country Cheese, Erickson Farms and S&S Acres!

School Board Members

Catherine Griffin, President ~~~~~(608) 769-1714
Caitlin Wilson, Vice President ~~~~~ (608)780-3836
Trish Harman, Treasurer ~~~~~(608) 332-9222
Jennifer Hatz, Clerk~~~~~ (608) 317-3115
Bob Minard, Director~~~~~(608)786-9998
Ben Garbers, Director~~~~~(608) 498-9510
Nick Walters, Director~~~~~ (608) 769-0278

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

District Announcements

Heider Center



Heider Center Mainstage

2026-2027 Season Tickets

Season tickets for the new 2026-2027 Heider Center Mainstage Season will go on sale Thursday, May 28th at 1:30 pm. through June 29th

Individual show tickets will go on sale to the general public on Thursday, August 13th at 1:30 pm

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

Taking the Next Step

Five of our seniors participating in our Youth Apprenticeship program with various local employers recently "signed" with them to continue their training and employment after graduation. The Youth Apprenticeship is a great opportunity for students to get work experience while they are in school and we are so grateful to our local employers that are willing to work with our students and offer them these opportunities! Congratulations to the following students!

- Ethan Hegge - Bernie Buchner, Inc.
- Spencer Kammel - Laborers Local 140 Union
- Dawson Staff - Coleman Custom Homes
- Dominic Wachter - 383 Iron Workers Union
- Cooper Yahnke - DuraTech



Transcript Information

Are you transferring to a different college or do you need a copy of your high school transcript?

WSHS graduates that need a transcript can request one online, or print out an official transcript request form by going to the Student Services page on the district website at www.wsalem.k12.wi.us. Navigate by going to 'Schools' > "High School" > "Students" > "Student Services" > "Transcripts."

If you have questions, please call the High School Student Services Office at (608) 786-1220.

Enrollment for 2026-2027

Are you new to the district and looking to enroll your students for the 2026-2027 school year?

All enrollment information can be found by going to our website at www.wsalem.k12.wi.us and clicking on "Enrollment" at the top of the page. Here you can learn more about our district and print off the required enrollment forms. Once completed, you can bring them to the District Office to complete registration. If you have any questions, please call (608)-786-0700.

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.





REFERENDUM PROJECT UPDATES

What is Happening with the Construction Projects?



The countdown to the end of school is on! Be on the lookout throughout the summer for continued updates at both the Elementary and High School. We are excited to continue to see these projects come to life for our students, staff, and community!

Elementary School

Construction is approximately 52% complete. Completed work at the Elementary school includes installation of the CMU partition wall, caulking of precast wall panels, progress on the mezzanine stairs, and overhead MEP rough-ins in the gym area. Interior remodel of the locker room and PT/OT demolition activities were also completed.

High School

Construction is approximately 29% complete. Completed work at the High School site includes installation of structural steel columns, beams, joists, and deck in Area H (fitness addition); pad footings, piers, and backfill in Area I (CTE addition); and roof drains and piping in Area H. The chiller installation was completed, along with demolition of the wrestling and football pads storage areas. Additional completed work included the wrestling CMU wall and infill, as well as underground plumbing for the football pads storage area.

Work Upcoming

Ongoing work at the Elementary School includes painting precast walls, exposed ceilings, and ductwork; installation of interior metal stud framing; underground plumbing for the interior remodel; installation of interior remodel windows; and continued work on the bio pond.

Ongoing work at the High School includes construction of the Area H/I CMU partition wall and Area H concrete slab. Additional activities include Area H MEP (mechanical, electrical, plumbing) overhead rough-ins and interior wall framing; Area I exterior framing, sheathing, and blocking; roof drains and piping in Area I; underground plumbing rough-ins in Area I. Additionally, wall framing, MEP rough-ins, and drywall installation in the football pads storage area.

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!



Elementary School



Elementary School



High School



High School

School District of West Salem

School District of West Salem Regular Board Meeting Minutes

April 27, 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 April 23, 2026.

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

Roll Call

Present: Catherine Griffin, Caitlin Wilson, Trish Harman, Ben Garbers, Jennifer Hatz, Bob Minard and Nick Walters. Also in attendance – Administration: Ryan Rieber, Justin Jehn, Alex Hubing, Heidi Horton, Ben Wopat, Shawn Handland, and Alyssa Harlan; Student representatives: Tula Mitchell and Graham Sjoquist. Recording secretary: Jennifer Larson.

