

Giigoonh Gazette: The Troller Times

February 2026



A Midyear Note from the District Administrator

As we move into the heart of winter, we also find ourselves **halfway through the school year**—a natural moment to pause, reflect, and look ahead. Our schools are full of learning, growth, and connection, and I continue to be grateful for the students, staff, families, and community members who make our district such a special place.

Looking ahead, we are preparing for the **facilities projects made possible by you and your belief that safe, structurally sound school buildings are foundational to teaching and learning**. These projects represent more than bricks and mortar—they reflect our shared commitment to creating environments where students and staff can thrive for generations to come. Thank you for your trust, engagement, and support as we move into this important next chapter.

I also want to warmly invite you to our **Winter / Sugar Bush Community Feast on Tuesday, February 17**. Please join us for a delicious meal, time together in fellowship, and a stroll through the many informational tables

that will be set up in the Commons area near the gymnasium. This event is a wonderful opportunity to connect, learn more about what's happening in our schools, and celebrate Troller Pride!

Our district is a **public community school**, and there are many ways to stay involved—whether by volunteering, attending events, sharing your voice, or simply staying connected. Your presence matters, and we are always better when we learn and grow together. Wishing you a warm and meaningful winter season, and I look forward to seeing you in our schools and at upcoming events.



Dr. Beth Manidoo Makwa Paap
District Administrator

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Referendum & Tax Levy Information

As property tax bills arrive in mailboxes across Wisconsin, it is understandable that many taxpayers are frustrated by increases they did not expect. Unfortunately, much of that frustration is being directed at local school districts—often based on misconceptions about how school funding actually works. We want to take this opportunity to clearly explain the factors that contributed to the School District of Bayfield's 2025–26 tax levy and how local and state decisions intersect.

Referendum impact: what was estimated and what actually occurred

Prior to the referendum, the School District of Bayfield communicated an estimated tax impact of \$0.69 per \$1,000 of equalized (fair market) value, beginning with the 2025–26 tax bill. This estimate was based on the District's 2024 equalized value, which is the appropriate measure used for school taxation across multiple municipalities.

Once the borrowing associated with the referendum was completed, the actual tax impact came in slightly lower, at \$0.67 per \$1,000 of equalized value. This means that the owner of a home with a 2024 fair market value of \$100,000 would see an increase of approximately \$67 per year attributable to the referendum.

Operational levy increase: separate from the referendum

It is important to distinguish the referendum impact from the increase in the District's operational levy, which is separate and unrelated to the referendum.

The School District of Bayfield's operational budget is funded primarily through local property taxes, state aid, and federal aid. Annual increases to this budget are strictly capped by state-imposed revenue limits.

For the 2025–26 year, the District's operational levy increased for several reasons beyond local control:

- \$568,561 to replace lost Federal Impact Aid
- \$85,528 to offset revenue lost due to declining enrollment
- \$60,398 representing the state-authorized \$325 per-pupil increase to the District's base revenue limit

These increases were partially offset by modest increases in state aid. After accounting for all factors, the operational levy increased by \$680,083. The School Board determined these revenues were necessary to maintain the District's current standard of educational programming and services for students.

Total levy impact

When the referendum levy and the operational levy increase are combined, the District's total tax levy increased by \$1,233,916, or 16.3% compared to last year.

Because the School District of Bayfield includes multiple municipalities, equalized (fair market) value is used to distribute the levy fairly across the district. As a result, the impact on individual tax bills may vary. Some property owners may see an increase greater than 16.3%, while others may see a smaller increase, depending on local property value trends.

The broader state context

These local impacts are occurring alongside significant state-level policy decisions. On short notice, the Assembly Education Committee held a public hearing on several education-related bills, including Assembly Bill 391, which would eliminate the \$325 per-pupil adjustment in the revenue-limit formula beginning in the 2027–28 school year. This bill is still in process of being passed by both houses.

Who really controls school spending?

In Wisconsin, school districts do not unilaterally decide how much they can spend. District budgets are governed by state-imposed revenue limits, and districts must seek voter approval through referenda to exceed those limits.

