



WASHBURN RURAL HIGH SCHOOL

JUNIOR BLUES NEWSLETTER



FEATURED STORY

BOYS SWIM

Congratulations to Coach Burdick and our Washburn Rural swimmers on an outstanding performance at the KSHSAA Class 6A State Swim Tournament! The Jr. Blues represented our school with determination, talent, and pride while competing against the best swimmers in Kansas.

Leading the way was Daniel Allen, who captured the Class 6A State Championship in the 100-yard butterfly, earning the title of state champion in thrilling fashion. Daniel also added a bronze medal in the 100-yard backstroke, capping off an incredible individual performance and solidifying his place among the state's elite competitors.

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From the Desk of Our Principal



Greetings!

I'm sure that many of you will join me in wondering where the academic year has gone. It seems like only yesterday that we were starting school. Our students have accomplished some fantastic things so far this year. We are the City Champs in Boys' Cross Country, Girls' Cross Country, and Boys' Swim and Dive; we are the Centennial League Champions in Boys' Soccer, Volleyball, Boys' Cross Country, Boys' Swim and Dive, and Girls' Bowling; we are Regional or Sub-State Champions in Girls' Tennis, Volleyball, Boys' Soccer, and Boys' Bowling; we are the State Champions in Boys' Cross Country, Boys' Soccer, and 4-Speaker Debate. Matt Swedlund-Boys' and Girls' Cross Country was named all Shawnee County Coach of the Year; Brian Hensyel-Boys' Soccer was

named Centennial League and 6A State Coach of the Year, and he also received recognition as the 2025 National Federation High School Section 5 Coach of the Year. In addition, we have one State Boys' Swim Champ: Daniel Allen 100-yard butterfly; we have two State Boys' Wrestling Champs: Landen Kocher-Munoz 144 lb. weight class and Jadya Baum 215 lb. weight class. I have every confidence that we will finish the school year as strongly as it has unfolded. In keeping with that belief, I would again like to share some information with you that will assist in helping your child bring a successful conclusion to their academic year.

If your child is experiencing problems in any of their classes, our counselors are more than willing to provide assistance. A multitude of services exist at WRHS that the counselors can help coordinate with you and your child. If individual attention from the teacher and other interventions proves ineffective in solving your challenges, your child may be referred for further intervention through our Student Intervention Team (SIT). The SIT is a group of trained educational professionals, and you, of course, who will conduct a comprehensive analysis of your child's academic progress and habits. After the evaluation is complete, intervention may be recommended to address academic performance issues. Fortunately, most problems can be effectively resolved through this process. For those that aren't, our counselors will be happy to discuss more aggressive options with you. For your convenience, I have listed them below.

Leslie Fischer (785-339-4117): Responsible for students whose last names are A-D

Keith Wetzel (785-339-4116): Responsible for students whose last names are E-J

Emilio Chavez (785-339-4103): Responsible for students whose last names are K-O

Michelle Pegram-Caporusso (785-339-4911): Responsible for students whose last names are P-T

Marie Coates (785-339-4118): Student Services

Marcie Frederickson (785-339-4115): Responsible for students whose last names are U-Z

EmmaRae Chavez (785-339-4119): Responsible for students in B-3 Alternative Education

Also on the horizon are a couple of school events that I want to bring your attention to.

One of the most anticipated evenings of the entire year is fast approaching for our juniors and seniors and their guests! Prom will be held in the Townsite Avenue Ballroom on Saturday, April 11 from 8:00-11:00 p.m. After prom activities, which are sponsored by the WRHS PTO Blues Backers, are currently scheduled to begin at 11:30 p.m. at WRHS. This is a very special time for our school and I hope you will join me in encouraging your students to make good decisions for themselves.

Graduation will occur at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 17, 2026 at the Stormont Vail Events Center. The last day for seniors will be Monday, May 11. Seniors who have not otherwise met graduation requirements **will be required** to attend through the end of the year.

As always, if you have questions about any of these items, please feel free to call me.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Raines". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Ed Raines, Principal
raineedw@usd437.net

WRHS Counseling Office

Counseling Website: bit.ly/wrhscounselors

Crisis Hotline: 785-232-5005 or 988

[Counseling Staff](#)

Pre-enrollment

Students completed pre-enrollment from January 16 until February 26. Students watched [pre-enrollment videos](#) in their advisory and met with counselors in the auditorium during English (Juniors: Feb 12, Sophomores: February 13, Freshmen: February 16). Students were given information about graduation requirements, the importance of taking rigorous courses, the Kansas Scholars Curriculum, program opportunities, and specific details about choosing courses. Students selected 7 fall and 7 spring courses. This information will be used to determine how many sections of each course are needed. As families continue to discuss course planning, please contact your school counselor with questions. Tentative schedules will be released in July.

Junior and Senior Planning Letter

Juniors, Seniors, and their families were sent the [Spring Junior Planning Letter](#) and [Senior January Letter](#) that included many resources and reminders. We encourage families to spend time reviewing the information.

College Visits

WRHS hosts many [college visits](#) throughout the school year. As summer approaches, we encourage families to visit college campuses. This experience can help students set goals, make decisions, and understand the application process. Advice on planning a college visit can be found at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/campus-visit-guide>.

College Honors Programs

Many colleges offer honors programs. Every honors program is designed differently but can usually be characterized by smaller classes, mentorship, research opportunities, honors housing, honors designation on diplomas, and more. Many honors programs have application processes separate from the general admissions process. We encourage students to research whether an honors program would be a good fit! Check out some regional options [HERE](#).

State Sponsored ACT

Over 300 juniors sat the ACT on March 3 at WRHS. Students who would like to retake the test should register at www.act.org. While Kansas colleges are not using the ACT for admission (if a student has a high enough GPA), many are still using it for scholarship consideration.

Scholarships

Need money for college? Many scholarships with March deadlines are available on the [WRHS Counseling Website](#). To access the scholarships, visit our website and click the scholarship tab. The list provides access to applications as well as information on eligibility requirements and deadlines. Students can also search Naviance for scholarship opportunities.

Senior Transcript Requests

Transcripts including grades from the Fall 2025 semester are available via Naviance. Seniors were sent information with instructions on how to request a transcript. Information can be found on the [WRHS Counseling Website](#).

