

# Superintendent Update

August 14, 2025



# At the forefront of educational excellence



## **WHAT WE INTEND TO CREATE**

*Inspire dreams, build integrity and instill hope  
in our students, our staff, our families and our communities.*

## **OUR PURPOSE**

Partner with students, staff, families and communities to challenge all  
students to achieve their greatest potential and become informed and  
engaged citizens.

# Back to school messages sent today



## In This Issue

- Greetings Vikings! - A message from Supt. Paul
- 2025-26 Student/Parent Handbook
- [First day of school signs](#)
- [School supply lists](#)
- Application for educational benefits information
- Transportation sign-up link
- [K enrollment](#) open now
- Get the app
- Calling all high school students!



## Greetings Vikings!

### Greetings Vikings!

After a busy summer of building repairs and improvements, along with staff trainings and goal setting workshops, we are thrilled to be rounding the corner to the start of the 2025-26 school year. The start of a new school year is a time of renewal and opportunity, where students, staff, and families come together to create a vibrant learning environment.



## Welcome Days

One of the highlights leading up to the first day of school is our district's Welcome Days events. Welcome Days provide students and families with the opportunity to meet teachers, connect with

Back to school messages were sent districtwide today around noon. If you would like to review any of the messages, here are the links:

- [Early Learning](#)
- [Sunrise](#)
- [NBAMS](#)
- [NBAHS](#)
- [Norse](#)
- [DLA](#)

# Subs fill vital role



One of the most impactful ways individuals in our community can support our mission is by stepping into the vital role of substitute teaching and becoming one of our Viking Support Stars.

- One of the greatest benefits of becoming a Viking Support Star is the flexibility the role offers.
- Becoming a Viking Support Star comes with real rewards, both personal and financial.
- We are also seeking Viking Support Stars in educational assistant roles, which offer another impactful way to be part of NBAPS.

If you are interested in learning more about these opportunities, please contact me at [spaul@isd138.org](mailto:spaul@isd138.org) or 651-674-1012. I would love to discuss how you can join the NBAPS team.



# Night to Unite was great fun



Thank you to everyone who joined us at Central Park on August 5 for a fun-filled evening of food, music, laughter, and community spirit!

- One of the biggest hits of the night? The Bubbly Foam Party, sponsored by North Branch Area Community Education!
  - From 6:00 to 7:30 PM, the park was absolutely bursting with joy, giggles, and mountains of foam. Families danced, splashed, and made unforgettable memories together!
- Kids also loved picking out free books from Books for Better MN, and the bouncy house, water play, and community service vehicles added even more excitement to this magical evening.
- Nights like these remind us how strong and connected our North Branch community truly is. Thank you for showing up and bringing joy!





# In the news: Hitting and Coding



NBAHS Junior Wyatt Helberg was recently featured in the County News Review!

- Wyatt is NBAHS's #1 singles player
- Spends a good deal of his summers playing tennis
- Also also works for his dad's company, Freight Book, Inc.
  - Creates AI bots that interact with customer data
- Wyatt has been coding since he was 8 years old

# In the news: Supt. Paul attends forum



Supt. Paul attended a political forum last week hosted by the Chisago County GOP, featured in the Chisago County Press. Also in attendance were Forest Lake Supt. Steve Massey and Chisago Lakes Supt. Brian Dietz.

## Key takeaways:

- Parents should expect transparency from their school districts
- Public education funding remains an issue
- Thank you to Rep. Max Rymer for hosting the event!

2 Thursday, August 7, 2025 Edition: MNCHISAGO COUNTY PRESS

## Political forum gives school leaders opportunity to educate

by DENISE MARTIN

The Split Rocks entertainment complex became a venue for public education last week as the Chisago County GOP hosted a chance to hear from three area school superintendents. After an hour or so of commentary on current issues facing public schools, moderated by local Minnesota House member Max Rymer, R-North Branch, the audience asked questions for about 30 minutes.

The main takeaways might be boiled down to: parents can find transparency in their students' education to a much greater extent than most parents currently take advantage of — and there's still work to do at the state level to improve school funding.

This was part of the local GOP's "Reclaiming Liberty" series of monthly forums, which as of September will be offered monthly, on the second Thursday. (August is the annual fundraiser spaghetti supper so there's no program this month.)

All the guests, North Branch's Sara Paul, Chisago Lakes' Brian Dietz and Steve Massey, superintendent for Forest Lake, applauded Rymer, for his willingness to put in the necessary work and trying to grasp the complexities of school budgets.

Supt. Paul especially gave Rymer a thumbs up, developing an apprenticeship teacher effort in Minnesota, built off of North Branch as a pilot district. There is a shortage of instructors getting certified in certain fields and having a mentor, financial aid and a job waiting in districts has helped.

Supt. Paul commended Rymer for working to get the legislature to support the extended Apprenticeship Program.

Rymer is on the Education Finance Committee in the Minnesota House and he described the complex budget process as "crap piled on crap." The formulas have been revised and amended over the years to where nobody comprehends the intent anymore. For example, the districts' reliance on testing outcomes (among other measurements like graduation rates) to qualify for money.

Spending by and for schools in general is a mystery wrapped in an enigma and Rep. Rymer pointed out the districts should do a better job communicating with the public on this issue.

Superintendent Sara Paul, Chisago Lakes Superintendent Brian Dietz and Forest Lake Superintendent Steve Massey.

The superintendents were introduced by Rep. Max Rymer (at right) at table. Left to right are North Branch Superintendent Sara Paul, Chisago Lakes Superintendent Brian Dietz and Forest Lake Superintendent Steve Massey.

