Volume Three Issue 2 - Winter 2026

the NEST

News from Hawk Nation



Hillsboro R-3 School District

www.hsdr3.org

FROM THE DESK OF DR. JON ISAACSON

Dear Hillsboro R-III School District Community,

One of the things I appreciate most about The Nest is that it tells the story of Hillsboro R-3 through many voices—our students, staff, and schools. As you read the building highlights in this issue, I hope you take a moment to recognize just how much good work is happening across our district every single day. Those stories reflect dedication, creativity, and a deep commitment to students that make our community proud.

Celebrating the Work in Our Buildings
Across all buildings, we continue to see strong instructional practices, positive school cultures, and meaningful connections with students and families. Whether it's academic growth, student leadership, extracurricular success, or day-to-day moments that matter, our schools are doing exactly what they are supposed to do—serving kids well. I am grateful to our staff for their professionalism and to our families for their partnership.

Financial Strength and Transparency
I also want to highlight an important point of pride for Hillsboro R-3: **our most recent audit was clean,** once again confirming that the district is operating with strong financial controls and responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Financial transparency is not optional—it is a core value. We work hard to ensure that community members not only know how resources are being used, but why decisions are being made.

You will see financial updates in this issue of The Nest because we believe informed communities are strong communities. Hillsboro R-3 remains on a solid financial footing, and we will continue to communicate openly as we plan for both current needs and future priorities.

Looking Ahead: The Next 18 Months
As we look ahead, the next 18 months will be a period of focused, intentional work as we navigate leadership transitions, financial challenges, and evolving state mandates while continuing to work with local and state legislators to advocate for Hillsboro R-3 students and protect the strong opportunities our community expects—many of which can't be measured by a single test. Our priorities include:

- Continuing to meet students where they are and providing meaningful opportunities for success
- Long-term planning for facilities, enrollment trends, and sustainability
- Evaluating programs to ensure they are effective, efficient, and aligned with student needs
- Communicating clearly and consistently with our community every step of the way

This work is about stability and progress—keeping Hillsboro R-3 strong today while positioning the district for long-term success.

A District Worth Supporting
Public education is often discussed in broad terms, but our community deserves a clear picture of Hillsboro R-3. We are locally governed, accountable, and deeply committed to student success—and the best way to see that is firsthand. If you're interested, I invite you to schedule a personal tour with me or a member of our Central Office leadership team.

Thank you for taking the time to stay informed and engaged. Hillsboro R-3 is moving forward with purpose, pride, and transparency, and I am honored to serve this district alongside such dedicated students, staff, and families.

Dr. Jon Isaacson
Superintendent of Schools





IN THIS ISSUE

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Hillsboro High School (grades 9, 10, 11, 12): (636) 789-0010
Hillsboro Learning Center: (636) 789-0086
District Registrar: (636) 789-0007 | fax: (636) 789-4316
Hillsboro Transportation: (636) 789-0081
Hillsboro Technology: (636) 789-0077

ADMINISTRATORS

Amy Phillips-Early Childhood Principal
Shannon Murray - Primary Principal
Eric Detweiler - Elementary Principal
Leslie Marchetti - Intermediate Principal
Dr. Bill Murphy - Junior High Principal
Mark Groner - High School Principal

Dr. Jon Isaacson - Superintendent
Melissa Hildebrand - Associate Superintendent
Dr. Clay LaRue - Assistant Superintendent, District Operations
Matt Whitehead - Executive Director of Special Services

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the NEST | FALL ISSUE 2025
COVER: Silas Archer, Kylan Flood, Liam Reiter,
PHOTO BY: Amy Phillips

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Hello and welcome from the Board of Education to the Winter edition of The NEST. As we begin a new calendar year, this season offers a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the progress made across our district and to look ahead with optimism and purpose.

Winter is a time when the strength of our school community is especially evident. In classrooms, on stages and courts, and through clubs, activities, and events, the dedication of our educators, staff, students, and families continues to create meaningful opportunities for learning and growth. These experiences help shape well-rounded students and foster a strong sense of Hawk Pride.

The start of a new year brings renewed energy and focus. Together, we remain committed to continuous improvement, responsible stewardship, and providing high-quality educational experiences for every student. With the continued partnership of our community, we look forward to the milestones and achievements that lie ahead in the months to come.

On behalf of the Board of Education, thank you for your continued support and dedication. With Hawk Pride, we invite you to enjoy this edition of The NEST | News from Hawk Nation.



John Linhorst
Hillsboro R-3 Board President

Upcoming Meetings
Thursday, February 26, 2026
Thursday, March 26, 2026
Thursday April 16, 2026
Thursday, May 28, 2026

YouTube
Watch Live or Later on YouTube

1 HOUR LATE START WEDNESDAYS

February 4	March 4	April 1	May 6
No School 2/11	March 11	April 8	May 13
February 18	No School 3/18	April 15	May 20
February 25	March 25	April 22	
		April 29	

Mark your calendars!





Community Support Makes a Difference

The Hillsboro R-3 School District is grateful for the continued support of our local churches and their commitment to our students and families. The ladies' group at Hillsboro Christian Church has generously donated shoes for students in need, along with diapers, wipes, and clothing for our Early Childhood and Parents as Teachers programs, making a meaningful difference for many families. We are also thankful to the ladies' group at Twin City Church of Christ for their hard work in collecting and donating books to support student literacy. The compassion and generosity of these churches are a true blessing to our district.





Community Comes Together at First Annual Foundation Golf Tournament

The Hillsboro R-III Public Schools Foundation hosted its First Annual Golf Tournament on October 2, 2025, during Homecoming Week at Raintree Golf Course. The event brought together more than 18 teams and 37 sponsors to support the new Early Childhood Program playground. The tournament was a tremendous success, with strong participation, great weather, and enthusiastic community involvement. Representatives from the Foundation, including Jaime Lammert, Foundation Board Member and Golf Tournament Lead, were in attendance to present a check to the Board in support of the playground project.

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CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENTS *News*

2026-2027 School Calendar



Melissa Hildebrand, Ed. S.
Associate Superintendent

The district's calendar committee typically meets in January or February of each year to develop a proposed school calendar for the following year, which is then submitted to the Board of Education for approval. For the 2026–2027 school year, the committee will delay its meeting until late February or early March.

This delay is due to an upcoming meeting of the State Board of Education in February, during which a potential exemption will be considered that could directly impact school calendars for all public school districts. Under current state law, schools may not begin more than 14 days before Labor Day. In 2026, Labor Day falls on September 7—the latest possible date. As a result, the earliest allowable start date under the law would be August 24, 2026, which is approximately one week later than in previous years.

While this shift may seem minor, an August 24 start date would have great impact on the overall school calendar, including the number of instructional days per semester, the timing of holiday breaks, and the start date for summer school in 2027.

The district will continue to communicate with families as additional information becomes available.

How We Will Learn During Weather Closures:

A friendly reminder that the district will continue using Alternative Methods of Instruction (AMI) days this winter. AMI days allow students to learn from home when schools must close due to inclement weather. By using AMI, the district can remain "open" for instruction for up to 36 hours, the equivalent of six school days. When weather threatens school operations, we will announce the closure type (AMI or traditional snow day) via local media and all district communication channels.