Time Management Tools for High School Students

This article explores 8 ways for teens to take control of their time:

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/inside-the-classroom/8-ways-to-take-control-of-your-time>

Freshmen

- Spread the Word Campaign
- Sources of Strength Activity
- Working with your Teachers, Part 2
- Educator of Excellence Nominations
- Academic/Attendance Check

Sophomores

- Spread the Word Campaign
- Sources of Strength Activity
- Google Drive & Email features
- Educator of Excellence Nominations
- Academic/Attendance Check

Tuesday Advisory Activities for March

Juniors

- Free ACT & Spread the Word Campaign
- Sources of Strength Activity
- Review Junior Planning Letter
- Educator of Excellence Nominations
- Academic/Attendance Check

Seniors

- Spread the Word Campaign
- Sources of Strength Activity
- Senior Exit Survey
- Educator of Excellence Nominations
- Mindfulness Activity

Tues. & Thurs. 3:05–4:15pm

AFTER SCHOOL LABS

Library.

English

Math

Science

Social Studies

Room G2342

AF-JROTC

Room F656

Student Services Resource



**Need a ride
home?**

Sign up in the Main Office
before 6th Period!

◆ Science Olympiad

Science Olympiad Team Shines at Wichita Heights Invitational

Congratulations to Dr. Bailey and the Washburn Rural Science Olympiad Team on an outstanding performance at the Wichita Heights Invitational at the beginning of February! Competing against top schools from across the region, our students demonstrated impressive knowledge, teamwork, and problem-solving skills in a wide range of challenging STEM events.

2nd Place: Anatomy and Physiology: Prajeet Akula

2nd Place: Astronomy: Nikita He and Jace Jackson

4th Place: Remote Sensing: Ian Bailey and Zhun Clark-Kerns

4th Place: Code Busters: Zhun Clark-Kerns, Nikita He, and Jonas Long

4th Place: Electric Vehicle: Jace Jackson

6th Place: Forensic: Nikita He and Jonas Long



◆ Boys Swim

Jr. Blues Make a Splash at KSHSAA State Swim Tournament

Congratulations to Coach Burdick and our Washburn Rural swimmers on an outstanding performance at the KSHSAA Class 6A State Swim Tournament! The Jr. Blues represented our school with determination, talent, and pride while competing against the best swimmers in Kansas.

Leading the way was Daniel Allen, who captured the Class 6A State Championship in the 100-yard butterfly, earning the title of state champion in thrilling fashion. Daniel also added a bronze medal in the 100-yard backstroke, capping off an incredible individual performance and solidifying his place among the state's elite competitors.



Our state qualifiers competed in a variety of individual and relay events, showcasing the depth and talent of this year's team:

- Ben Allen – 100-yard Butterfly
- Daniel Allen – 100-yard Butterfly, 100-yard Backstroke, 200-yard Medley Relay, 200-yard Freestyle Relay
- Thomas Appuhn – 100-yard Individual Medley, 100-yard Backstroke, 200-yard Medley Relay, 200-yard Freestyle Relay
- Alex Jeffries – 400-yard Freestyle Relay
- Joe Jensen – 400-yard Freestyle Relay
- Quinten Jessop – 50-yard Freestyle, 200-yard Freestyle Relay, 400-yard Freestyle Relay
- Braeden Montgomery – 200-yard Freestyle, 500-yard Freestyle, 400-yard Freestyle Relay
- Andres Morao-Jaspe – 100-yard Individual Medley, 100-yard Backstroke, 200-yard Medley Relay, 200-yard Freestyle Relay
- Castle Wallace – 100-yard Breaststroke, 200-yard Medley Relay, 200-yard Freestyle Relay

Competing at the state level is an accomplishment in itself, and our swimmers rose to the challenge with impressive performances across the board.

◆ Wrestling

Jr. Blues Wrestling Programs Shine with Third-Place State Finishes

Congratulations to our boys wrestling team and to Coach Hogan and Coach Torres for leading the program to another outstanding podium finish at the state tournament. The Jr. Blues secured a third-place team finish in Class 6A, an accomplishment that reflects the team's depth across the lineup, relentless work ethic, and consistent preparation throughout the season.

Leading the way was senior Landen Kocher-Munoz, who capped off his remarkable high school career with his third consecutive state championship at 144 pounds. Winning three straight titles is a rare achievement and a testament to his sustained excellence, discipline, and leadership.

Junior Jadya Baum also captured a state championship, earning the title at 215 pounds and solidifying his place among the best in Kansas.

The Jr. Blues showcased their strength in multiple weight classes, with several additional wrestlers reaching the podium:

- Andrew Peterson – 2nd place (113)
- Ryder Harrison – 2nd place (120)
- Cooper Stivers – 2nd place (138)
- Brodye Kocher-Munoz – 3rd place (150)
- Hayden Broxterman – 5th place (106)
- Kaiden Marshall – 5th place (285)
- Brenner Beniga – 6th place (175)



Girls Wrestling Earns Third-Place Team Finish

Congratulations as well to our girls wrestling team and to Coach Parker and his staff for their outstanding leadership in guiding the program to a third-place finish at the state tournament. Their success reflects continued growth, determination, and the competitive strength of the program.

◆ Wrestling

The girls placed three wrestlers in the state finals and had strong representation across multiple weight classes on the podium:

- Lacey Middleton – 2nd place (125)
- Emme Blanco – 2nd place (145)
- Elia Smith – 2nd place (170)
- Aliyah Tangpricha – 3rd place (105)
- Madi Blanco – 3rd place (140)
- Raella Ebanez – 4th place (155)
- Lily Davis – 5th place (190)

With both programs earning third-place team finishes at the state level, Jr. Blues wrestling continues to demonstrate excellence, depth, and a commitment to competing at the highest level. Congratulations to all of our wrestlers and coaches on an exceptional season representing our school with pride.



WRHS Team Earns 2nd Place at Washburn Leadership Challenge

Congratulations to Ms. Lake, Ms. Finney, and our outstanding student team: Anisha Dhir, Serenity Hulse, Abigail Stone, MJ Johnson, and Luisa Espinoza, on earning 2nd place at the Washburn University Leadership Challenge Competition.

This highly competitive two-day event brings together high school and college students from across the region to participate in a live leadership simulation modeled after real-world community challenges. Teams are evaluated on their ability to collaborate effectively, think



strategically, communicate clearly, and make sound decisions under pressure while interacting with role-players and judges.

Competing at this level requires extensive preparation, composure, adaptability, and authentic leadership skills. Our students demonstrated all of these qualities while representing WRHS with professionalism and pride.

We are incredibly proud of their achievement and the way they rose to the challenge on such a competitive stage. Congratulations to our students and sponsors on this impressive accomplishment!

