

Dear School District of Wisconsin Dells Community Members,

November is a short month from an instructional perspective, and it is also a transitional month as student-athletes soon begin their winter sports season at the high school level. Additionally, November can be a transitional month from a weather perspective as well. While the fall weather has been relatively mild, as we progress further into the fall season, we may occasionally encounter some winter weather. This is a good time to remind everyone of how the district will inform families when it faces a closure, delay, or early release due to inclement weather. The district will make a final decision and inform the public by 6:00 a.m., utilizing a phone call to families and posting on the district's Facebook page. If an early release is necessary, the district will utilize the same practices and aim to make this decision by 11:00 a.m. for a 12:30 p.m. release. If the district deems it necessary to release students early due to inclement weather and you have elementary-age children, please ensure that we have your alternative transportation arrangements in advance and on file at one of the elementary offices, or that you have communicated them to our classroom teachers in advance. This will significantly assist the office staff, as well as the classroom teachers and aides, who ensure that your children are on the correct bus. Please ensure your family has a plan in place for any late starts or early releases due to weather conditions.

Attention everyone! Please mark your calendars for the upcoming production, "Once upon a Mattress," with shows scheduled for Friday, November 7th at 7:00 p.m., Saturday, November 8th at 7:00 p.m., and Sunday, November 9th at 2:00 p.m. All shows will take place in the Nelson Performing Arts Center, and tickets will be available to purchase at the door for \$12 for adults and \$6 for students. Come on out and support the fine arts at WDHS. We hope to see you there!

Please note that there is a scheduled early release on Wednesday, November 12, 2025. Additionally, please note that Thanksgiving break will begin at the end of the school day on Tuesday, November 25, 2025, and classes will resume on Monday, December 1, 2025. Enjoy this well-deserved extended break!

MILL RATE & TAX LEVY ESTABLISHED

As part of the October 27, 2025, Board of Education meeting, the board adopted the 2025 levy. Overall, this year's levy was approved at \$23,394,128, and the mill rate was established at \$6.11, which is down from the previous year's rate of \$6.22 in 2024 and \$6.43 in 2023. One key variable to note about the district's third Friday membership count is that the district registered a count of 1,711, which is down 2.67% from last year, when it was 1,758. Conversely, the district is seeing an increase in students open-enrolling into our schools. In fact, this year the district is experiencing a surplus of 42 students who attend from surrounding districts, and the district will receive a transfer amount of \$10,102 per pupil. This additional revenue will help offset the decline in student membership. Overall, these variables, combined with previous advanced planning, have kept the mill rate from falling or rising dramatically, as well as the overall amount levied, in line with inflation. Finally, when the district is able to review per-pupil spending for the current school year, the district will likely remain in the lowest quartile in the state of Wisconsin.

2026-27 SCHOOL PLANNING & RENEWAL of NON-RECURRING REFERENDUM

Following the turn of the New Year to 2026, the district will take up planning for the 2026-27 school year. The merger of Lake Delton Elementary and Spring Hill Elementary schools is scheduled to begin next fall, forming a reconfigured PK-4 elementary school. This is an opportunity to review all of our elementary programming to ensure the district is meeting our belief statement of setting high academic standards, delivering a guaranteed and viable curriculum in every classroom, and believing that all students will be successful. Additionally, the middle school principals recently conducted a site visit to observe at Waupaca Middle School, a 5th through 8th grade middle school, which provided some excellent insights into how they effectively deliver instruction to their middle school students. The plan is to share this information with parents in the spring, once we have determined a date to hold an informational session later this spring. Finally, perhaps the most significant variable in planning for the 2026-27 school year is the renewal of the four-year non-recurring referendum. In short, there will be a need to renew the current non-recurring referendum to maintain the educational and operational services currently in place. The plan is to forecast a budget that would renew the current level of services for the next three years, expiring with the 2028-29 school year. Again, as the back of this school year unfolds, the district will formulate a plan that would support student-centered services while upholding financial accountability.

DPI SCHOOL REPORT CARDS

Finally, in mid-November, DPI will be releasing the annual state-required school report cards. When released, we look forward to sharing this information as our schools continue to exhibit positive academic trends in various areas. Internally, we recognize that our student achievement remains respectable at all schools. One variable that we will continue to focus on is student achievement growth. This is an area where we must continue to focus on getting better. Overall, the report card scores provide valuable feedback on what the district and, more specifically, its students are doing well, as well as identifying areas where the district needs improvement, both in the current year and in years to come. This data serves as a blueprint for what our teaching staff will be working on at forthcoming early release days.

In closing, we thank you for the opportunity to serve our communities' children, for they are both our highest priority, and it is our privilege to do so!

Sincerely,

Terrance R. Shack