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All the superintendents agreed the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, or MCAs, part of the "report card" data for schools, are pretty unremarkable. Supt. Massey said better information about where a student is at, during the school year can be gotten from other test formats, and the results can come in a more timely manner than MCAs which take months to be scored and standings released. Small snapshots of academic progress done frequently would make more sense. And, the overrated importance of some test results is not relevant in the real world, Massey said employers don't want to hire kids who tested well, they want employees who can reason, can work with others and exhibit life skills.

Another observation is that tests must matter to the pupil, like a targeted college entrance measurement or Advanced Placement test—in order for a student to do well.

Supt. Dietz agreed, adding district "are good at throwing out data" but using tools that track where a student is at in real time and reacting so they get what they need, can be far more valuable.

Parents and guardians shouldn't sit on the sidelines if they have an interest in the curriculum and learning materials.

Supt. Dietz noted that Chisago Lakes had 40 parent/guardian community members sign-up for the reinvigorated recently announced mentorship program in the middle school. Their involvement will help to spread the word in general about what's happening in the schools.

Supt. Massey also explained district library materials are listed online in the district inventory, and curriculum should not be a secret, just use your pupil's password for access to the electronic lesson outline curriculum.

Supt. Paul also noted North Branch does "Patron Tours" to visit a class or school, and the participation in the annual family surveys is providing feedback. Minnesota public schools have "opt-out" procedures for families who desire alternative learning materials or oppose topics which the superintendent said the local school board is elected to play a role reviewing.

North Branch leaders are holding seats on the Chamber of Commerce and on HRA and these are opportunities to get involved in local policy and be connected.

Massey told the forum attendees to try to show up sports events, attend plays and musical performances and support students they counter.

As for the referendum problem in Chisago Lakes, Supt. Dietz pointed out that the legislature had sworn to state aid keeping up with inflation in energy costs and other non-optional expenses. Chisago Lakes would be getting \$6 million more in state funding and there wouldn't need for a local levy to be increased. Chisago did win approval in the last ballot, and will run another referendum, still being developed, he said.

Supt. Massey explained that studies show the district would be receiving \$1,500 additional per pupil support if the state had maintained coverage.

The public may hear record levels of state money being dedicated to education but the state also mandated unemployment pay for summer loss of work for teachers staff, there is a paid leave act if time-off pending or expected to be costly and other mandates are not funded.

# It's a bubble party!

It's been a great summer for Youth Connections students! There has been foam parties, magic shows, visits from the Raptor Center and the Bell Museum Planetarium, and more!.

Last Tuesday students had a bubble party, complete with the limbo.





# Warming House gets new look!



A collaboration to beautify the rink warming house on Grand Avenue/Viking Way was just completed.

NBAHA President, Jason Zerwas, asked art teacher, Lee Ann Falen, to add more color and spirit to the building. The entire building received a fresh coat of paint first, then three of the four walls were embellished with bold ideas in our North Branch school colors.

The Viking logo is 12' tall and the state of Minnesota is 6' tall.

- Thanks to Bob Olsen and the North Branch Lions Club for generously donating the funds to cover paint and supplies for this project!

# August 12 Realtor Breakfast



North Branch Area Public Schools proudly hosted a Realtor Breakfast to build strong partnerships with local real estate professionals.

- This event provided an opportunity to share the district's vision, academic offerings, and community strengths, ensuring realtors are well-informed ambassadors for families considering a move to our area.
- By fostering collaboration, we aim to highlight how NBAPS supports student success, promotes vibrant community connections, and helps make North Branch a destination for quality living and learning.



**Viking  
Outreach**

# Mixed Couple Scramble - Sept. 20



North Branch Girls Golf is hosting a mixed couples scramble on Saturday, Sept. 20, starting at 3 p.m., at the North Branch Golf Course. Proceeds raised will support girls golf!

- Scan the QR on the flier, or [use this link](#), to register
- Each team must have two men and two women, and registration fees include the scramble, on course games, raffles, and dinner! There is also a dinner only option for \$20.

Help support girls golf, dominate on the course, get a great dinner, and maybe win some cool stuff. That's win-win-win-win!

# One last Concert in the Park



It has been an amazing summer for Concerts in the Park!

- Next Tuesday is the final concert of the summer, featuring our own Andy Spofford!
- Food trucks and fun begin at 6 pm
- Storytime at 6:45
- “AJ Spoff” starts at 7 pm

A poster for the 'AJ Spoff' concert. At the top, it says 'NORTH BRANCH CONCERTS IN THE PARK' and 'PRESENTS'. The name 'AJ SPOFF' is in large, white, bold letters. Below the name is a photo of a man (AJ Spoff) wearing a baseball cap and playing an acoustic guitar. To the left of the photo, a white box says 'AUG 19'. Below that, another white box says 'NORTH BRANCH CENTRAL PARK'. To the right of the photo, a white box lists the schedule: '6 PM BOUNCY HOUSE FOOD TRUCK FARMERS MKT', '6:45 PM GUEST READER', and '7 PM CONCERT'. Below the photo, a white box says 'Chalk Drawing Contest for the Kids!'. At the bottom left is the 'NBAEF' logo (North Branch Area Education Foundation). At the bottom right is the 'CITY OF NORTH BRANCH' logo (EST. 1881). At the very bottom, a black banner says 'THIS CONCERT IS SPONSORED BY NORTH BRANCH AREA EDUCATION FOUNDATION'.