WRHS Musicians Shine at KMEA State Convention

Congratulations to our music staff and students on outstanding performances at the KMEA State Convention in Wichita last weekend, the most prestigious stage for high school music in Kansas.

This Generation, under the direction of Ben Holcomb, presented an aggressive program of sophisticated literature, showcasing both technical precision and artistic expression. Our students rose to the occasion with remarkable poise and musical maturity, delivering a performance that reflected countless hours of preparation.

Jazz I, directed by Luke Chaffee, brought incredible energy to the convention with a dynamic set of jazz standards that had the audience on its feet. Their tight ensemble sound, confident soloists, and stage presence made for a truly memorable performance.

Both directors are to be commended for their leadership and dedication in bringing out the very best in our students on such a significant stage.

In addition to the ensemble performances, several WRHS students were selected to participate in All-State Honor Ensembles, an exceptional achievement that represents the highest level of individual musical accomplishment in Kansas. Please see the accompanying graphic and join us in congratulating these talented musicians for representing WRHS with distinction and pride.



2025-2026 All-State Honors

Elementary Choir Ellie Crumb Mille Gerrish Charley Murray	High School Full Orchestra Cello Finley Guccione Trumpet Tessa Chaffee	
High School Choir Mixed Choir Beckham Carr Max McKibben Treble Choir Audrey Appuhn Cambria Hall Anna Johnston	High School Band B-flat Clarinet Alexander Al-Murrani Trumpet Kaden Raines Tuba Blake Kelly	High School Jazz Band Trumpet Lucas Langley Annie Winter

Washburn Rural's AFJROTC program had an exceptional February, highlighted by competitive success, historic achievements, and a celebration worthy of the red carpet.

The "New Cadet" marksmanship team has shown tremendous growth this season. The team is currently scoring more than 100 points higher than last year and has climbed to an impressive 22nd in the world in the Scopos Marksmanship League. Their dedication, focus, and commitment to improvement are clearly paying off on the global stage.

On February 7, Washburn Rural competed at the Lee's Summit Drill Meet, where history was made. Cadets Iain Singer and Luke Weber became the first students in school history to compete in an Armed Exhibition Competition. Not only did they represent Washburn Rural with pride, but they also earned a 3rd place finish, bringing home a medal in the event for the first time ever. Their performance marks a milestone moment for the drill program.

Excellence continued on February 18 during the unit's annual AFJROTC Evaluation conducted by Regional Director Steve Sanders. The unit earned an outstanding score of 92, receiving an overall rating of "Exceeds Standards," the highest rating attainable for the Unit Assessment. This distinction reflects the hard work, leadership, discipline, and professionalism demonstrated by the cadets and instructors throughout the year. Click [here](#) to view pictures from the evaluation.



The month concluded with a celebration of these accomplishments at the annual Cadet Military Ball on February 21. With an "Old Hollywood" theme, cadets walked a star-studded red carpet, enjoyed a lasagna dinner, and danced the night away. The evening also included the crowning of AFJROTC royalty:

Prince: AJ Wessell
Princess: Haniel Arbon
King (tie): Levi Holmes and Michael Leonard Jr.
Queen: Mariah McDonald

From world rankings and historic medals to top-tier evaluations and elegant celebrations, Washburn Rural AFJROTC continues to set the standard for excellence. Congratulations to the cadets and instructors on an incredible month. To view pictures from the Ball, click [here](#).

◆ World Language

German Students Excel at KATG Schülerkongress

Eighteen WRHS German students traveled to the University of Kansas on Saturday, February 28, to attend the KATG Schülerkongress. This annual event brings together German students from across the state for a day of language immersion, collaboration, and competition.



Students had the opportunity to speak with native German speakers, connect with peers from other schools, and compete in a variety of academic events highlighting their language skills and cultural knowledge. Several of our students earned top honors:

German 4

- Eli Replogle – 1st Place, Culture Quiz

German 3

- Dawson Wilber – 1st Place, Poetry; 2nd Place, Culture Quiz
- Dylan Weigel – 1st Place, Culture Quiz
- Thomas Dicken-Munoz – 2nd Place, Culture Quiz