Join Our Team!

Now hiring bus drivers for the 2025-26 school year.

DISTRICT OPERATIONS *News*



Dr. Clay LaRue
Senior Director of Operations

HS HVAC

The Board of Education recently approved a major HVAC replacement project for Hillsboro High School. The current system is more than 25 years old and well beyond its expected lifespan. Despite the outstanding efforts of our maintenance team, the equipment has become increasingly difficult and costly to repair. Replacing it now helps us avoid system failure and ensures long-term reliability for our staff and students.

As part of this project, seven rooftop units (RTUs 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 13) were replaced over Christmas Break due to failed heater coils. This work came at no additional cost and simply accelerated a portion of the overall project. The remainder of the HVAC construction and full integration into the building automation system will take place during summer 2026, as planned. Because of the size and complexity of this work, Summer School will be relocated to the Jr. High next year.

After 25 Years, Hillsboro High School HVAC Retires: Board Approves $8.7 Million Replacement in 2026

Roof Replacements and Restorations

The Board of Education has also recently approved two roofing projects at both the Jr. High and the Primary School to take place next FY. These buildings have roof sections that are out of warranty and well past their expected service life.

At the Jr. High, the current roofing was originally installed in the late 1990s and resurfaced in 2007 to extend its lifespan. That extension ended in 2012, and the section is now due for a full replacement. The new system being installed comes with a 25-year warranty, providing long-term protection for the campus.

The Primary School roofing sections were installed around 2006 and are also at the end of their service life. These areas will be resurfaced with a new, 20-year warranted system. For more details about the roof upgrade and specific sections, here is the link to the district news story.

Hillsboro R-3 Moves Forward With Routine Roof Replacements at Junior High and Primary Schools

Transportation Department Update

This school year, the district added three new buses to the fleet, partially funded through the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA). Two of the buses arrived this fall, and the third arrived at the beginning of the calendar year. The three buses being replaced all qualified under the DERA guidelines, allowing the district to receive $22,500 per bus toward the cost of replacement.

In addition to these fleet upgrades, the district implemented a new routing system and equipped all buses with GPS and tablets. These enhancements have already proven to be a major asset for the Transportation Department by improving the efficiency of route creation and monitoring. The GPS-enabled tablets also support substitute drivers by providing turn-by-turn navigation, helping ensure consistency and reliability across all routes. The Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) feature was activated on December 1, with the AVL notifications turned on for families through the MyRide K-12 app, which began on January 5th, 2026. To access these notifications, make sure you have notifications enabled in your smartphone settings for the MyRide K-12 app. To learn more, please visit the Transportation page on our school's website or contact the bus garage.

On December 9, 2025, the Transportation Department underwent an audit by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) of our Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) program. The FMCSA approved the program and indicated that no corrective actions were needed. This positive outcome reflects the quality and compliance of our training practices.
DOT bus inspections will take place on Friday, March 20, 2026.

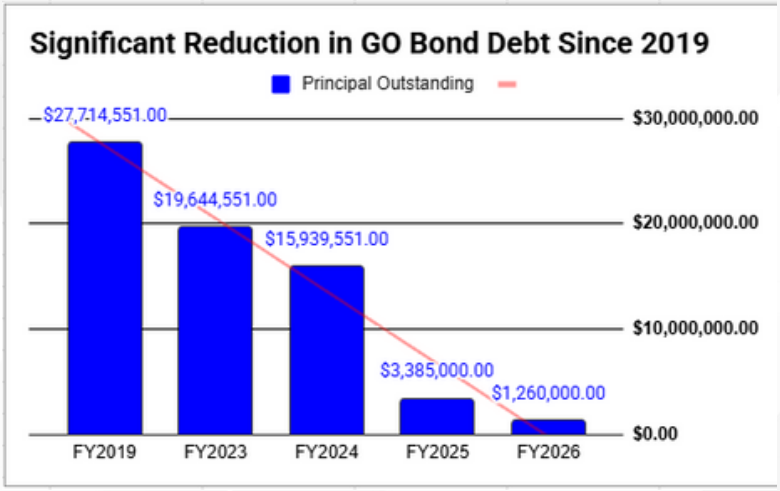
District FINANCE AT A GLANCE

TOTAL EXPENDITURES ALL FUNDS			
	YEAR END 2023-24	YEAR END 2024-25	2025-2026 BUDGET
General Fund 10	$16,068,574	$15,472,544	$17,330,345
Teachers Fund 20	$21,123,054	$22,177,162	$23,863,545
Debt Service Fund 30	$4,519,047	$13,236,293	$2,449,205
Capital Projects Fund	$3,076,012	$5,140,542	$5,702,206
Activity Fund 60		$1,098,168	$2,145,000
Total Expenditures	**$44,786,687**	**$57,124,709**	**$51,490,301**

The Debt Service Fund is used exclusively to repay principal and interest payments on the District's General Obligation bonds and cannot be used for daily operations, salaries, or classroom expenses.

Debt Service Fund spending can vary significantly from year to year. Higher expenditures in certain years **reflect planned, strategic bond paydowns**, not new debt.

By using this fund as intended, the District has been able to **pay off bond debt faster, reduce long-term interest costs, and save taxpayer dollars.** This disciplined approach has helped move the District toward the near-elimination of outstanding bond debt.



S&P BOND RATING **A+**

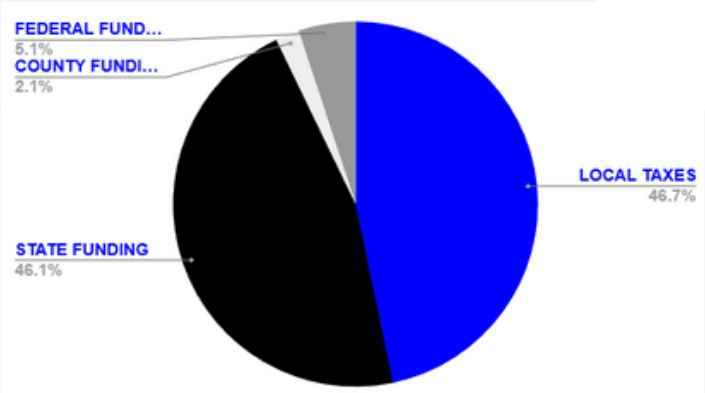
The District has reduced its General Obligation (G.O.) bond debt by **95%** in seven years, lowering the outstanding balance from **$27.7 million in FY2019** to **$1.26 million in FY2026**.

With this year's $2,449,205 debt prepayment in March, the District is projected to save approximately **$702,300** in future interest costs—directly reducing long-term expenses for taxpayers.

