



Menahga Principal's Board Report

Steph Mercil and Michelle Koch
September, 2026

Elementary School Update



Open House Attendance: The Elementary had 91% of students in attendance for open house! The halls were filled with smiles and families meeting their teachers.

Enrollment: see chart below

Staffing: New hire for part-time para to cover recess every day, this creates room for more service time for students. With 5 new to the district students, each having a large amount of para support needed, our special ed team is working to efficiently support all student needs. Also, looking to hire a long term sub for one of our current paras on maternity leave, until Nov 23rd. Thank you for supporting increasing our teacher sub rate of sub pay, we've added to the teacher sub pool as well.

ELA committee Meetings(picture above): This team is working with a Sourcewell consultant to take us through the 6 steps of effective practices. This team will meet next Monday the 28th after school to review work from last year and move forward with choosing next reading resources. Will be adding reps from 6,7,8 to review their ELA resources as well.

Drills: First fire drill in the books and went well. Bus evacuations successful.

Safety Around the Schools: Thank you to Christina and her team for creating a successful and fun day of learning for students around safety - pedestrian, car, bus, bike safety!

FastBridge Screening: All students K-12 beginning the FastBridge screener for reading, math, and Social Emotional Behavior. New subtests required for the early readers. Fourth - 6th graders will complete Capti, a diagnostic assessment. All parents will receive a notification letter if their child meets criteria for an intervention in reading or math.

MTSS: Had our 1st meeting with the district leadership team for learning about Multi- Tiered Systems of Support, completing an inventory of initiatives currently happening and how well they are going. This team will have trainings/meetings monthly. As part of this work, we will plan for implementing a more structured

Brave Learning Time or Professional Learning Time for teachers to collaborate, review and make instructional decisions using data, and learn together.



Important Dates:

Oct 1 Picture Day

Oct 3 Homecoming Coronation (TBD)

Oct 5-9 Homecoming (Games, Activity Night, Parade)

Oct 15-16 No School (EM Break)

Oct 18 Staff Development (no School)

Oct-Nov Big Buck and Big Doe Contest

Nov 12 Conferences (no School)

Nov 13 Staff Development (no School)

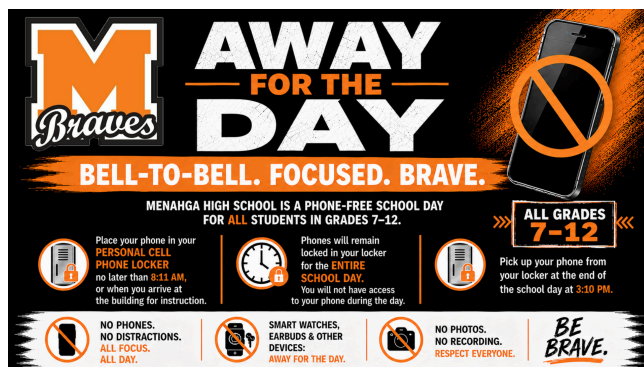
High School Update!

Student Meetings:



The first day of school I met with all 7th and 8th graders and then 9th-12th grade students to share our Vision, Mission, Values...give the expectations for our new phone policy, attendance, etc... I appreciate staff giving up teaching time on that first day so that all our students can hear the same message! We also honored our Seniors during the 9-12 grade meeting!

Away for the Day Update:



Simply stated...it is going very well. We are also working on cutting screen time. 7th and 8th graders may not use their Chromebooks at lunch or recess. Most 9th-12th graders do not use them at lunch or recess.

I'm truly grateful to Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) for reaching out and giving me the opportunity to share my perspective as a principal on our new cell phone policy. We had a great conversation about cell phones, AI, technology, and, most importantly, taking care of our kids. I appreciate being given a voice in this important conversation and am proud to represent Menahga Public Schools.

<https://www.mprnews.org/episode/2026/09/01/minnesota-principals-navigating-fastchanging-technology-when-shaping-cellphone-policies>



Senior Sunrise: We were so excited to continue this new tradition! We kicked off the year with a special Senior Sunrise for the Class of 2027. Seniors gathered on the football field early Thursday morning (9-10) with blankets, lawn chairs, coffee, and plenty of Brave spirit. Caramel Rolls were provided as students spent time together and celebrated the beginning of their final year at Menahga High School.

It was a simple but meaningful way to start their senior year—building memories, enjoying time together, and recognizing that this year will be filled with many “lasts” as well as exciting new beginnings. We are looking forward to celebrating the Class of 2027 throughout the year!

Support Teams: Thank you **Terry** and crew for the amazing job you do everyday to keep our facilities running smoothly and looking amazing! We also want to give them a big shout out for getting our new classroom furniture set and ready! Thank you **Christina** for the amazing job you do to have our transportation plans completed so thoroughly and efficiently! The bus evacuation drills went off without a hitch!

Staffing: Thank you to Deanna and Sara K for working with Baileigh and me to shift schedules around so that they both can support our 7th and 8th grade students through math and reading interventions. Sara has a class of 7th grade and a class of 8th grade reading students. Deanna has both grades in math. These sections are based off of previous assessment data and will be reviewed and evaluated after the fall benchmarks.

1st Semester Success: First Semester is up and running. Students are engaged and working hard. Baileigh has done an amazing job with balancing classes, honoring requests from students and staff. She is currently working on setting up Senior Meetings and continuing to look ahead to the second semester.