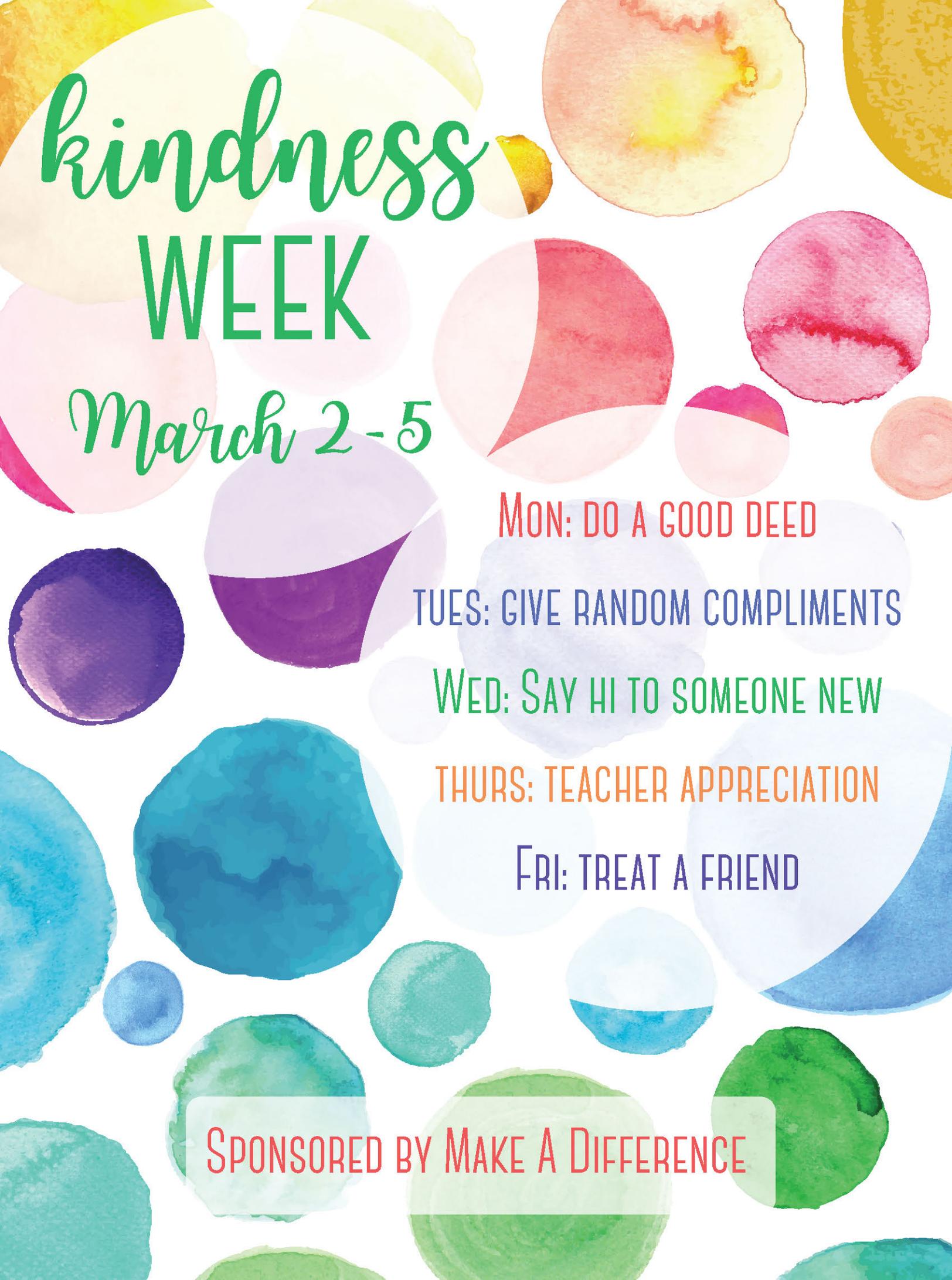
German 2

- Hudson Rannebeck – 1st Place, Prose
- Luke Weber – 1st Place, Culture Quiz
- Isaac Kailer – 1st Place, Culture Quiz

German 1

- Jonathan Tilghman – 3rd Place, Breakout Room

These accomplishments reflect the dedication, preparation, and enthusiasm of our World Language students. If you see these students this week, be sure to congratulate them on their success! A special thank you to Kaylee Barber for dedicating her weekend to support our German program and for providing students with this outstanding opportunity to grow and compete.



kindness WEEK

March 2-5

MON: DO A GOOD DEED

TUES: GIVE RANDOM COMPLIMENTS

WED: SAY HI TO SOMEONE NEW

THURS: TEACHER APPRECIATION

FRI: TREAT A FRIEND

SPONSORED BY MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Tangled: A Night Under Lanterns

WINTER FORMAL 2026

Pascal Day

Spirit Week and

King & Queen of Courts:

Candidates and students at WRHS dressed up for spirit week centered around the movie Tangled!



Winter Formal Assembly: The assembly was held on Friday 2/13 and featured performances by the Dancin' Blues, Cheerleaders, pep band, and games played by teachers and students!

King & Queen of Courts:

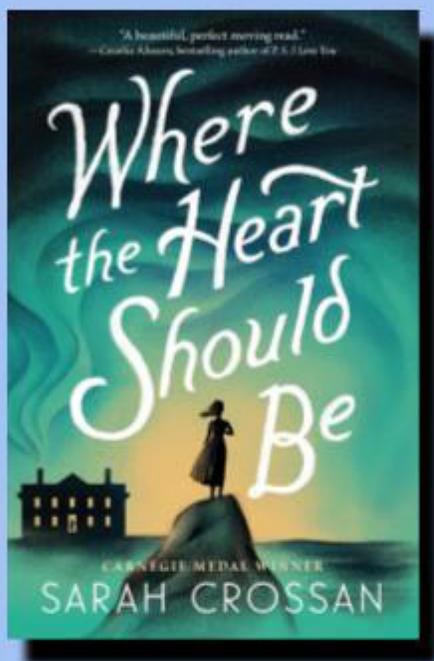
Congratulations to Conner Schonlaw and Jenna Jo Jensen on being crowned King & Queen between the basketball games on Friday 2/13!



Winter Formal and King & Queen of Courts are proudly sponsored by WRHS Student Council.

Mrs. Finney's Monthly YA Book Recommendation

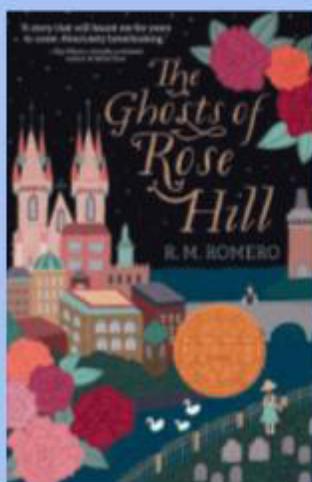
March 2026



Where the Heart Should Be
By Sarah Crossan
F CRO

“It is 1846 and Ireland is starving. The potatoes are black, people are dying...” This historical fiction novel in verse tells the story of Nell, a young girl trying to help her family survive by taking a job working at the big house in the kitchen. Unfortunately, Nell’s help may not be enough, because rent is due, people are desperate, and not even love can save them.

Similar Titles Include:



Connect with us @wrhslib for:

- technology support
- homework help
- reading recommendations
- area job openings
- school activities and more



Text 4 Help: 785-260-0015

Marcy Sandberg sandbmar@usd437.net

Victoria Finney finnevic@usd437.net

Visit the WRHS Library to place a hold on or check out one of these amazing books today!



WRHSLib Bookmark Creation Contest March 23rd - April 13th 2026

The Bookmark Creation Contest is back! To participate:

- Starting Monday, March 23rd, students & staff are invited to design an original bookmark using their own creative supplies or those provided by the library.
- Bookmarks must be submitted to the library by Friday, April 3rd.
- Voting opens Monday, April 6th, and closes Friday, April 10th.
- Winners will be announced Monday April 13th, 2026.

Consider creativity, neatness, and message while designing your bookmark. Bookmarks will be on display (without names) in the library and voted on by WRHS students and staff. The top 3 winning bookmarks will be printed and distributed to students and staff checking out books in the library!



Connect with us @wrhslib for:

- technology support
- homework help
- reading recommendations
- area job openings
- school activities and more



Text 4 Help: 785-260-0015
Marcy Sandberg sandbmar@usd437.net
Victoria Finney finnevic@usd437.net

6 things to know about AI

Artificial intelligence technology is not new, but dramatic advances in generative AI have captured the world's attention and are transforming the information landscape. **Here are six news literacy takeaways** and implications to keep in mind as this technology continues to evolve.



TEXT

TOOLS

Chatbots: ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, Claude, etc.

HOW THEY WORK

Generative AI chatbots rely on a technology called a **large language model** to synthesize large amounts of information and imitate human writing. They are trained on vast databases of internet text and digitized online writings, including books, articles and websites.