In the 2025–27 state budget, the Legislature authorized a modest increase in revenue limits. For the 17th consecutive year, that increase was below the rate of inflation and, critically, was not paired with a corresponding increase in state general school aid.

Historically, revenue limit increases were accompanied by increased state aid to reduce pressure on local property taxpayers. The most recent budget broke from that practice, shifting costs from the state to local communities—even though districts did not significantly change their spending behavior.

Special education: a growing pressure

These challenges are compounded by the continued underfunding of special education. Wisconsin's "sum certain" reimbursement model routinely falls short of promised levels. Because districts are legally required to provide special education services, shortfalls must be covered with general operating dollars—leaving districts with no local discretion.

Myth vs. fact: school funding and property taxes

Myth: School districts raised property taxes because they chose to spend more than inflation.

Fact: Districts can only raise revenue within state-set limits. The state authorized a per-pupil increase below inflation and did not provide the aid to support it, shifting costs to property taxpayers.

Myth: Schools received "record funding" in the state budget.

Fact: While some funding increased, it did not keep pace with inflation or rising fixed costs. Special education aid remains significantly underfunded.

Myth: Referenda signal poor local fiscal management.

Fact: Referenda are often the only tool districts have to address structural funding gaps created by state policy.

Myth: Property tax increases would have happened regardless of state action.

Fact: Historically, when revenue limit increases were matched with state aid, property tax impacts were significantly reduced. The 2025–27 budget broke that precedent.

Myth: This is a local problem.

Fact: This is a statewide issue. Nearly three-quarters of Wisconsin school districts will receive less general aid than last year, and reliance on temporary "hold harmless" aid continues to grow.

We appreciate the community's engagement and encourage informed discussion grounded in how school funding actually works. The School District of Bayfield remains committed to transparency, fiscal responsibility, and maintaining high-quality educational opportunities for our students.

Scan this code to learn more about
Wisconsin school funding.





Nicole Boyd
Board of Education Vice President
Red Cliff Seat

Voices from the Helm

Boozhoo District Families, Staff and Community,

This is my final year being a parent of a Troller student. In June, my second Troller grad and his childhood peers will graduate from Bayfield—congrats class of 2026! Like many in our District, my family represents multiple generations of Troller alumni including my mother's graduation in 1980 and mine in 2003. The thought of my granddaughter now having the opportunity to attend Ojibwemowen immersion programming at the School District of Bayfield is incredible.

Since 2018, I've served on the Bayfield School Board with various Administrations, School Board members, though the Covid-19 pandemic, the sale of the Bayfield Rec Center, a referendum, and in the new DOGE and DEI saga. I've seen this District grow to meet student and staff needs in many ways, and I'm proud of the meaningful partnerships and the swift responses taken. The education field continues to grow and evolve and we'd like to thank everyone for their input, passion and patience as we navigate this time together and share the common goal of making sure our District is successful and thriving.

Attendance matters! I am committed to understanding student attendance. The data from pre-k through high school tells us so many things...days of the week students are absent, lengths of absences, times of the year, illness trends, ages and classrooms with the most challenges, and so much more. I strongly believe everyone should be informed to best understand how we can help our kids be at school. When students miss more than 10% of scheduled school time, it is so hard for them to catch up. Chronic extended illnesses are a primary reason for absence and ensuring kids are healthy enough to be at school learning and growing is a priority for Bayfield! Please reach out to our amazing school student services team if you need assistance, resources, advocacy or support.

Miigwech to our incredible staff who show up for our kids and make a difference in their lives. Chi-miigwech for families entrusting the School District of Bayfield to be a part of your family. Go Trollers!



Upcoming Board Meetings

February 9, 2026 Bayfield School LRC & Zoom	Special Board Meeting @ 5:00 PM Committee of the Whole @ 5:30 PM
February 16, 2026 Bayfield School LRC & Zoom	Regular Board Meeting @ 5:30 PM
March 9, 2026 Bayfield School LRC & Zoom	Committee of the Whole @ 5:00 PM
March 16, 2026 Legendary Waters Resort & Zoom	Regular Board Meeting @ 5:30 PM
April 20, 2026 Bayfield School LRC & Zoom	Committee of the Whole @ 5:00 PM
April 27, 2026 Bayfield School LRC & Zoom	Regular Board Meeting @ 5:30 PM
May 11, 2026 Bayfield School LRC & Zoom	Committee of the Whole @ 5:00 PM
May 18, 2026 LaPointe Town Hall & Zoom	Regular Board Meeting @ 4:45 PM



Computer Repair Program

By: Stevie Matier, Technology Implementation Specialist

This program evolved because I was getting frustrated with the lack of care middle school students were showing the Chromebooks and the high numbers being lost/damaged in the post pandemic years, but what actually prompted me to get student help?