Approval of Agenda

J. Hatz moved, B. Minard seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Reorganization of the 2026-2027 School Board Election of 2026-2027 School Board Officers

B. Garbers moved to nominate Catherine Griffin for the office of President. B. Minard moved, J. Hatz seconded to close the nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Catherine Griffin as the President of the West Salem School Board. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Griffin moved to nominate Caitlin Wilson for the office of Vice President. B. Minard moved, N. Walters seconded to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Caitlin Wilson as the Vice President of the West Salem School Board. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Griffin moved to nominate Jennifer Hatz for the office of Clerk. B. Garbers moved, B. Minard seconded to close the nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Jennifer Hatz as the Clerk of the West

Salem School Board. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Garbers moved to nominate Trish Harman for the office of Treasurer. B. Garbers moved, N. Walters seconded to close the nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Trish Harman as the Treasurer of the West Salem School Board. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Minard moved, B. Garbers seconded a resolution to authorize the Board officers to borrow money for the 2025-2026 and the 2026-2027 school years per Wisconsin state Statutes 67.12(3). Motion carried unanimously.

T. Harman moved, C. Griffin seconded to select the Union State Bank of West Salem as the bank depository. Motion carried unanimously.

J. Hatz moved, B. Garbers seconded to authorize the use of facsimile and digitized signatures. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Wilson moved, N. Walters seconded to authorize the Board officers to invest surplus funds. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Minard moved, N. Walters seconded to continue with the current schedule, selecting the second and fourth Monday of each month for Regular School Board meetings, with a start time of 7:00 p.m.

B. Minard moved, N. Walters seconded to amend the motion to set only one meeting for December 14, 2026, and May 10, 2027. Amendment carried unanimously.

The motion, as amended, is to continue with the current schedule, selecting the second and fourth Monday of each month for Regular School Board meetings at 7:00 p.m., with the exception of one meeting on December 14, 2026, and May 10, 2027. Motion carried unanimously.

T. Harman moved, B. Garbers seconded to appoint Jennifer Larson as the Deputy Clerk and Shawn Handland as the Deputy Treasurer. Motion carried unanimously.

Board members should provide their input to the Board President regarding committee assignments by May 4, 2026.

J. Hatz moved, N. Walters seconded to select Catherine Griffin as the CESA #4 Representative.

School District of West Salem

School District of West Salem Regular Board Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2026 continued...

Marie Heider Meeting Room

7:00 p.m

Motion carried unanimously.

Written and Oral Reports

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

Connection with the Community

Graham Sjoquist, Student Representative, reported on:

- Senior presentations

- o This week, Seniors are finishing up their Panther Portfolio presentations to their classes, and all they have left to do is their final presentations, which will be judged on May 6th.

- Prom

- o Prom is in the near future on Saturday, May 2nd! The junior class has put together a prom committee, and they have been helping set up prom since November. The junior class has also voted for prom court recently, and the members have been announced.

- Boys' tennis

- o Boys' tennis is off to a strong start, even with all the weather causing cancellations and practices inside. They started off their season with a scrimmage against Tomah and have since had five matches, including a Quad at home.

- Golf

- o After a couple of weather cancellations, the golf team is starting off well with their last team win in Arcadia. They had their last varsity meet on Saturday in Sparta and performed well for the small school field.

- Baseball

- o The baseball team has started its season off on a good note with a 3-3 record in its conference and a 3-4 record overall. They have had 7 games and have their eighth season game tonight against Viroqua.

Tula Mitchell, Student Representative, reported on:

- Track

- o The Girls and Boys Track and Field team has had an excellent start to the season. They have had four indoor meets and six outdoor meets since the start of the season, with the latest being the Knights of Columbus meet on Saturday at UW-L. Also, last Tuesday at Logan, the girls 4x200 meter relay set a new school record!

- DECA

- o Four members of the DECA team headed to Internationals in Atlanta, Georgia last Friday. They will be competing from Saturday to Tuesday and will be back in West Salem this Wednesday.

- NHS

- o At the end of last week, the National Honor Society announced who the new members will be for the 2026-2027 year. NHS also announced their new officers for the upcoming year, as well as Induction for the new members and officers will be this Sunday at 6pm.

- Girls Soccer

- o The girls' soccer team is off to a strong start to their season. They have played 6 games so far this season with a record of 3-3. They have another full slate of games this week as well.