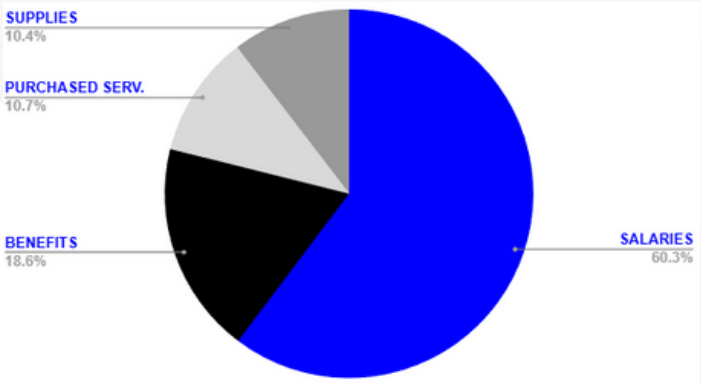
Hillsboro R-3 relies heavily on **state funding (46.13%)** and **local taxes (46.70%)** to support day-to-day operations. Because nearly half of our operating revenue comes from the state, decisions made in Jefferson City directly and significantly affect what Hillsboro can sustain for students, families, and staff—while maintaining the low local tax rate our community has worked hard to achieve.

State budget changes and legislative proposals—such as **Open Enrollment, school choice initiatives, and property tax measures like SB 3 and SB 190**—can reduce funding stability, limit local control, and shift costs to local taxpayers. If state-level decisions reduce Hillsboro's funding in the coming years and the District must consider a future tax issue to protect student opportunities, taxpayers deserve clarity and transparency about what changed, why it changed, and how state actions contributed to that outcome.

Source of Operating Revenues (Funds 10 and 20)



Uses of Operating Expenses (Funds 10 and 20)



The largest share of the District's operating budget is invested in people—the teachers, support staff, and employees who serve our students every day. **Salaries and benefits account for nearly 79% of operating expenditures**, reflecting that education is a people-driven service.

As outlined in our **District Strategic Plan**, this investment supports our commitment to students, families, and the community by strengthening our ability to recruit and retain high-quality professionals who help our district and students thrive.

District FINANCE AT A GLANCE

Understanding Enrollment Trends

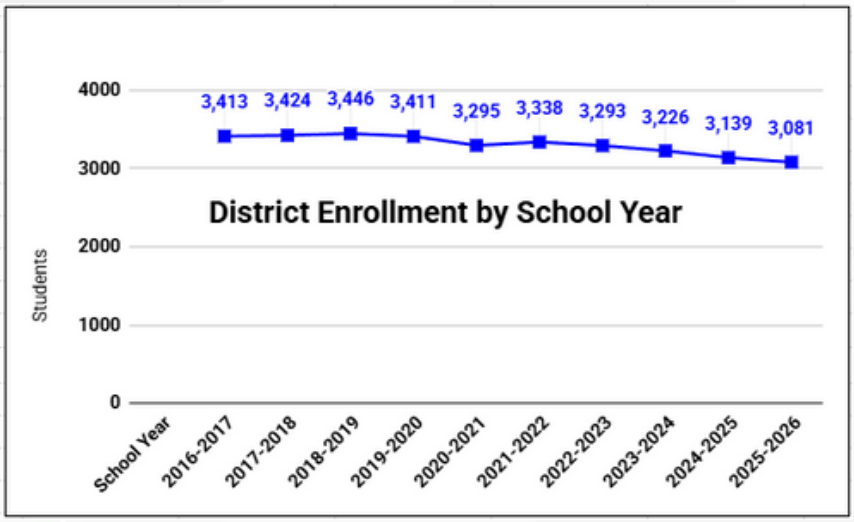
When looking at enrollment, it's helpful to step back and view changes over time. Since the **2016–2017** school year, overall enrollment in Hillsboro R-3 has declined, with the largest decreases occurring in our early grades through 8th grade.

Several factors help explain this trend. **Birth rates have declined locally and nationwide over the past decade**, which typically results in fewer students entering kindergarten in subsequent years. Enrollment is also influenced by **housing availability and affordability**. As home prices in Hillsboro have increased, it has become more difficult for many young families to move into the district, making adequate, affordable housing an important part of long-term community and school sustainability.

To put the change in perspective, Hillsboro R-3 has moved from approximately **3,413 students in 2016–2017** to **3,081 students today**, a difference of about **332 students**.

Enrollment trends matter not only for planning but also for funding. In Missouri, state funding is tied to student enrollment—so fewer students typically means less state revenue supporting our schools. Because state funding represents approximately **46% of the District's total revenue**, enrollment changes can have a significant impact. To maintain the same programs, services, and opportunities for students, reductions in state funding must be addressed through other revenue sources—most often local funding.

Understanding these long-term trends allows the District to plan responsibly for staffing, class sizes, facilities, and financial stability, while continuing to focus on what matters most: serving students and supporting the Hillsboro community.





Hillsboro R-3 Receives Clean Audit for Fiscal Year 2025

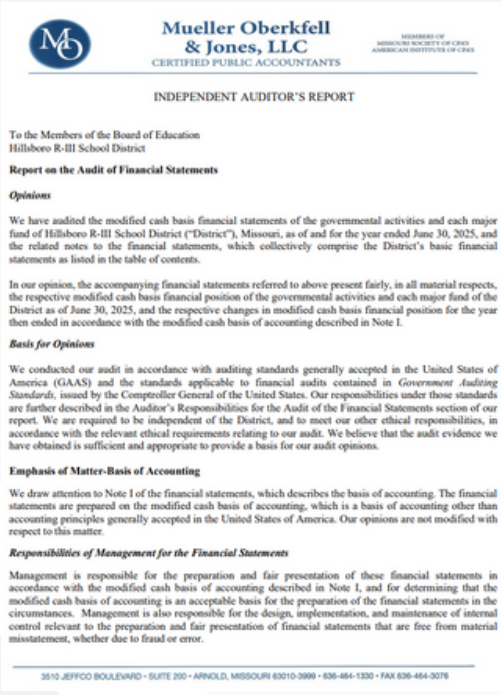
Hillsboro R-3 received the highest level of audit assurance for the 2025 fiscal year—an unmodified opinion, commonly known as a clean audit.

The audit was presented to the Board of Education and approved at the Board meeting on December 18, 2025. After a comprehensive review of the District's financial records, auditors from **Mueller Oberkfell & Jones, LLC** reported that Hillsboro R-3's financial statements are accurate, complete, and fairly presented.

"I am pleased to report that we issued an unmodified opinion, which means the financial statements are presented fairly in all material respects," said Hope Hernandez, Audit Associate with Mueller Oberkfell & Jones, LLC. ***"In other words, it was a clean audit with no material errors or issues noted. This is the highest level of assurance that can be provided and the best opinion a district can receive."***

In addition to the clean audit opinion, the review confirmed that Hillsboro R-3 is compliant with Missouri laws and regulations, including required procedures related to budgeting and disbursements, as well as key operational records such as attendance and transportation.

Hernandez also commended the District's work, noting the auditors ***"congratulate the district on an excellent audit"*** and commending staff for their diligence and attention to detail.



Mueller Oberkfell & Jones, LLC
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Members of the Board of Education
Hillsboro R-III School District

Report on the Audit of Financial Statements

Opinions

We have audited the modified cash basis financial statements of the governmental activities and each major fund of Hillsboro R-III School District ("District"), Missouri, as of and for the year ended June 30, 2025, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise the District's basic financial statements as listed in the table of contents.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the respective modified cash basis financial position of the governmental activities and each major fund of the District as of June 30, 2025, and the respective changes in modified cash basis financial position for the year then ended in accordance with the modified cash basis of accounting described in Note I.