Lunch and Recess Success: After a few tweaks in our scheduling, 7-12th lunch is going great! Four lunch blocks all with recess attached!

Career Pathways: We met with our Sourcewell Support team to specifically look at the 26-27 Career Pathways Action Plan. We are fully set up for success K-12! Baileigh has scheduled 8th Grade to the NYM Cultural Center and 10th Grade to Camp Ripley (including the new Museum). Katie, Baileigh and I participated in the SchoolLinks update at Sourcewell at the end of August. We are excited to learn how IC and SchoolLinks can talk to one another. And how our 5th-8th Graders can connect Metier to SchoolLinks!

District PBIS Team: Our continued investment in PBIS reflects our commitment to creating safe, positive, and supportive learning environments where all students and staff can thrive. We are finding ways to celebrate our staff and students daily. In the high school we have started Monday "Would you Rather", Trivia Tuesday, Thankful Thursdays and Fun Fact Fridays! We will be looking at consistent meeting times to check in and plan Elem/HS and District activities.

Till360: We are also excited to partner with **Till360** to support our students, staff, and school community. This partnership will help us continue building a positive school culture and climate where everyone feels connected, supported, and empowered to succeed. Curt had a virtual welcome back message for all staff. His team will be here in January!

7-12 Advisory Time: Beginning second quarter, we will introduce our new Wednesday Advisory (Brave Connections) program. I am currently working with Baileigh and Ali to survey the staff to most effectively assign students to the Brave Connections.

Staff/Student AI Training: As technology continues to evolve, Menahga is committed to helping students become responsible and ethical users of artificial intelligence (AI). Through our partnership with Gruvy Education, both students and staff will receive ongoing learning and support to use AI effectively, responsibly, and with academic integrity. By learning alongside one another, we are building the skills needed to prepare students for the future while enhancing teaching and learning in every classroom. William will be meeting with staff on Nov. 13th, and Luke will meet with students in 5-12 during morning assemblies the next week! They will also help us to focus on our new AI language from our handbook and build supports for all students.

Menahga Principal Goals for 2026-2027 that were developed at the June Leadership retreat.

Goal 1: Focus on Climate and Culture at Menahga Public Schools

Our school will strengthen a positive, inclusive, and collaborative culture by increasing students' and staff members' sense of belonging, safety, and engagement, as measured by annual climate survey results.

- Partner with Till360 for a Back to School message and follow up sessions with staff and students.
- Administer a climate survey to staff
- Re commit to PBIS practices

Goal 2: Strengthen Literacy and Academic Achievement

Ensure all students achieve at high levels by implementing evidence-based reading instruction aligned with the Minnesota READ Act, closing racial and economic achievement gaps, and building staff capacity in differentiated instruction to support the diverse needs of learners.

- Elementary will be participation in curricular pilots, collecting data, and collaborating to determine the best choice of ELA resources for our students K-6.
- District teams will resume Professional Learning Communities with a new name, Brave Learning Teams(BLT's).

Goal 3: Expand Career Pathways and Authentic Learning Opportunities

Increase student engagement and readiness for college, career, and life by developing cross-curricular, career-connected learning experiences; expanding community and business partnerships; and providing authentic, hands-on opportunities such as senior capstone projects and internships.

Goal 4: Support the Whole Child and Invest in Staff Development

Provide comprehensive supports that meet the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students, while ensuring every student has a positive connection with a caring adult. Strengthen staff recruitment, professional development, and training—including emerging tools such as AI—to sustain a future-focused and supportive learning environment.

- Follow up training is planned with William Grube for Nov 13th, and also plans for working with students.
- We are also excited to continue expanding our work with Artificial Intelligence through additional professional learning this fall. In November, we will welcome William Grube back to Menahga Public Schools for another day of AI training with our staff, building on the practical strategies and classroom applications introduced last year. In addition to staff learning, we are especially excited to offer student AI workshops on November 19. William will work with our 6th–8th grade students in the morning, followed by a session for our 9th–12th grade students. These workshops will help students better understand the responsible, ethical, and effective use of AI while preparing them with skills that are increasingly important in college, careers, and everyday life.

Projected Enrollment K-6 for 2026-2027 school year

Grade Level	# of Teachers	Estimated # of Students in each class
PreK	1 TBD part time Tues/Thurs	10
VPK	1	15-20
K	3, 2 full day 1 every other day	14 full day, 22 ½ day
1	4	19-21
2	3	21-22
3	4	19

4	4	18
5	4	18-20
6	3	22

Projected Menahga High School Enrollment for 2026-2027 school year

Grade Level	# of Teachers (NA)	Estimated # of Students
7	7-8 Four Core/shared specialists/two special education/one interventionist	75
8		72
9	9-12 Eight Core/shared specialists and electives/two special education	74
10		74
11		89
12		62
eCHS	(numbers will vary)	25+
PSEO	(numbers will vary)	13-18

Menahga School District Enrollment

Grade Level	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	March	April	May	
PreK	52								
K	52								
1	76								
2	65								
3	70								
4	70								
5	73								
6	63								
7	73								
8	71								

9	72								
10	74								
11	84								
12	61								
Total									
Menahga Online									
Total									

Respectfully submitted,

Steph Mercil and Michelle Koch