



THE BEACON

A Community Newsletter from the
Port Washington-Saukville School District

Welcome Back to The Beacon!

First and foremost, we are incredibly grateful for our community's support of the referendum on April 1, 2025. Your support will have a lasting, positive impact on future generations of PWSSD students. We also truly appreciate the high level of engagement we've experienced throughout this process. I've had the privilege of meeting so many of you—people who care deeply about our schools, our teachers, our community, and, most importantly, our children. It's clear that PWSSD is a wonderful place for kids to learn and grow.



We are excited to keep you updated on the progress of the referendum in the months and years to come. In addition to regular updates in The Beacon, we're transitioning the referendum portion of our website into a dedicated landing page where you'll be able to track progress at all of our buildings.

We've already made great strides since the April 1 vote. We've selected Groth Design Group as our architectural firm and VJS Construction as our construction manager. These partnerships, approved at our April board meeting, officially set the next phase of planning in motion. I encourage you to stay connected through our district website or follow me on Instagram. My "Monthly Minutes" will begin to highlight both district news and exciting construction updates!

Beyond the referendum, we're also making meaningful progress on our district's strategic plan. On February 20, 2025, we launched our community engagement sessions, featuring a presentation by Dr. Bill Daggett, titled "Preparing Students for Their Future, Not Our Past." We followed up with another session on April 9, when we identified core focus areas and developed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to help us stay accountable and measure our success.

Thank you for tuning in to our third and final Beacon for the 2024-25 school year. Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, we'll be shifting to a quarterly newsletter format to better serve and inform you.

We hope you will continue to stay involved as we move forward. Thank you again for your ongoing support of our schools and the students we serve.

Be Great Today!

Michael McMahon, Superintendent

www.pwssd.org

SPRING 2025

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Developing Our PWSSD Strategic Plan

Throughout the 2024–25 school year, one of the top priorities of the administration and School Board was the development of a comprehensive strategic plan. This plan includes a set of core focus areas supported by measurable and specific key performance indicators (KPIs) that will be shared with our community.

Following a series of staff meetings in fall 2024, we invited community members to participate in an evening learning session on February 20, 2025. This event featured a presentation by Dr. Bill Daggett, titled “Preparing Students for Their Future, Not Our Past.” Together, participants explored key areas within the Wisconsin Career Readiness Standards, focusing on Life Readiness, Career Readiness, and Learning Readiness indicators.

We followed up with a final community event on April 9, during which we finalized our six Core Areas of focus:

- 1 Life Ready
- 2 Career Ready
- 3 Learning Ready
- 4 Finance, Operations, and Facilities
- 5 Safe and Healthy Schools
- 6 Engagement

During this event, the community provided valuable feedback on 25 key indicators that will be reported to the public starting in fall 2025. We look forward to sharing the full Strategic Plan in the fall edition of The Beacon!

Matching Donations Fund Cutting-Edge Equipment for Students

Port Washington High School was able to secure a final grant match donation for the 2024 Wisconsin DWD Fast Forward Grant! The total grant project for Advanced Welding and Fabrication Equipment consisted of all-new Miller welders for 12 welding booths, a new Baileigh CNC press brake, a new Piranha 65-ton Ironworker, and a new Ellis mitering band saw—totaling just over \$88,000. The school’s business partner match consisted of a third of this total!



DONATIONS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

- Maniotowoc Crane: \$10,000
- Ram Tool: \$5,000
- Charter Steel: \$5,000
- Kapco: \$2,500
- GenMet: \$2,500
- KMC Stampings: \$2,500
- Construction Forms: \$1,250
- American Contractors Insurance Group: \$500



All equipment was purchased and delivered by the beginning of the fall semester. Students have been able to use the equipment to hone their welding and fabrication skills for both practice and project-based applications, such as fire pits, shop stools, rocket stoves, and grills!

Student Spotlight



A New Mentoring Program for PWSSD Students

Jaguar Juniors is a unique mentoring program at Thomas Jefferson Middle School that began last year via a partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ozaukee County.

School staff found that traditional community-based mentoring programs can have up to a two-year waitlist. Jaguar Juniors was a way to fill that gap and make sure students have access to the resources they need now!

The program is based on 7th and 8th graders volunteering to be mentors, or "Bigs." They go through a rigorous vetting process, including interviews, reference checks, and online training. They are then paired with a 4th or 5th grader.

"Littles" are students who might benefit from additional connections at school. The matches meet once or twice per week. In most cases, the matches will span two full school years!

Thank You to Our Donors!

We would like to take a moment to thank these generous donors for their support of PWSSD and our students!