Chatbots use probability to predict what words and phrases go together to answer a given prompt. Some experts compare them to autocompletion tools on steroids.



VISUALS

TOOLS

Image generators: DALL-E, Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, etc.

HOW THEY WORK:

These tools have **learned how to arrange pixels** to generate digital images after being trained on billions of images and text captions scraped from the web.

They allow anyone to generate compelling and custom visuals from written prompts and can imitate styles of paintings or create photo-realistic images.



1 Generative AI tools are not objective ...

They are subject to the biases of the humans who make them — and integrate any biases baked into their training data. Data sets often include copyrighted, misleading and overtly biased material. These tools do not just learn human biases; they can also amplify, extend and entrench them.

T Researchers have raised concerns about AI chatbots generating misinformation and providing responses that include conspiracy theories, pseudoscience and harmful content.

[E] AI image generators amplify biases in race and gender and can default to harmful Western stereotypes. A [Bloomberg experiment](#), for instance, found that Stable Diffusion produced AI images dominated by people with lighter skin tones for high-paying jobs, while images of fast food workers and dish washers skewed toward darker skin tones.

2 ... or reliably factual.

AI tools might feel authoritative and credible, but the responses they generate are routinely riddled with inaccuracies.

T Chatbots have been known to make up sources, provide incorrect answers to simple questions and write persuasive responses that include misinformation. Experts refer to false information presented with confidence as “hallucinations” — a persistent issue with this technology.

[E] AI image generators can create anything you ask for — however absurd, whimsical or potentially harmful and misleading. While many people use image generators to make fun, fanciful images, bad actors can use them to smear public officials or produce other damaging fakes.

3 It's not all bad.

It can be easy to get swept up in alarmist takes, but AI tools also have tremendous upsides. For example, they can boost scientific research and make complicated or specialized tasks more accessible, like writing computer code or building websites. Some news organizations use AI to responsibly automate certain tasks, such as [The Associated Press](#) using AI to compile corporate earnings and sports box scores.



4 Content is easier than ever to create — and fake.

AI chatbots and image generators produce text and visuals at an unprecedented scale — and have the potential to supercharge the spread of misinformation. Some tools are even being used to produce fabricated news broadcasts using realistic-looking AI anchors. Be ready to encounter even more information with less transparency about its origin.

5 It signals a change in the nature of evidence.

Don't let AI technology undermine your willingness to trust anything you see and hear. Just be careful about what you accept as authentic.

T Traditional signals of credibility — such as clean writing, academic footnotes or sleek website design — are relatively easy to fake in today's information landscape. But AI chatbots make them easier than ever to game — at scale. Skills like “[lateral reading](#)” become even more critical.

[E] The rise of more convincing fake photos and videos means that finding the source and context for visuals is often more important than hunting for visual clues of authenticity. Any viral image you can't verify through a reliable source — using a reverse image search, for example — should be approached with skepticism.

6 Reputable sources matter more than ever.

Credible sources follow processes to verify information before sharing it, and this should translate into higher levels of trust. Professional journalism ethics — such as fairness, transparency and accuracy — can be seen in the quality of information published by standards-based news organizations. Generative AI tools don't show the same concern for truth, verification or the public interest.



This infographic was created by the News Literacy Project with support from SmartNews, a news app for mobile devices.

For a future founded on facts

newslit.org

Is it legit?

Five steps for vetting a news source

Many sources compete for attention online, including partisan blogs and bogus sites posing as legitimate news organizations. It can be tough to know what to trust. Follow these steps to cut through the noise and learn how to evaluate sources for signs of credibility – as well as for red flags that signal a source should be avoided.

Test your source savvy!

Scan this QR code to put your source-vetting skills to the test.



1



Do a quick search

Conducting a simple search for information about a news source is a key first step in evaluating its credibility. It's important to look beyond social media. Go to a search engine and plug in the name of the website or publication. Do other legitimate sources, such as standards-based news organizations or [fact-checking websites](#), describe this publication as unreliable? Satirical? Is it a state-run propaganda "news" site? If so, there's no need to spend more time vetting. Look elsewhere for reliable information.

- **Tip:** Wikipedia can be a good place to start and lead you to relevant source links; just keep in mind that some credible local newsrooms may not have an entry there. You can also see if a source has been vetted for inclusion on news aggregators, such as [Google News](#), [Apple News](#) and [SmartNews](#).

2



Look for standards

Reputable news organizations aspire to ethical guidelines and standards, including fairness, accuracy and independence. These standards should be available publicly – often in the form of editorial policies or a code of ethics. Look for evidence that a source follows such standards. If someone is mentioned in a critical story, for instance, did the journalist give that person a chance to comment?

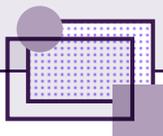
- **Note:** Some professional journalism standards are commonly shared across the industry, such as the [Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics](#). Other policies are unique to different newsrooms.

Beware of these trust busters!

If you spot any of these problems, look elsewhere for credible news.

- ✗ **False or untrue content:**
Publishing a demonstrably false claim without correcting it
- ✗ **Clickbait tactics:**
"Baiting" you with sensationalized language, including misleading or exaggerated headlines, or headlines that are purposely vague to drive clicks
- ✗ **Lack of balance:**
Consistently focusing on one angle or side of a legitimate debate or controversy, while ignoring or distorting other perspectives
- ✗ **Manipulated images or videos**
Tip: You can do a [reverse image search](#) using [Google](#), [TinEye](#) and [Yandex](#) (among other tools) to see if visuals have been misrepresented or altered in some way.
- ✗ **State-run or state-sponsored propaganda:**
Using government-controlled news organizations to further national agendas and improve public image
- ✗ **Dangerous, offensive and malicious content:**
Could include discriminatory language, unverified pseudoscience, content that promotes violence or coverage that – as the SPJ Code of Ethics states – panders "to lurid curiosity"

3

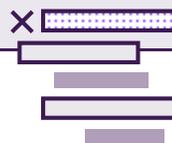


Check for transparency

Quality news sources should be transparent, not only about their reporting practices (see Step 2), but also about their ownership and funding. Is it clear who owns and runs this website or publication? Is advertising labeled responsibly? Can you tell who is writing and producing content? Is there a way to contact newsroom editors and reporters?

- **Remember:** "About" pages can provide some of these details, but they can also be misleading and omit important information (about a source's ownership or lack of independence, for example). **Don't be fooled** by a [sleek web design](#), or trust the "About" page on an unfamiliar site without further verification. If something seems suspicious, check it out.