Basis for Opinions

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS) and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of the District, and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinions.

Emphasis of Matter-Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note I of the financial statements, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial statements are prepared on the modified cash basis of accounting, which is a basis of accounting other than accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Our opinions are not modified with respect to this matter.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with the modified cash basis of accounting described in Note I, and for determining that the modified cash basis of accounting is an acceptable basis for the preparation of the financial statements in the circumstances. Management is also responsible for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

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HISTORIC SCHOOL TAX RATE TRENDS IN HILLSBORO R-3
& County Comparisons

School District Real Estate Tax Comparisons by Assessed Home Value										
Ranked Highest to Lowest Tax Rate		Real estate taxes are based on a property's assessed value set by the County Assessor, not its market or sale value.								
		$200,000	$300,000	$400,000	$500,000	$600,000	$700,000	$800,000	$900,000	$1,000,000
Dunklin R-V	4.8393	$1,839	$2,758	$3,678	$4,597	$5,517	$6,436	$7,356	$8,275	$9,195
Windsor C-1	4.7464	$1,804	$2,705	$3,607	$4,509	$5,411	$6,313	$7,215	$8,116	$9,018
Crystal City #47	4.7141	$1,791	$2,687	$3,583	$4,478	$5,374	$6,270	$7,165	$8,061	$8,957
Grandview R-2	4.6777	$1,778	$2,666	$3,555	$4,444	$5,333	$6,221	$7,110	$7,999	$8,888
Sunrise R-IX	4.6262	$1,758	$2,637	$3,516	$4,395	$5,274	$6,153	$7,032	$7,911	$8,790
Jefferson R-7	4.5967	$1,747	$2,620	$3,493	$4,367	$5,240	$6,114	$6,987	$7,860	$8,734
Desoto #73	4.4135	$1,677	$2,516	$3,354	$4,193	$5,031	$5,870	$6,709	$7,547	$8,386
Northwest R-1	4.2891	$1,630	$2,445	$3,260	$4,075	$4,890	$5,705	$6,519	$7,334	$8,149
Fox C-6	4.1867	$1,591	$2,386	$3,182	$3,977	$4,773	$5,568	$6,364	$7,159	$7,955
Festus R-VI	3.9831	$1,514	$2,270	$3,027	$3,784	$4,541	$5,298	$6,054	$6,811	$7,568
Hillsboro R-3	**3.6777**	**$1,398**	**$2,096**	**$2,795**	**$3,494**	**$4,193**	**$4,891**	**$5,590**	**$6,289**	**$6,988**

A Historic Low — And the Lowest in Jefferson County

Thanks to decades of community support and thoughtful long-range planning, the Hillsboro R-3 Board of Education set the district's 2025 tax rate at **$3.6777**—the lowest rate in Hillsboro R-3 since the mid-1990s. This milestone would not be possible without the trust voters have placed in the district through past bond and levy approvals that strengthened our schools, facilities, and long-term stability.

We also recognize that many community members—families, retirees, and business owners—are feeling the impact of rising costs. Even households that appear financially stable are often managing debt or living on fixed incomes. The Board is mindful of these realities and values the sacrifices residents have made over the years to support public education.

Hillsboro R-3 has held the **lowest school tax rate in Jefferson County for the past three years (2023–2025)**. While tax rates vary across districts for many reasons, this comparison helps show where Hillsboro currently sits within the county range. The next-lowest district rate is **$3.9831**—about **8% higher**—which equals roughly **$174 more per year on a $300,000 home** and **$290 more per year on a $500,000 home** (based on the chart examples).

The difference is even greater when compared to the **highest school tax rate in the county ($4.8393)**. At that rate, residents pay approximately **$662 more per year on a $300,000 home** and **$1,103 more per year on a $500,000 home.**

As a reminder, school property taxes are calculated using a home's **assessed value** (set by the County Assessor), not the home's market or sale price.

Looking ahead, Hillsboro R-3 is in a strong position because of past and continued community support. As community needs evolve, future priorities could affect where the district falls in county comparisons over time—but the district is well-positioned to move forward in whatever direction our community believes is best for students, schools, and Hillsboro as a whole.

Hillsboro is strong because of its people—and we are grateful for the community support that has helped our schools and students succeed for generations.

IN 2025, THE HILLSBORO R-3 SCHOOL TAX RATE IS MORE THAN 20% LOWER THAN IN 2015 AND 2005.

Historical Hillsboro R-3 Tax Rates (1999 to 2025)										
Year	*Tax Rate*	*$200,000*	*$300,000*	*$400,000*	*$500,000*	*$600,000*	*$700,000*	*$800,000*	*$900,000*	*$1,000,000*
1999	*4.0900*	$1,554	$2,331	$3,108	$3,886	$4,663	$5,440	$6,217	$6,994	$7,771
2005	*4.6358*	$1,762	$2,642	$3,523	$4,404	$5,285	$6,166	$7,046	$7,927	$8,808
2014	*4.7542*	$1,807	$2,710	$3,613	$4,516	$5,420	$6,323	$7,226	$8,130	$9,033
2015	*4.7025*	$1,787	$2,680	$3,574	$4,467	$5,361	$6,254	$7,148	$8,041	$8,935
2016	*4.6944*	$1,784	$2,676	$3,568	$4,460	$5,352	$6,244	$7,135	$8,027	$8,919
2017	*4.6185*	$1,755	$2,633	$3,510	$4,388	$5,265	$6,143	$7,020	$7,898	$8,775
2018	*4.6185*	$1,755	$2,633	$3,510	$4,388	$5,265	$6,143	$7,020	$7,898	$8,775
2019	*4.6185*	$1,755	$2,633	$3,510	$4,388	$5,265	$6,143	$7,020	$7,898	$8,775
2020	*4.6185*	$1,755	$2,633	$3,510	$4,388	$5,265	$6,143	$7,020	$7,898	$8,775
2021	*4.6185*	$1,755	$2,633	$3,510	$4,388	$5,265	$6,143	$7,020	$7,898	$8,775
2022	*4.1392*	$1,573	$2,359	$3,146	$3,932	$4,719	$5,505	$6,292	$7,078	$7,864
2023	*3.8941*	$1,480	$2,220	$2,960	$3,699	$4,439	$5,179	$5,919	$6,659	$7,399
2024	*3.7370*	$1,420	$2,130	$2,840	$3,550	$4,260	$4,970	$5,680	$6,390	$7,100
2025	*3.6777*	$1,398	$2,096	$2,795	$3,494	$4,193	$4,891	$5,590	$6,289	$6,988

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH
& Transition Timeline

Superintendent Dr. Jon Isaacson has announced his intention to retire at the conclusion of the 2026–2027 school year.

The Board of Education has put a transition plan in place to hire a new Superintendent, with the appointment beginning July 1, 2027, for the 2027–2028 school year.