I was trying to promote accountability by helping students understand the impact of damage to their Chromebooks. Because repairs can take time, I thought having students participate in fixing devices they damaged would build appreciation for the work involved and encourage more responsible use.

Once I had started this I got a couple of interesting calls from teachers asking if certain students could do this on a regular basis as they found it interesting. I believe that if a student (especially a middle school student) asks to learn about something you should take that very seriously, so I said sure.



I had 2 students who came to my office a few times a week to help me fix Chromebooks. They really seemed to enjoy this and over the space of 3 months I began to notice an increase in focus and concentration as well as problem solving and analytical skills. as they figured out the cause of whatever problem was presented. At the beginning students would be easily distracted from the task at hand, but after 2-3 months I would just give them a computer to fix and they would get on with it, mostly without any need of input from me - they knew what they were doing and just wanted to get it done.

Students began to become more and more motivated to stay focused on the job at hand, it's usual for me to hear, "Ok that's done, any more?" It seemed they enjoyed fixing things and they've added helping with tech issues in their regular classrooms too! Bonus!

This program has been ongoing for 4 years now and I have students every day. They have become so proficient and efficient at keeping these machines running that we have been able to extend our life cycle for Chromebooks by one year or 20%, saving the school significant amounts of money. As well as this we have been able to offer this service to surrounding schools as we don't have enough faulty or broken machines to keep them busy and sometimes I have to send them back to class as there is nothing to fix.



The students, their relatives, and their teachers have told me that, for them, it is the best part of their day and they still keep coming even when there is nothing to fix. I love all parts of my job but this program has a special place for me and is the part of my job that I love the most.

Learning by Building: How Tech Ed Projects Turns Students Into Community Makers



By Dave Doering, MS & HS Tech Ed Teacher

In an era when education often feels dominated by screens and standardized tests, Bayfield Schools Technology Education Department is embracing a different philosophy—learning by doing. Through a hands-on, community-focused “makers” initiative, students grades 6-12 are stepping out of traditional classrooms and into real-world problem-solving. The result is a series of meaningful projects that serve the school and the wider community, from Leopold benches for area trailers and Ojibwe language signs at Frog Bay National Park, to bat houses at the Bayfield Fish Hatchery and Early Childhood center in Red Cliff, a Lake Superior fish display, and even an Elementary playground mud kitchen and coat racks.

A Classroom Without Walls

The program is built on a simple but powerful idea: students learn best when their work has purpose. Instead of creating projects that end when the bell rings, students design and construct items that will be used in their own communities. Whether 6th graders are building bathhouses for Red Cliff early childhood center, high school students designing and building a mud kitchen for younger students or 8th graders are cutting out a Lake Superior fish display for the school, learning becomes something tangible—something students can see, touch, and proudly point to.

Projects With Heart and History

Leopold benches, inspired by conservationist Aldo Leopold, serve as an introduction to ecological stewardship. Students measure, cut, sand, and assemble the benches before placing them along school nature trails or donating them to local parks. The project blends woodworking skills with lessons about local ecosystems and land ethics.



A series of **Ojibwe language signs** highlight a partnership with the school garden. Students learn basic Ojibwe vocabulary, then create bilingual signage for gardens, and outdoor learning spaces. The signs not only enrich student learning but also promote cultural visibility and respect.

The **Video Production** class has made numerous videos of community and school events. Making youtube videos of the unique activities students participate in at Bayfield School such as Red Cliff Winter Camp and the ever popular Sciencefest. The most popular videos by far are the “All School Lip Sync” videos where grades K-12 participate in a video lip syncing various popular songs and showing off the massive school spirit students and staff have at Bayfield School



Other projects are tied closely to local wildlife. Students have built **bat houses** to support native bat populations and reduce mosquito numbers in our community. **The Lake Superior Fish Display**, created with help from Ojibwe language teachers, showcases species found in Lake Superior and becomes a learning tool for biology classes and visitors alike.