4



Examine how errors are handled

Credible news sources are accountable for mistakes and correct them. Do you see evidence that this source corrects or clarifies errors?

5



Assess news coverage

An important step in vetting sources is taking time to read and assess several news articles: Do you see original reporting? Do they provide straight news reports, or just commentary and opinion? Are there grammatical and/or spelling errors? How do news articles from this source compare to coverage from other standards-based newsrooms on this same topic? Many people have strong opinions about news sources without evaluating them firsthand.

- **Tip:** Take note of bylines (names) on news coverage. These bylines can help you confirm that this coverage was written or produced by professional journalists. Bylines are also a sign of transparency and accountability.

News Literacy Project



SmartNews

This infographic was created by the **News Literacy Project** in partnership with **SmartNews**, a news app for mobile devices.

For a future founded on facts [newslit.org](#)



STUDENT SERVICES

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS AND UNIFIED SPORTS

EVERYONE'S A JR. BLUE NIGHT

We had a spectacular group of students participate in our annual Everyone's a Jr. Blue Night. From basketball to cheer and dance coupled with an electric crowd showing their support - it was a great night for all. Thank you to everyone who made this magical night possible!

SPREAD THE WORD WEEK

Spread the Word is an annual worldwide campaign that encourages inclusion and kindness. Join us for a fun week of activities as we highlight the importance of inclusion and creating a culture of belonging for all.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- March 2nd-6th - Spread the Word Spirit Week
- March 4th - Spread the Word Day - Sign the Banner at Lunch!
- Stay tuned for Spring Unified Sports - Soccer and Track and Field



SIGN UP TO JOIN US!



◆ Career and Technical Education

For the 2026-27 school year, WRHS will be offering classes in the following Career Clusters and Pathways

- **Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources:** Animal Science, Health and Related Industries, Diversified Agricultural Science, Natural Resources & Environmental Sustainability and Plant Science & Industry Operations Pathways
- **Information Technology:** Media Design & Communications and Programming & Software Development Pathways
- **Business Finance:** Finance Pathway
- **Marketing:** Marketing Pathway
- **Manufacturing:** Manufacturing Pathway
- **Education & Training:** Teaching/Training Pathway
- **Health & BioSciences:** Biotechnology and Health Science Pathways
- **Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security:** Corrections, Security, Law & Law Enforcement Pathway
- **Architecture & Design:** Construction & Design Pathway
- **Hospitality & Tourism:** Restaurant & Event Management Pathway

Visit the CTE website for more information: WRHS.net/cte or WRHS counselor page - [WRHS Course Planning Guide](#)

CTE is for everyone - It Works!

Career and technical education (CTE) engages students and prepares them with the skills they need for fulfilling careers in vital, in-demand industries and occupations.

https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/ACTE_CTEWorks_January2026.pdf

The link below gives information about CTE status for Kansas. As students move through the process of completing their four-year plan, I hope they are considering CTE classes.

<https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Kansas-CTE-Fact-Sheet-June-2025.pdf>

For more information about CTE Pathways and courses please visit

<https://sites.google.com/usd437.net/wrhscareertechd>

CTE@WRHS or WRHS.net Guidance Page- Course Planning Guide

Hospitality & Tourism Guest Speaker



Lacey Livingston, an inspector from the Department of Agriculture, recently delivered an informative presentation on food safety, highlighting the critical role proper handling and regulation play in protecting public health. The session focused on common food safety risks, including contamination, improper storage, and inadequate sanitation practices, and explained how these issues can be prevented through adherence to established guidelines to our culinary students in Ms. Dible's class.

Drawing on real-world inspection experiences, the inspector outlined key standards enforced by the department, such as temperature control, cleanliness, and accurate labeling.

◆ Career and Technical Education

Attendees gained insight into how inspections are conducted and why compliance is essential not only to meet legal requirements but also to maintain consumer trust.

The presentation emphasized that food safety is a shared responsibility among producers, vendors, and consumers. By following best practices and staying informed about regulations, businesses can reduce risks and ensure the food reaching the public is safe, wholesome, and of high quality.

Teaching and Training Pathway



Ms. Fike's students enrolled in Family Studies and Human Growth & Development classes are gaining hands-on experience through training with "RealLife" Babies, a program designed to teach the realities of infant care. These lifelike infant simulators help students understand the responsibilities involved in caring for a baby, including feeding, diapering, comforting, and responding to cries at all hours of the day and night.

Before taking the RealLife Babies home, students receive detailed instruction on proper handling, safety, and care techniques. Lessons also focus on time management, emotional readiness, and the impact of caregiving on daily routines. This preparation ensures students approach the experience responsibly and with a clear understanding of expectations.

Over the weekend, teachers are able to monitor each student's progress through built-in technology within the RealLife Babies. The devices record data such as response time, frequency of care, and any instances of mishandling or neglect. When students return, teachers review the data with them, allowing for reflection, discussion, and assessment. This interactive experience provides students with valuable insight into child development and reinforces the challenges and rewards of responsible caregiving. This experience was made possible by a grant received from the Auburn Washburn Foundation.

Teaching and Training Pathway

Students in the *Teaching as a Career* program recently took an educational field trip to several important sites in Topeka, including the Topeka Public Library, the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, and the Kansas State Capitol.

The trip began at the Topeka Public Library, where students learned about the many resources available to teachers and students. They also discovered that working at a public library can be a great way to gain experience working with children.

Next, students visited the Brown v. Board of Education site, where they learned about segregation laws and how they were eventually repealed. One highlight of the visit was acting out the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, which helped students better understand the impact of these laws on education.



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The final stop was the Kansas State Capitol, where students learned more about Kansas history and experienced what it might be like for students to visit on a school field trip.

Overall, the trip provided valuable insight into education, history, and future career opportunities. For many students, the Brown v. Board of Education site was the most memorable stop due to its powerful lessons about equality in education.

Manufacturing Pathway

Students in Mr. Harvey's welding classes recently had the opportunity to learn from guest instructor Jonah Winter of Heartland Welding Academy in Andover, Kansas. Winter spent the day with WRHS welding students, sharing an overview of Heartland Welding Academy's programs and career opportunities in the welding field.

During the visit, Welding 3 students observed demonstrations and practiced advanced 6G pipe-to-pipe welds, while Welding 2 students focused on 2G and 3G pipe welding techniques. The hands-on session gave students valuable exposure to industry-level skills and expectations, reinforcing classroom instruction with real-world experience.