Search Timeline

August 1, 2026
Finalize Job Posting

Aug 4-Sept 28
Community Surveys/Involvement

Week of Oct 6
Review Canidates

Week of Oct 20
Finalist Interviews

Transition Phase

Nov 2026-June 2027
Phase-In Period



Leadership Meetings



Board Workshops



Community Engagement

New Superintendent starts **July 1, 2027**

District will work with longtime partner and board facilitator MSBA.

WELCOME

CLASS OF 2039

NEW STUDENT: KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION OPENS FOR THE 2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR

- New Student Kindergarten Online Enrollment Begins Feb. 9th
- March 12th: In-Person Screening 4p-8p (By Appointment Only)
- April 25th: In-Person Screening 8:30a-3:30p (By Appointment Only)
- Current Early Childhood Student Parents register their student for Kindergarten on March 23rd
- Call 636.789.0050 to Make a Screening Appointment







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HILLSBORO EARLY CHILDHOOD *News*

Friendsgiving Feast: Tiny Turkeys Gather with Grateful Hearts

During Thanksgiving week, students and staff celebrated with a Friendsgiving Feast. They made decorations, placemats, and thank-you cards, while each class contributed to meal preparation. After cooking, everyone enjoyed a family-style feast with district administrators and support staff. The event showcased teamwork and is hoped to be the first of many Friendsgiving celebrations.























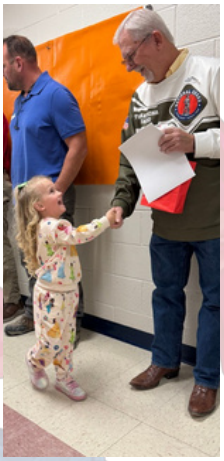
Little Hands, Big Thanks: Honoring Our Veterans at the ECC

Hillsboro Early Childhood honored local veterans in November by discussing the importance of Veterans Day and exploring patriotic symbols. They invited military family and friends to a recognition event, allowing students to interact with their honored guests. The students served patriotic snacks and presented handmade gifts, creating a heartfelt experience that showcased their respect and admiration for veterans.





















Thank you

HILLSBORO EARLY CHILDHOOD *News*

Hands-On Learning Beyond the Classroom

Hillsboro Early Childhood students enjoyed their first field trip to Bridle Ridge Acres, marking their first bus ride. At the farm, they explored the barn, fed sheep, petted guinea pigs, and walked goats. The day included hands-on activities and community-sponsored Christmas tree displays, enhancing their learning experience.



















High School FCCLA Partners with Hillsboro Early Childhood for "Snow Much Fun" Event

The High School FCCLA held a "Snow Much Fun" event for Hillsboro Early Childhood students and their families. During the event, they served our families ice cream sundaes and provided them with an opportunity to make several winter-themed keepsakes. Students built clay snowmen, designed picture frames, and created thumbprint ornaments. Each family also participated in a photo session, receiving a printed photo for their frame.











HILLSBORO EARLY CHILDHOOD *News*











From Glitter and Glue to Gumdrops and Sprinkles

During the month of December, our early childhood students participated in a thematic unit focused on self-expression through art. They engaged their creativity through a variety of hands-on learning labs designed to encourage the use of their imagination while utilizing a variety of mixed media such as watercolors, ink, and glitter. Activities included painting pictures, designing Christmas trees, and decorating gingerbread.







LEARNING EVERYDAY

HILLSBORO PRIMARY *News*













Hillsboro Primary Honors Veterans

Hillsboro Primary honored **Veterans Day** with meaningful activities that helped students learn the importance of service, sacrifice, and gratitude. Students and staff created a **Veterans Tribute Wall** featuring photos of family members who have served, highlighting the strong military connections within our school community.

Students also welcomed guest speaker **Mr. Nate Shumaker**, who shared his military experiences and answered thoughtful questions, including how his prosthetic supports him in everyday life.

In addition, kindergarten and first-grade students participated in a **Veterans Hygiene Drive** benefiting Jefferson Barracks Hospital. With the help of families, students collected **1,265 hygiene items** for local veterans. **Ms. Day's class** led the effort with **258 items**, earning a pizza party.

We are proud of our students and families for honoring and supporting our veterans—past and present.

First Graders Bring Winter Wishes to Life in *The Big Chill*

First graders warmed hearts with their winter musical, *The Big Chill,* celebrating hopes for a snow day. Family and friends filled the audience as students performed confidently in cozy winter attire. Many had speaking roles, showcasing their bravery, while an interactive moment with soft "snowballs" added laughter. Ms. Lindsey Becker incorporated a popular saying, delighting the crowd. The performance highlighted the creativity and joy of Hillsboro's first graders, celebrating the winter season.



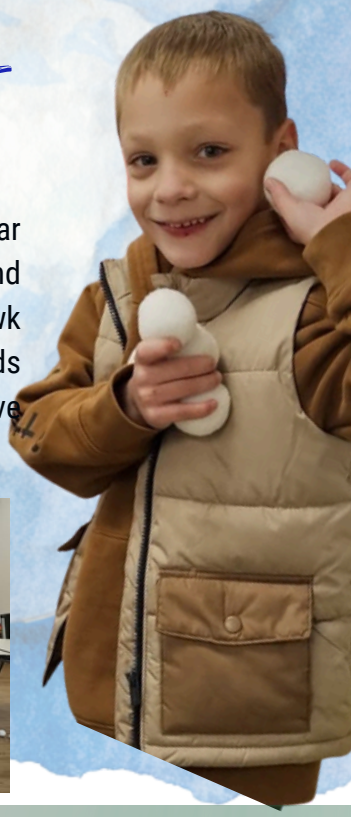








HILLSBORO PRIMARY *News*



Feather Focus: Encouraging Positive Choices at Hillsboro Primary

At Hillsboro Primary, promoting positive behavior is a collaborative effort based on clear expectations and strong role models through the Feather Focus: being safe, respectful, and responsible. Students receive recognition for demonstrating these behaviors by earning Hawk Tickets, which can be exchanged for fun rewards at the end of each quarter. Popular rewards include an indoor snowball fight and lunch with the principal. This initiative fosters a supportive and enjoyable learning environment for all students.









A Storybook Christmas: Library Tree Brings Books to Life

The Hillsboro Primary Library became a festive storybook scene this holiday season with a Christmas tree adorned with handmade ornaments representing favorite literary characters. Mrs. Megan Gillman invited families to participate, resulting in over eighty creative entries inspired by beloved stories. This project celebrated reading and imagination, fostering family discussions about books while creating lasting memories. The storybook tree highlighted the connection between reading and family, showcasing how stories come to life when shared.











Sweet Success at the Pie the Principal Assembly!

The Pie the Principal Assembly at Hillsboro Primary was a lively event where students threw whipped cream pies at their principals and staff, including Mrs. Murray, Mrs. Clute, and Mr. Maness. This fun celebration recognized students' fundraising efforts and fostered a positive atmosphere, highlighting teamwork, community, and school spirit.

HILLSBORO PRIMARY *News*



All Aboard for a Magical Night: The Polar Express Movie Event

Families and friends celebrated a heartwarming holiday evening at the Polar Express Movie Event, filled with laughter, crafts, games, and hot cocoa. A surprise visit from Santa delighted children, and the highlight was watching the timeless film, The Polar Express. The event also had a meaningful purpose, as all proceeds supported the Hillsboro Hawkpack program, providing food-filled backpacks to students. Thanks to community generosity, this magical night will positively impact the lives of Hillsboro Hawks.