Meeting Real Needs Within the School

Some projects respond to practical needs in the school itself. Younger students use **playground mud kitchens** built by older peers—complete with a counter, sink and stovetop outlines—to inspire creative outdoor play. Repairing **school sheds** teaches High School students to build and repair construction projects, while custom **elementary coat racks** built by 8th graders help reduce playground clutter and keep students' jackets out of the mud.

At every step, students take ownership. They sketch designs, calculate measurements, test prototypes, and revise their work when a hinge doesn't quite fit or a door needs reinforcement. These moments of trial and adjustment become some of the most valuable learning experiences.



Skills That Go Beyond the Classroom Walls

While students gain practical skills—safe tool use, woodworking techniques, basic construction—they also develop a legacy students leave behind. Every bench on a trail, every bilingual sign, every structure in a school garden stands as a reminder that students are capable not just of learning, but of shaping the place they live and learn. In a time when communities are searching for ways to reconnect, this hands-on approach to education offers a hopeful model: one where learning is active, collaborative, grounded in local culture, and visibly meaningful. These students aren't just completing assignments—they're building something far more lasting. They're building community.

Featured Upcoming Events

Biboon Gabeshiwin (Winter Camp) - February 17 - 20, 2026



The School District of Bayfield is honored to partner with the Red Cliff Nation for a week of winter activities rooted in culture, community, and place.

Biboon Gabeshiwin begins at 5:30 PM the evening of Tuesday, February 17, with a community feast at the Bayfield School, featuring a meal by chef Chris Basina and the celebration of the winners of the art design contest. Join us for delicious food and a beautiful art display!

On Wednesday and Thursday, February 18 & 19, Biboon Gabeshiwin is hosted at the Red Cliff Boys and Girls Club with instructors from near and far sharing hands-on activities including snow snake, Ojibwe language games, sled dogs, snowshoeing, traditional food demonstrations, ice fishing & net setting on Buffalo Bay (ice permitting), and more! Adizookaan (storytelling) will be in the evenings at the Red Cliff Cultural Center.

The camp concludes on Friday morning, February 20, with a celebratory youth powwow in the Bayfield School gymnasium. All community members are warmly invited to attend all events.

To stay up to date on events and schedules, visit: <https://www.redcliff-nsn.gov/biboongabeshiwin/>

Many hands come together to make this a meaningful and memorable experience. Chi miigwech to all who make Biboon Gabeshiwin possible through their time, energy, and commitment to youth, culture, and community.

Science Fest & Community Feast - April 22, 2026

Science Fest is Back!

Bayfield School District families and Bay Area community members are invited to join us for Science Fest on Wednesday, April 22nd. The Bayfield School is hosting an exciting evening celebrating curiosity, creativity, and hands-on learning. Students will explore interactive science activities and projects designed to spark wonder and discovery for all ages. A feast will be provided prior to the event, beginning at 5pm. Demonstrations will begin immediately following the feast. Come hungry and ready to explore. We look forward to celebrating science together with our Bayfield community!

If you are interested in providing a demonstration or information as a community partner, kindly contact Savannah Marshall at smarshall@bayfield.k12.wi.us to reserve a table.



Alumni Corner

Trisha Miller - Class of 2002

Growing up in Bayfield, I didn't realize how much it shaped me. Even in a small but mighty K-12 school on the shores of the world's largest lake coupled with a tight-knit community, I couldn't wait to trade the long, grayscale winters for a 30,000-population city nestled in Montana's big, sunny skies. It was not too much later I realized how deeply the Bayfield area and my schooling had prepared me for the rest of my life.



Trisha & Pip
in Colorado

As a creative, I gravitate toward visual learning. One experience that sticks with me was when Mrs. Eid introduced me to Photoshop 5 so I could design my senior graduation invitations. I was over the moon. It was such new technology in that time, and the fact that Bayfield School offered it was remarkable. Little did I know, I would use Photoshop almost daily for the rest of my life. This can't go without mentioning how much Mr. Haiden and Ms Peterson influenced my future career by introducing me to newspaper and yearbook publishing.