- Riot Games donated 10 Alienware 2518 monitors to the PWHS Esports teams
- Milwaukee Tool donated a large assortment of tools to the PWHS Tech Ed Program
- The Knights of Columbus donated \$626.92 to the PWHS Special Education Department
- Ansay & Associates donated \$3,000 to the PWHS DECA Program
- Lake Financial Group donated \$600 to the PWHS DECA Program
- Students in Aviation (SIA) donated a flight simulator to PWHS

We are incredibly grateful to these amazing donors!



DES Student Council Demonstrates Leadership, Service



The Dunwiddie Elementary School Student Council, made up of dedicated 3rd and 4th grade students, has been working hard to make a positive impact on their community!

In January, they visited Milan Estates in Saukville, where they spent time visiting with residents and making Valentine's Day wreaths. In February, they brightened the residents' day again by creating and delivering handmade Valentine's Day cards. Students took great pride in spreading joy and warmth to others during the cold winter months.



The Student Council also showed its appreciation for local first responders by bringing treats to the Port Washington Police Department. Afterward, they were given a tour of the facility, learning more about the important work officers do for the community. These young leaders are truly making a difference through kindness, outreach, and a commitment to service!





Flight Simulator Now Available at PWHS

Students in Aviation (SIA) graciously donated a flight simulator, located in the tech ed computer lab, to allow students to learn how to fly! In partnership with SIA, students at Port Washington High School can explore careers in aviation. Students interested in trying the flight simulator are welcome.

SES Students Perform 'We Are Monsters'

On February 28, Saukville Elementary School's 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders put on a show, with the 2024-25 Storybook Theatre production of *"We are Monsters."*

Storybook Theatre has been a key part of the school since 1997. What started as a parent-led afterschool program has evolved into a cornerstone of the educational experience. As a TAG program, SBT combines art, music, and physical education to inspire creativity and self-expression.

Each year, about 80 students participate, practicing twice a week for two months. SBT gives students the chance to showcase their talents, take a break from screens, and experience hands-on creativity. By uniting the school, families, and community, SES celebrates students' hard work in a meaningful way.

Thank you to Mrs. Grover, Mrs. Martinez, and Mrs. Piontek for coordinating and supervising such a wonderful program for our students!



Concert Choir Students Perform with Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra



On February 26, the Port Washington High School Concert Choir participated in the Teen Choral Partners performance of "Brilliant Bernstein," with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. Ours was one of three high schools selected to perform at this year's concert, alongside Bay Port and Brookfield Central.

Starting in September, students learned nearly 46 pages of music. Performing Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms" also meant that students needed to learn some Hebrew to perform the piece. In addition to this piece, students also performed Bernstein's "Make Our Garden Grow."

To put together a joint choral event with nearly 140 total singers from three high schools, PWHS students participated in multiple rehearsals with the other choirs at Allen-Bradley Hall, including a one-time rehearsal with the MSO.

PWHS's Concert Choir includes 75 singers and is directed by Mr. Dennis Gephart. The choir encompasses a broad cross-section of the school's sophomore through senior population for whom music is a passion!

4th Graders Perform at Lakeland University

On February 8, a group of dedicated 4th graders participated in the AWAKE Choral Festival at Lakeland University. Prior to the performance, students spent weeks rehearsing their songs individually and gave up their time in the cafeteria at least once a week to practice with their music teacher during the lunch period.

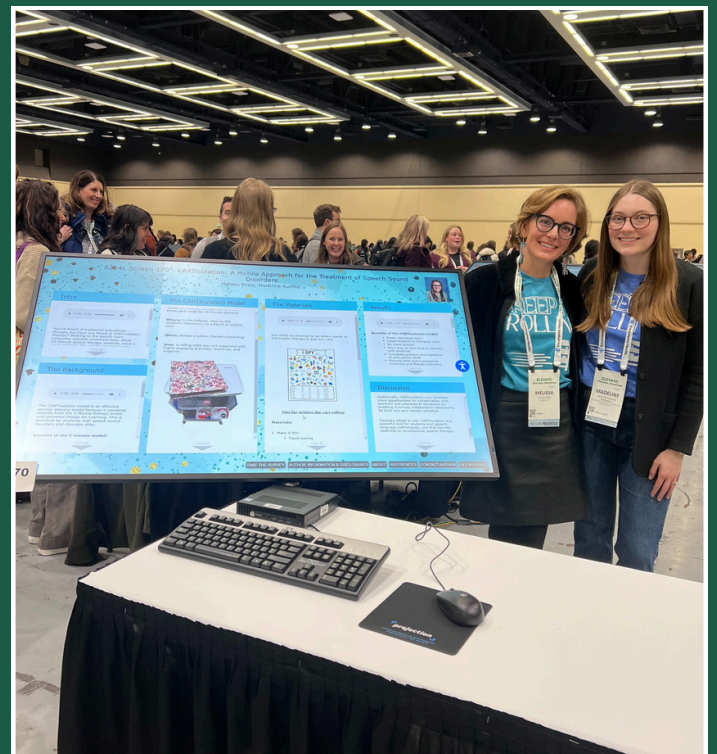
Once at Lakeland, they spent the day rehearsing alongside other 4th graders from surrounding districts, creating an exciting opportunity to meet new people while sharing their love of music. The hard work of music teachers Mrs. Denk, Mrs. Martinez, and Mrs. Kim—and the support of the participants' families—made this event possible.