Holiday Spirit Shines Bright at Hillsboro Primary

The holiday season at Hillsboro Primary is filled with joy, kindness, and learning. The staff creates a festive environment that emphasizes the importance of giving. Throughout December, students participate in dress-up days, fostering excitement and connection. A highlight is the canned food drive organized by Mrs. Courtney Moreno, supporting the Hillsboro Food Pantry, alongside a toy drive for families in need. The Grinch and Santa Claus make special appearances, spreading cheer. These traditions instill lessons of generosity and kindness that extend beyond the holiday season.





Elves in Training: First Grade and Kindergarten Spread Holiday Cheer 🎄🍬🍪🦌

Mrs. Sutterer's first-grade class had a unique holiday lesson focused on the qualities of elves—kindness, helpfulness, teamwork, and joy. They partnered with Ms. Epley's kindergarten students to create festive reindeer headbands, with first graders guiding and assisting their younger buddies. They also shared a holiday story, fostering cooperation and joy between the grades. This collaboration strengthened connections and emphasized the true spirit of being an "elf" by caring for others.





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HILLSBORO ELEMENTARY *News*

Celebrating Character at Hillsboro Elementary

Each month during the school year, elementary students explore various positive attributes, focusing on their meanings and how to embody these traits. Students who are acknowledged by their teacher for demonstrating these characteristics receive a medal, a certificate, and the opportunity to add their handprints to the hallway wall. Our latest attributes highlighted were gratitude and empathy.















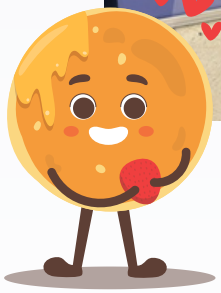
Building Bonds Over Breakfast

The Hillsboro Elementary Counseling Department hosted its first "Flapjacks with Father Figures" Event this past November. Students and their father figures were invited in for pancakes and sausage before school. It was great to see so many families participate, and we hope to expand this event for next year.











Community Generosity Making a Difference

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Valle Ambulance EMS Employee Association for their generous donation to Hillsboro Elementary. This contribution will significantly assist in addressing lunch debts and supporting students in need.

#HAWKSTRONG

HILLSBORO ELEMENTARY *News*

Ornament Contest

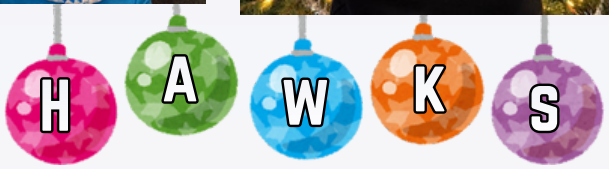
Our library asked students to design a Christmas ornament based on their favorite books. Here are some of the best entries they received.











Hawk Trot 2025

Students in 2nd and 3rd grades had the chance to join the annual Hawk Trot, a fun one-mile race around the school. High school cross country runners and coaches were present to motivate and encourage the runners.







A Winning Visit from the Blues Street Team

The St. Louis Blues Street Team visited our 2nd and 3rd-grade students in early December. The students learned how to pass, shoot, and handle the "puck" (this time a ball instead of a puck) as they took part in P.E. Class. The students impressed the Street Team during their visit. There were many who played hockey and helped their classmates out with handling the stick and shooting goals.











#HawkStrong

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HILLSBORO INTERMEDIATE *News*



2,503 Reasons to Be Proud!

Character Council and Student Council hosted our annual Food Drive. Students were able to collect a total of 2,503 Food items. The Intermediate building donated these items to the Hillsboro Food Pantry and our Hawkpack Food Program.



Building Gratitude, One Brick at a Time

In November, the Character Council organized a "Gratitude Wall" activity. Students were invited to create a brick featuring things they are grateful for. These bricks are showcased in the Intermediate Commons area, forming a brick wall. The wall remains on display, serving as a reminder to students of all the blessings in their lives.



Veteran's Day Assembly

It is with great pride that we take time out to recognize our veterans. Every year on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, we have an assembly to offer thanks to all of our veterans for the sacrifices they have made for us. We were fortunate to have some very special guests this year. Mr. Herron, who retired from the Missouri Air National Guard. Mr. Pieschel, Executive Director/Director of Veteran Services for Dogs for our Brave. During the assembly, students and veterans learned about our nation's bird, the Bald Eagle from a representative from the Word Bird Sanctuary.



















HILLSBORO INTERMEDIATE *News*





Rockin' Hawks Shares Holiday Joy with Local Residents

On Tuesday, December 16, the choir brightened the holiday season by visiting Stonebridge Senior Living, where they performed for the residents with festive Christmas songs. Each resident received a special Christmas gift from the choir. The group then made a stop at the De Soto Pony Bird location, where the residents thoroughly enjoyed the choir's performance.





Curtain Up! "Hawks on Stage" debuts with a Hit

We are thrilled to announce the successful launch of our very first drama club, Hawks on Stage! Led by Ms. Smith and a team of dedicated volunteers, this unique opportunity invited students in grades 4-6 to explore the performing arts.



The response was nothing short of incredible. Interest was so overwhelming that the club was split into two separate groups to accommodate all the eager actors. After weeks of weekly rehearsals and preparation, the students were ready for the spotlight. The club hosted two separate nights of performances of "Twas the Night Before Christmas," allowing both groups to showcase their hard work to a full house. Bravo to our budding stars and the volunteers who made it possible!

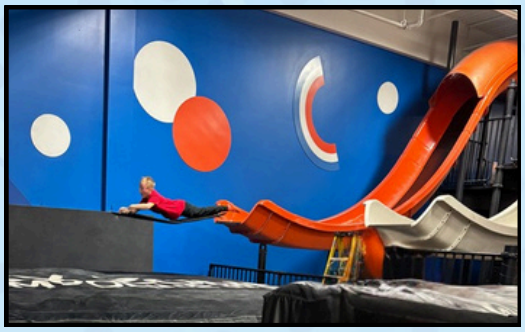
Join us in the spring when Hawks On Stage presents their one-act performance of *12 ANGRY PIGS*.



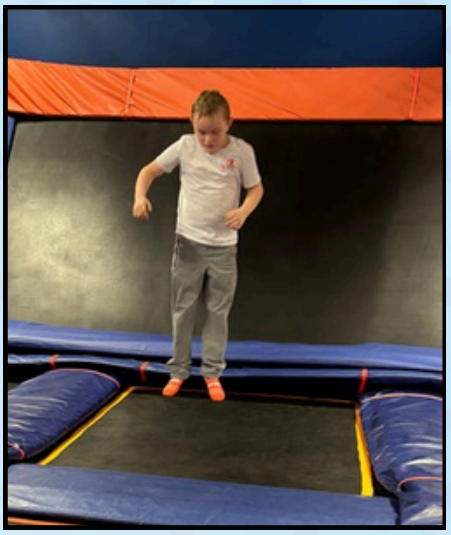




HILLSBORO INTERMEDIATE *News*













Annual Cookie Dough Rewards

Our Annual Cookie Dough Fundraiser was a big success, and students celebrated their hard work with VIP rewards. Qualifying students enjoyed a high-energy day at SkyZone with jumping, pizza, and friends, while top earners dined in style after riding to lunch on a limo bus. Some students even took part in a candy scramble. It was a fun and well-deserved celebration—great job to everyone involved!