After graduating from Bayfield, I was surrounded by mountains and a far greater student population—but I didn't feel out of place. I loved it. Four and a half years later I earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree with a Graphic Design Emphasis from Montana State University.

I sought the corporate life in Boulder, Colorado where I worked as an art director for Spin to Win Rodeo for many years. This magazine was immersed in Western culture, design, and storytelling by award-winning journalists. Once again, I found myself learning from the best while drawing on skills and experiences rooted in Bayfield.

In 2021, life brought me full circle—back to Bayfield and into my current role with the Bayfield Heritage Association. It's here, working daily with archives, stories, and communities' history, that I've come to understand the Bayfield area even more. I'm also discovering layers of family lineage and history that make my return feel less like a coincidence and more like a calling.

Bayfield and its shoreline didn't just raise me—it prepared me. For mountains and movement, for creativity and diversity, for leaving and, ultimately, for returning home.

Calling All Bayfield Troller Alumni! We'd love to hear what you've been up to since your Troller days—school, career, service, or life adventures. Share your updates at newsletter@bayfield.k12.wi.us and help inspire current students and connect our alumni community. *Once a Troller, always a Troller! Go Big Red!*

Bayfield Troller Gear Is Here!



Whether you're a student, parent, alumni, longtime fan, or a fresh face in the stands, we'd love to see you

join in the fun. Keep an eye out for our merch table at select upcoming home games to check out the lineup, grab some Troller swag, and cheer on Big Red! It's a great way to connect with neighbors, soak up the excitement, and show your support for our young athletes.

Upcoming HOME GAMES

February 10, 2026 HS Boys & Girls Basketball	Double Header vs. Butternut Boys @ 5:45 PM & Girls @ 7:15 PM
February 11, 2026 MS Volleyball	vs. LCO @ 5:45 PM
February 12, 2026 MS Volleyball	vs. Chequamegon @ 5:30 PM
February 17, 2026 MS Volleyball	vs. Ashland @ 5:30 PM
February 19, 2026 HS Girls Basketball	vs. Drummond @ 5:45 PM (Parents Night)
February 20, 2026 HS Boys Basketball	vs. Drummond @ 5:45 PM (Parents Night)
February 23, 2026 MS Volleyball	vs. South Shore @ 5:45 PM (Parents Night)



Land-Based Learning Middle School Alternative Education Program

By: Cate Williams, MS Alt Ed Teacher

On a recent snowy morning, Middle School Alt Ed students tumbled off the bus and onto the trail, the first humans in the woods after a snowfall. Five inches of fresh powder covered the trail, and we wound our way on a gradual downhill to Houghton's Point, carefully avoiding roots and rocks, and relishing each brush with a balsam or hemlock that dumped snow on the person behind. At the head of the line, setting slow pace and finding the icy spots for students behind me, I quietly listened to their conversations.

"Remember when we brought the 7th graders here when they were visiting Alt Ed and that red squirrel was super mad at us and yelled at us from the trees? Is it too cold for the squirrel to worry about us today?"

"Where even is the trail? This is like when we went snaring at Frog Bay and Ms. Cate fell in a hole and couldn't get up!"

"Remember when we found that vernal pond, where is that today?" And before I could answer, "Bruh, vernal means spring, it's not here in winter."

"Oooh! The dells are coming up, can we go down in the creek bed? Remember that cedar tree that grows like a J? I love that tree!"

The alternative education program is over 25 years old, but is widely unknown in our area. Started in 2000, it serves students in both middle and high school that benefit from hands-on and experiential learning, a small learning community, and project-based learning. It is not a special education program; students in our program may have IEPs, but special education participation rates in alt ed are only slightly higher than general education classes. In Middle School Alt Ed, we cover all the typical subjects, but whenever possible, we ground them in learning from the land, Ojibwe seasonal practices, and from experiences in our community.

That is my "elevator speech" for the Alt Ed program, my short and quick description of a multi-age community of students from ages 11-18 as they grow from children to adults.