Construction & Design Pathway



Greg Duryea from Custom Wood Products recently spoke with students about career opportunities in machine repair, offering a real-world look into this in-demand field. The presenter shared how machine repair technicians play a critical role in keeping manufacturing equipment running safely and efficiently, especially in a production-based industry like wood products.

Students learned about the skills needed for success, including problem-solving, mechanical knowledge, and attention to detail, as well as the benefits of the career, such as strong job stability, hands-on work, and opportunities for advancement. The presentation gave

students valuable insight into how technical skills learned in CTE programs can lead directly to rewarding careers in the workforce.

◆ Career and Technical Education

8th Grade Students Explore Future Opportunities at CTE Center

Eighth grade students from both middle schools recently toured the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center to learn more about the exciting opportunities awaiting them in high school next year. The visit gave students a firsthand look at the wide variety of programs and pathways available to them as they begin planning for their futures.

During the tour, students attended a presentation led by members of the National Technical Honor Society (NTHS). The NTHS students shared valuable insights about CTE courses and programs, helping the eighth graders better understand their options before enrolling in classes.

The presentation focused on three main areas: exploring opportunities, having a plan, and getting involved early in high school. NTHS members encouraged students to take time to discover their interests, think ahead about their goals, and participate in activities, clubs, and organizations as soon as possible. They emphasized that early involvement can open doors to leadership roles, internships, certifications, and future career pathways.



The session concluded with a question-and-answer period, where eighth graders had the chance to ask about specific programs, workloads, and student experiences. NTHS members also introduced themselves, sharing what programs they are involved in, what they have accomplished during high school, and their plans after graduation, whether entering the workforce, attending technical school, or pursuing college degrees.

The tour provided eighth graders with valuable information and inspiration as they prepare to take the next step in their academic journey.

Understanding the True Cost of Health Care: Brent Krenzin Speaks to Business and Finance Students

Washburn Rural High School students recently had the opportunity to learn firsthand about one of the most important, and often overlooked, financial realities of adulthood and business ownership: health insurance. Brent Krenzin, Senior Group Sales Consultant with Blue Cross Blue Shield, visited Mr. McFall's Consumer & Personal Finance classes and the DECA Business Club on February 5 to share his industry knowledge and real-world insights.

Krenzin focused on the concept of risk transfer, explaining how health insurance helps individuals and businesses protect themselves from potentially catastrophic medical costs. He emphasized that for employers, employee benefits, especially health insurance, are often the single largest and fastest-growing expense, increasing each year due to inflation and rising health care costs.

Students were surprised to learn that health coverage for just one person can cost around \$1,000 per month, meaning employers may need to generate \$4–\$20 per hour in revenue simply to cover one employee's

◆ Career and Technical Education

insurance. This highlighted how benefits significantly affect total compensation. For example, a job paying \$20 per hour with strong health benefits could actually be worth more than a \$24-per-hour job with limited coverage.

Krenzin also explained different types of health plans. Self-funded plans, where employers assume the direct financial risk of employee medical claims, can lead to huge expenses, sometimes millions of dollars for a single claim. Because of this unpredictability, many companies rely on insurance pools, where contributions from many people help cover high-cost medical needs for a few individuals.

Students explored the differences between traditional plans and high-deductible plans, along with tools like Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) and Health Savings Accounts (HSAs). Both allow individuals to use pre-tax dollars for medical expenses, lowering taxable income. FSAs must be used within the year, while HSAs can roll over and even function similarly to a retirement account for future health costs.

Additional topics included the Affordable Care Act, marketplace insurance options, staying on a parent's plan until age 26, and how preventative care is often covered at no cost. Krenzin compared health insurance to car ownership; routine "maintenance" costs are expected, but insurance protects you from major accidents or unexpected bills.

During his DECA presentation, Krenzin connected health care costs directly to business operations (school-based businesses). He explained that expenses like insurance, utilities, and payroll influence product pricing and overhead. He also shared how salary and benefits together form a compensation strategy, reminding students that higher pay doesn't always mean better overall value if benefits are weaker.

With U.S. health care spending reaching trillions of dollars annually and costs rising 10–12% each year, Krenzin encouraged students to become informed consumers and future business leaders who understand how to budget, compare plans, and use available financial tools wisely.

His visit gave students a practical look at how health care impacts both personal finances and the business world, knowledge that will benefit them long after graduation.

Investing in Real-World Skills

In Mr. McFall's Consumer and Personal Finance and Banking and Finance classes, students aren't just learning about money; they're putting it to work. This semester, students are participating in a stock market simulation using StockTrak, giving them firsthand experience managing investments in a realistic virtual market.

Rather than reading about stocks and bonds, students trade them in a simulated environment using real market data. Through platforms like StockTrak, students build and manage their own virtual investment portfolios, make buying and selling decisions, and track performance over time, just like real investors. This simulation teaches students how financial markets work, how to analyze investments, and what it means to balance risk and reward.

Beyond stocks, the simulation helps reinforce core personal finance concepts, including:

- Budgeting and saving
- Banking basics
- Risk vs. return
- Diversification and long-term planning

◆ Career and Technical Education

By making decisions in a safe, educational setting, students gain confidence and essential financial literacy skills that will serve them long after graduation.

Thanks to a partnership with Kansas State University's Department of Finance, students are participating in the K-State High School Investment Competition. In this challenge, teams use StockTrak to manage their virtual investment portfolio, competing to maximize their returns over several months. Top-performing teams can win scholarship prizes and may even be invited to visit K-State's campus! This competition builds:

- Teamwork and strategy development
- Real-world financial analysis
- Critical thinking and decision-making
- Presentation and reporting skills

Learning about finance in a classroom is useful, but experiencing it firsthand takes understanding to a whole new level. The StockTrak project and investment competition help students connect classroom lessons to real financial concepts, preparing them for college courses, career opportunities in finance, and strong personal money management skills throughout life. Whether you're planning to study business, save for college, or simply manage your own finances smartly, these simulations are an exciting step toward financial confidence.

Washburn Rural High School recognized for Outstanding School-based Enterprises

The WRHS Bank, Common Grounds Coffee Shop, and The Shack, the school-based enterprises (SBEs) at Washburn Rural High School have earned Gold Certification and will be recognized at DECA's International Career Development Conference in April in Atlanta, Georgia.

An SBE is an entrepreneurial operation in a school setting that provides goods and services to meet the needs of the market. SBEs are managed and operated by students as hands-on learning laboratories that integrate National Curriculum Standards in marketing, finance, hospitality, and management. DECA advisors have utilized this effective educational tool for over four decades to provide their students with realistic and practical learning experiences that reinforce classroom instruction, enhance 21st-century skill development, and prepare students for college and careers.