From Page to Screen: Sixth Graders Meet Wendelin van Draanen

Our sixth graders had a truly storybook moment on January 15, 2026, when they zoomed with beloved author Wendelin van Draanen!

With smiles all around, she chatted about her writing life and shared fun insights into *Swear to Howdy*. It was an inspiring visit that truly brought our reading to life and left our class smiling and motivated.





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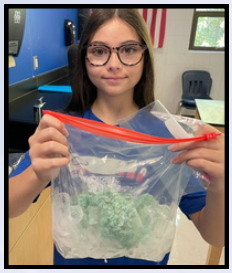
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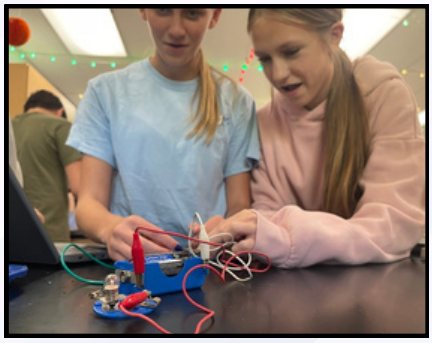
The Hillsboro R-III Public Schools Foundation and the Hillsboro Community Civic Club invite you to a formal gala celebrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

HILLSBORO JUNIOR HIGH *News*







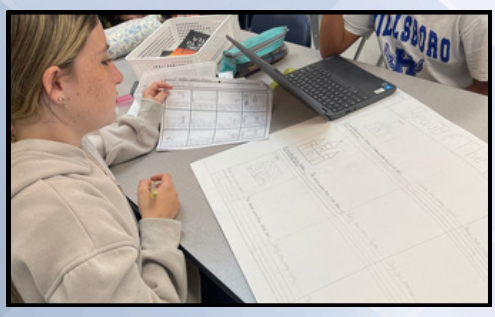
Inspiring The Learners Of Today…

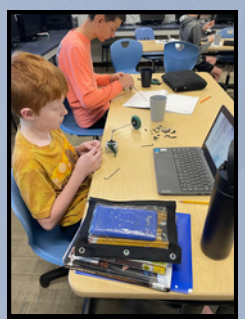
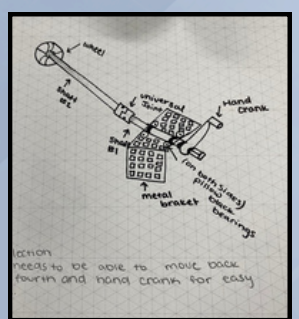
Junior High classes are bustling with activity to inspire students and keep them engaged in their learning. Our teachers work hard to bring their lessons to life and provide unique experiences for students. Just check out all the amazing things the kids get to do!

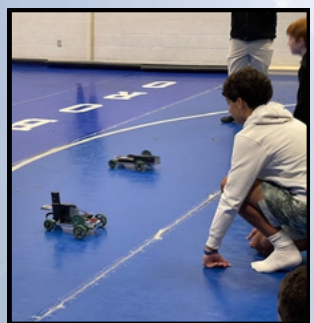
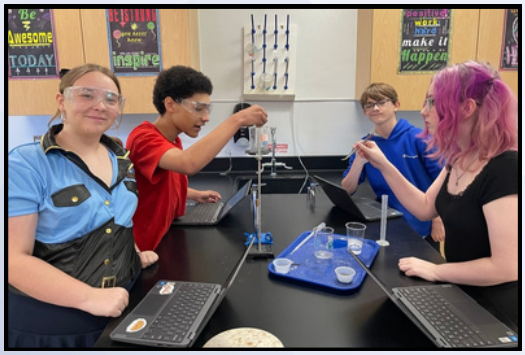






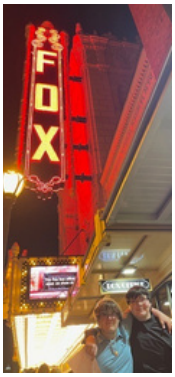


HILLSBORO JUNIOR HIGH *News*







8th Grade at The Fabulous Fox Theater

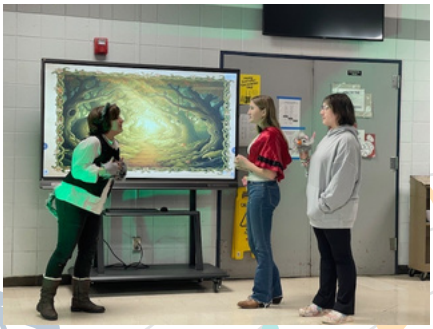
Our 8th-grade students had the opportunity to see The Outsiders at The Fox Theater this winter. The show was absolutely amazing, and our students represented Hillsboro well. The Outsiders is part of our Junior High curriculum, and it was exciting to hear students talk about the similarities and differences between the book, the movie, and the musical. After the show, we even got to sit in on some Q&A with cast members. It was a night to remember!



Performance Spotlight

The winter season brings with it some fantastic performances from our performing arts groups. Our Junior High Band and Choir both had their winter concerts, and our Theater troupe had two different plays, both written by one of our 7th-grade students.











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HILLSBORO JUNIOR HIGH *News*

HJH Holiday Coin Drive: A Remarkable Success!

We are grateful to all the students who generously donated to our holiday coin drive. Thanks to everyone's contributions, the Student Council was able to shop for five children, adding some extra joy to their holiday season.



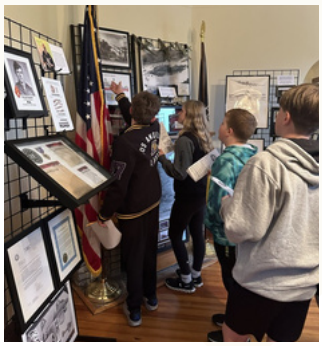






Military Appreciation visits the POW/MIA Museum

Students in Mrs. Stephenson and Mrs. Luster's Military Appreciation Day took a field trip to the POW/MIA Museum at Jefferson Barracks on Thursday, November 20th. About two dozen students got to tour the museum, learn about how the POW's communicated with each other in secret, read biographies about the St. Louis area POW's, and listen to Curator, Paul Dillon. Dillon's father was captured during World War II and later returned to his family.





Vietnam Sister Wall

HJH students in Military Appreciation classes also visited the Vietnam Sister Wall, located in Perryville, in November 2025. Students spoke with Veterans from the Vietnam Wall while visiting the museum located at the Memorial Site. They also searched for the names of local soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines who are on the Vietnam Sister Wall. The Vietnam helicopter on display outside the museum was an exciting part of our visit as well. Students learned so much and got to see firsthand a replica of the Vietnam Wall they had learned about in class.