Speech Pathologists Present Delivery Model in Seattle

In December, speech pathologists Maddie Auchter (of DES) and Melissa Pinke (of LES) presented their novel CARTiculation model at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association in Seattle!

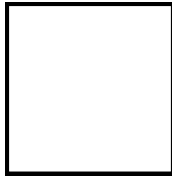
The model has become an effective way to support students receiving articulation therapy at elementary schools in the district. The speech pathologist can provide speech therapy right outside the classroom on a cart in a fun and functional way, resulting in greater student success and reduced time outside the classroom. During the CARTiculation poster session, Auchter and Pinke demonstrated the model and interacted with speech language pathologists from schools throughout the country!





Port Washington-Saukville School District

100 W Monroe Street
Port Washington, WI 53074



Voters Approve Referendum for PWSSD Facilities

On Tuesday, April 1, our community approved the capital referendum for the Port Washington-Saukville School District. This will allow us to move ahead with the construction of a new Saukville Elementary School.

District leaders are actively exploring potential locations for the new school

site in Saukville, specifically at the end of Bucktrout Street. The new school will feature modern, flexible classrooms and spaces designed to support 21st century learning and enhance student engagement.

In addition to building the new school, referendum funds will be used for essential maintenance, accessibility, and safety improvements across all district buildings. A planning timeline and next steps will be shared in the next issue of The Beacon.

We are incredibly grateful for our community's support of this referendum, which will positively impact generations of PWSSD students. Thank you again to our community for your continued support of our schools and the students we serve!

Community News

FREDONIA Janik topples Leder in race for top town seat that focused on tavern. **4B**

GRAFTON Chairman's picks who agree on library pact elected to board. **5B**

SAUKVILLE Factory farm controversy in Trenton not an issue in town. **6B**

BELGIUM Incumbents beat challenger aiming to represent lakeshore residents. **7B**

Ozaukee PRESS
Published in Port Washington

INSIDE: Grafton village president survives challenge from trustee in race fueled by public input at meetings. See page 5B

www.ozaukeeexpress.com Thursday, April 3, 2025 Section B

\$59.4M referendum passes by a landslide

By BILL SCHANEN IV
Ozaukee Press Staff

Voters on Tuesday overwhelmingly approved the most costly referendum in the history of the Port Washington-Saukville School District, giving it permission to borrow \$59.4 million for a new school and major maintenance projects.

"This is a message that our kids matter to this community and we're committed to doing better for them," Supt. Michael McMahon said Tuesday night.

The referendum was approved by a 2,164-vote margin, with 63% of the people who cast ballots voting in favor of the spending plan, according to unofficial results from the Ozaukee County Clerk's Office.

Voters in all but one community in the School District, which is comprised of the city and town of Port Washington, Village of Saukville and small portions of the towns of Saukville and Grafton, backed the referendum by significant margins. It failed by two votes in the Town of Saukville.

■ **PW-S District's plan to build new school, tackle major maintenance projects approved by 63% of voters**

Although the referendum eclipses the borrowing request approved by voters in 2015 by \$10 million, it was approved by a significantly larger margin. Ten years ago, the \$49.4 million plan to renovate and expand Port Washington High School and Dunwiddie Elementary School passed by a two-point margin. This year, the proposal to build a new Saukville Elementary School on a new site and tackle maintenance projects at its other four schools was approved by a 26-point margin.

School officials were concerned going into this week's vote about how the district's spending plan would be received amid rising costs outside of its control — a significant City of Port Washington tax increase for a new public safety building and skyrocketing city water rates. But working in the district's favor was the fact the tax impact of the referendum is relatively modest considering the amount of money being borrowed.

The district projects that the new debt See *Referendum* on page 11B