But it is harder to explain moments like stepping into quiet, cold woods first thing in the morning with a group giggling, chatty, occasionally grumpy middle schoolers and hearing them recount the years of knowledge they have about a place and the connections they can make to other places they love. They remember stories - a game of Forest Ninja that culminated in finding seven wood ticks on one person, a foray into the National Forest on unplowed roads that included following deer trails and rolling down hills, a broken foot at the school sugarbush ("and that's when I learned that adults are right about horsing around in the woods being a bad idea") - and they wrap them around deep knowledge of a place. Students can tell me when trees have fallen in a stand we've visited, where we're most likely to see foxes, the time of year they like to harvest wintergreen berries and when they don't like to harvest rosehips but will do it anyway, and which beaches show spring erosion most dramatically. They know how water flows and how spring sounds. It's a slow process, one based largely in exploration and play, and getting them to wear weather-appropriate clothing will likely be the death of me (my last words on earth will likely be "did you put your boots on"), but I am amazed at the knowledge students have gained from their time on the land. With such deep observation, it's easy to build in-classroom science, social studies, math, and writing projects that further their knowledge.

As a small step toward sharing their knowledge, my students have contributed to the **Bayfield Peninsula Outdoor Guide**.



SCAN ME



Troller After School Program

By: Sally Kessler, TAP Coordinator



The Troller After School Program (TAP) has been active at The Bayfield and Madeline island schools for over 15 years. We meet Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 -5:00 throughout the school year.

At the mainland school we enroll students from grades 2-5 in the elementary school and 6-8 in the middle school. LaPointe Elementary School on Madeline Island enrolls the entire school. Over 50 students are registered for TAP overall. Currently all classes are filled but we continue to accept registrations as enrollment fluctuates.

Here are a few of the comments from our students when asked what they thought about TAP:

"TAP is fun."
"I like to be with my friends."
"I like making things and playing games."
"I like snacks and staying after school."
"We make real neat stuff."
"Hiking is fun."
"Good place to hang out."
"LaCrosse is cool."



And from our dedicated and intrepid staff:

Jeannie Hovas, second grade:

Our second graders are having a great time at TAP. We do a variety of things from reading, hiking, STEM building and learning about animals in nature. Creative activities that teach social skills are a favorite too."

Amy Day, third grade:

Third grade Tappers continue to find new and fun ways to get their bodies moving after a long day at school. When weather allows, they get outside. Sometimes we go sledding, take hikes on the ravine trail or learn new outdoor games. When the weather keeps them inside they sometimes visit Mashkawiiziwig (sensory room). Or they set up races and obstacle courses in the hallway. After moving they get to engage in quieter creative activities and play.

Grace Freitag, fourth grade:

In fourth grade we have done several different things this year. In the fall we made leaf art and learned how to fold different models of paper airplanes. We also listened to folk tales from different cultures around the world and made pictures of the stories. In December we learned to make different Origami boxes and cut out snowflakes.

Phillip Brede, fifth grade:

Fifth grade TAP had the privilege of playing LaCrosse with Middle School Alt Ed. When it is not too cold, we have had a blast sledding. On the coldest days we enjoy chess, checkers, Legos and chatting while a fun movie plays in the background.

A busy year so far!! TAP is a safe, nurturing space to spend time after school with an emphasis on developing good social skills, expanding creativity and unwinding after a long school day. TAP will run through the remainder of the year, following the Tuesday and Thursday schedule. A complete calendar for the second semester will be published soon.





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Upcoming Event

All upcoming events—from board meetings and athletic competitions to family breakfasts, seasonal concerts, and more—can be found on our **district website**.



Bayfield School Coffee Chat

February 13, 2026 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Stop by Wonderstate Coffee Shop in downtown Bayfield to visit with Bayfield School staff and administration. Pop in to ask questions, get to know us better, or simply grab a cup of coffee and a snack!



WE WANT TO STAY CONNECTED WITH YOU!

Your voice matters, and we want to ensure you're informed and engaged with our school district. Please take a moment to let us know the best ways to stay connected with you. Whether it's through email, text, phone calls, or other channels, your preferences help us share important updates, events, and opportunities in a way that works best for you. Together, we can build a stronger, more connected community!