- Scholarship

- o This past week, the WIAA announced its Scholar Athlete Award recipients for all the divisions. Our own Josie Brudos earned this award for Division 2. This is an honor as only four girls per division earn this award!

Correspondence

A thank-you card from Lydia Jothen was read.

Public Comments

None.

Consent Agenda

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

- a. the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of April 13, 2026;

- b. the invoices to be paid;

- c. Co-Curricular Recommendations: high school head football coach – Justin Jehn;

- d. to hire Makayla Nortman as a 1.0 FTE high school Math Teacher; Matthew Duster as a 1.0 FTE middle school Special Ed Teacher;

- e. the resignation of Faith Moser-high school Psychologist;

- f. to accept the donations from Janet Fritsch donated \$775.00 to middle school Odyssey of the Minds, Arndt, Buswell, & Thorn S.C. donated \$300.00 to middle school Odyssey of the Minds, La Crosse PR, INC donated \$560.00 to elementary school Odyssey of the Minds, Brittney Hodgson and Kyle Jones donated \$1000.00 to DECA Scholarship, the American Red Cross donated \$1100.00 to Scholarship funds, Cynthia and William Innes donated \$20.00 to the Random Acts of Kindness Fund

Motion carried unanimously.

School District of West Salem

School District of West Salem Regular Board Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2026

Marie Heider Meeting Room

7:00 p.m

Discussion/Action Items:

C. Wilson moved, B. Minard seconded to approve the teacher and school psychologist contracts for the 26-27 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

J. Hatz moved, N. Walters seconded to approve the contracts for vehicle drivers for the 26- 27 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Garbers moved, C. Wilson seconded to approve a county letter of support for school funding and a resolution in support of including voucher payments on property tax bills. 6-Aye, 1-Nay (Minard). Motion carried.

C. Griffin moved, T. Harman seconded to approve the Budget Adjustments for 2025-2026. Motion carried unanimously.

The list of to-do items/Board member information requests was reviewed, and one duplicate item was removed.

Live Streaming of the Board Meeting ended at 7:55p.m., as noted on the Public Meeting Notice.

Closed Session

The Board did not convene in closed session.

Board Development

Superintendent Rieber provided a new Board Member welcome and orientation to all the Board Members.

District Strategic Initiatives were discussed, and Ben Garbers presented his research on mission statements.

Adjournment

C. Griffin moved, T. Harman seconded to adjourn at 9:10 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Caitlin Wilson, Clerk



Starts 6/2

Tuesdays and Thursdays

11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Meals can be picked up at Our Savior's Lutheran Church

359 Leonard St. N (use East Ave. door)

Delivery available within the Village of West Salem - Watch for

sign up on Facebook & District website

Free meals for kids 18 and under

For more info, check the Feed Our Children - West Salem

Facebook page or email feedourchildrenws@gmail.com

SWARTHOUT POOL



OPENING DAY | JUNE 1

Pool Hours Monday through Friday

Early Risers: 6:00 a.m.-7:55 a.m.

Adult Lap Swim: 12:45 p.m.-1:30 p.m.

Open Swim: 1:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

Pool Hours Saturday and Sunday

Open Swim: 1:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

For admission and membership prices, visit the district website at www.wsalem.k12.wi.us and then go to "Community" > "Swarthout Pool"
Other Questions? Call the pool at (608) 786-5309



**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
WEST SALEM**

West Salem High School Presents



GREASE

SCHOOL VERSION

Thurs. - Fri, June 11-12 & Wed. - Thurs., June 17-18, 2026 at 7:00 pm

Marie W. Heider Center for The Arts

Tickets \$10 - available at Box Office during business hours or 1 hour before show time

"Grease: School Version" is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc., a Concord Theatricals Company.
www.concordtheatricals.com

Pockets Full of Sunshine

WSMS students recently worked collaboratively on a homeroom project to create some "Pockets Full of Sunshine" that included a recycled denim pocket full of notes of encouragement for residents at Lakeview, Salem Terrace and Mulder's. Students decorated the pockets with

bright, colorful designs and quotes to help spread some cheer. This homeroom lesson combined spreading kindness in and around our community as well as learning a bit about recycling and reducing waste during Earth Week. In total, they delivered 200 pockets. Way to go, students!



COULEE REGION

FARM To School
LOCAL FOODS, HEALTHY KIDS

Did You Know?

Strawberries are the only fruit with the seeds on the outside!



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

Follow us on X
[@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

School District of West Salem
405 East Hamlin Street
West Salem, WI 54669



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