The Washburn Rural DECA members who contributed to the certification were Nicholas He, Kaci Hodgson, Keegan Knudtson, Kate Muir, and Kailyn Petersen, with guidance from their DECA chapter advisor, Brian McFall. The SBEs at WRHS have operated for over 15 years, an accomplishment that reflects sustained excellence and commitment.



◆ Career and Technical Education

“DECA’s School-based Enterprise Certification Program is a rigorous process designed to help DECA members demonstrate their classroom learning in a practical, learning laboratory, and then translate that learning into meaningful outcomes,” said Christopher Young, Chief Program Officer at DECA Inc. “These DECA members are practicing important workplace readiness skills while preparing for college and careers.”

DECA’s SBE Certification Program recognizes outstanding achievement while motivating SBEs to pursue continuous excellence and growth. Enterprises may receive certification at three levels: Bronze, Silver, or Gold. To apply, SBEs must submit comprehensive documentation demonstrating how they meet established marketing and retail standards. Documentation is reviewed by a certification committee, which determines the level of recognition awarded. DECA’s SBE Program is sponsored by Otis Spunkmeyer Inc.

Programming & Software Development Pathway

Joe Jensen, pictured below, received a RUDD Foundation scholarship to continue his education in Computer Engineering at Kansas State University.

The Rudd Foundation Scholarship is a life-changing opportunity for Kansas students seeking a college education without the burden of student debt. Established by businessman and philanthropist Leslie Rudd, the scholarship reflects his commitment to expanding access to higher education and supporting students with strong character, work ethic, and leadership potential.

The program provides a comprehensive scholarship covering tuition, fees, room and board, and books, along with additional financial support for expenses such as study abroad, internships, or professional development opportunities. Beyond financial assistance, Rudd Scholars receive mentorship, leadership development, and access to a strong network of peers and professionals.



◆ Career and Technical Education

Health Science Pathway

WRHS HOSA Students Explore Healthcare Careers at Stormont Vail Hospital

The Washburn Rural High School HOSA (Health Science) Club recently visited Stormont Vail Hospital for an immersive behind-the-scenes look at the many professionals who work together every day to care for patients and support families in our community. The field trip gave students exploring healthcare careers a firsthand view of the wide range of opportunities in the medical field—from hands-on patient care to laboratory diagnostics and professional training.



Advanced Simulation Labs

One of the highlights of the visit was the hospital's robotic patient simulation lab. In this advanced training space, healthcare professionals practice procedures and respond to emergency scenarios using lifelike robotic patients that simulate real symptoms and reactions. Students were impressed by the realism of the simulations and the level of preparation required to ensure patient safety before entering a real clinical setting.

The group also toured a green screen simulation room, where providers practice adapting to different clinical environments. This innovative technology allows teams to strengthen communication, enhance decision-making, and prepare for a wide variety of patient scenarios.

Laboratory Science

In the gross anatomy lab, students observed pathologists and laboratory technicians meticulously preparing organs and tissues for further evaluation. They also visited the hospital's blood bank, chemistry lab, and microbiology lab to learn about the critical tests performed daily to guide diagnoses and treatment plans. Students gained an appreciation for the vital role laboratory science plays in patient care—even in areas that patients may not directly see.

Specialized Patient Care Units

WRHS students toured the cardiac unit and oncology floor, witnessing how nurses, physicians, therapists, and technicians collaborate to care for patients with complex medical needs. A particularly memorable experience was a demonstration of virtual nursing technology, which allows experienced nurses to support bedside staff remotely, enhancing patient monitoring, education, and communication.

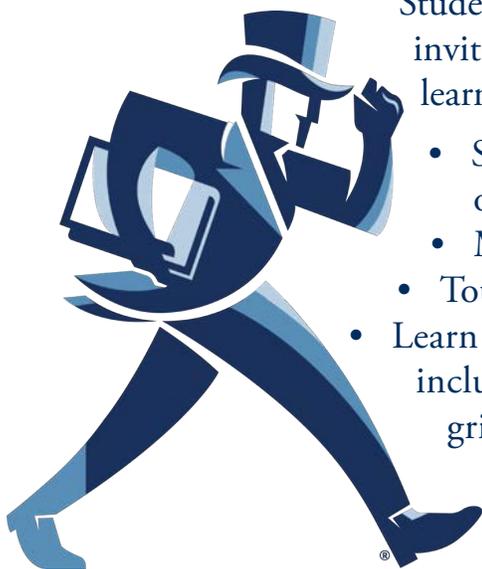
Inspiring the Next Generation

Throughout the visit, one theme stood out: learning in healthcare never stops. Professionals shared how continuing education, certifications, and teamwork are essential in a field that is constantly evolving. Our students left with a deeper understanding that a career in healthcare requires not only knowledge but a lifelong commitment to growth and service.

The Washburn Rural HOSA Club is grateful to Stormont Vail Hospital for welcoming our students and for investing in the next generation of healthcare professionals.

◆ Career and Technical Education

Health Science Pathway



Students and parents interested in biology are invited to join us from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. to learn more about what we have to offer:

- Speak with faculty members about your class options and majors.
- Meet with current Washburn students.
- Tour our top-notch science classrooms and labs.
- Learn about your scholarship opportunities, including our enhanced academic merit grid, specialized scholarships and ScholarshipUniverse, our new database for all awards.
 - Register to win a scholarship drawing!

REGISTER FOR THE EVENT



◆ Career and Technical Education

Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security Pathway



FBI KANSAS CITY 2026 TEEN ACADEMY

Join us for a three-day immersive experience into the daily life at the FBI July 29-31. From crisis negotiations to intelligence analysis, and from SWAT to evidence collection, FBI Agents and Professional Staff will showcase their careers and daily work through simulations, hands-on demonstrations, and real-life case examples. You'll also learn more about future careers with the FBI. The three-day program is not an overnight camp. Accepted students will report to FBI Kansas City headquarters each day. This is a competitive opportunity and only a limited number of students will be selected. Full details are available via the application.



APPLY ONLINE:

<https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/outreach-applications/2026-kansas-city-teen-academy-application.pdf/view>

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SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS



Ashlynn VanDonge

Years in The Shack: 3 Years
Intended Major: Graphic Design
College: Undecided



Gavin Payne

Years in The Shack: 2 Years
Intended Major: Finance
College: The University of Kansas



Madysen Sorensen

Years in The Shack: 1 Year
Intended Major: Biology
College: Undecided



2026 WRHS YEARBOOK

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