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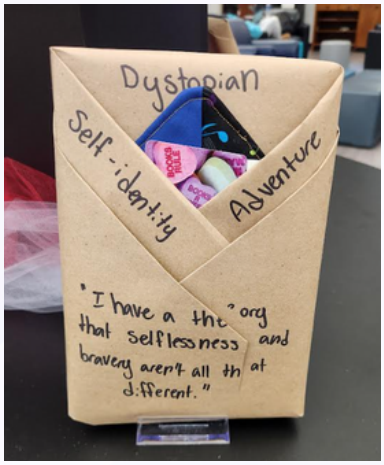
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HILLSBORO HIGH SCHOOL *News*



Fall In Love With Reading

HHS eleventh grader Elisabeth Pierce, with the assistance of HHS Librarian Leigh Kalista, is working hard to stimulate student interest in reading. Elisabeth took the initiative to create a "Blind Date with a Book" activity. Students are encouraged to check out a book that is covered in a brown paper wrapper, thus concealing its title. Elisabeth has already had to restock as the books are flying off the shelf.



HHS FCCLA Brings Home the Gold at Regionals

Thirteen HHS student members of the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America recently traveled to Rolla to participate in a regional competition. All thirteen earned gold medals and are now eligible to compete at the state level. Our student competitors included: Samatha Girse, Haley Madonna, Briana Biere, Dylan Heitert, Hunter Sonntag, Kaylee Hopkins, Breanna Danback, Julia Yamnitz, Cole Huskey, James Kimbrell-Cave, Sophia Davis, Hallena Jaccox, Payton Huff.

Congratulations to all of our FCCLA competitors on an excellent regional showing. We wish our state qualifiers the best of luck as they continue their journey at the FCCLA State Competition in April. The Hillsboro community is proud of your achievements!



*FCCLA sponsors are Cyndi Heitert and Erica Huskey

Congratulations to
Ms. Stephanie Williams for being nominated as December's Staff of the Month. The word of the month was Humble. Those that nominated her stated, "Wills would climb Mt. Everest and not brag about it. Plus, she's literally one of the smartest people I have ever met in my life, but I don't think she would ever acknowledge that truth." Another commented "Her students respect her immensely and she is a very quiet presence in the building. She does not look for accolades, just goes about her day."



STAFF OF THE MONTH!
Respectful

Gina Dale



*Gina is definitely someone who actively listens to students, values their opinions, and treats each individual with dignity.

*There has never been a time that I have witnessed Ms. Dale have a negative interaction with a student. She is positive, upbeat, and respectful with her students. When visiting her class, her students are engaged and interacting in a positive manner. This speaks to the level of respect that has been established between Ms. Dale and her students.

HILLSBORO HIGH SCHOOL *News*

HHS Curriculum Fair and Senior Seminar

On January 12th, HHS students in grades 9-11 participated in a curriculum fair in an effort to help them build their course schedule for the 26-27 school year. Teachers and counselors presented students with course information and scheduling options.

Seniors were treated to doughnuts, social activities, guest speakers, and an alumni panel as part of a Senior seminar. Many thanks to guest speakers Don Brown, Scott Readnour, and Tammy Fadler, as well as alumni Blake Moore, Jillian Mayer, and Chase Sucharski. Your words of wisdom and inspiration were beneficial to our seniors as they prepare to graduate and leave the nest.

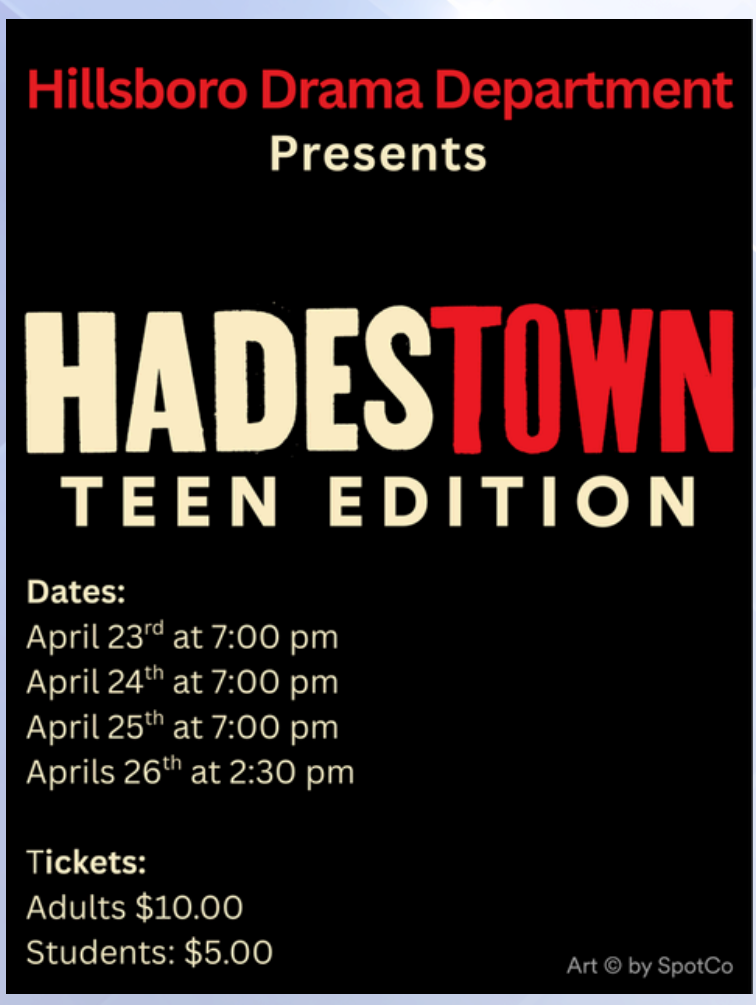












When Myth Meets Music: Hadestown

Get ready for a journey to the underground! The Hillsboro Drama Department is proud to present Hadestown! This Tony Award-winning musical by Anaïs Mitchell modernizes the classic myths of Orpheus, Eurydice, Hades, and Persephone in a dark, industrial setting inspired by the Great Depression. Using a captivating blend of folk, blues, and New Orleans jazz, this is one show you won't want to miss! Hadestown is a powerful story of hope and resilience that will stay with you long after the final curtain.

Hawks

#HawkStrong

HILLSBORO HIGH SCHOOL *News*



The new Hillsboro High School Principal is Mr. William Reece. Mr. Reece is currently serving as an Assistant Principal at HHS, and will take the reins when current Principal Mark Groner retires on June 30th. Mr. Reece brings a wealth of experience and a passion for serving others to the position.





Hillsboro High School JAG Students Enjoy Special Night

On Tuesday, December 16, the students from the HHS JAG program enjoyed a special night of installation and initiation. JAG, which stands for Jobs for America's Graduates, is a program headed by teacher Sam Nansel that helps students learn important skills to help them obtain employment after high school graduation. The program also provides leadership opportunities for the students. Students and parents were treated to a ceremony in the theater followed by a catered meal in the commons. The 2026 HHS JAG group is one of the largest JAG classes in Hillsboro's history.









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Athletics & Activities *News*



Hillsboro Girls' Basketball Captures Holiday Tournament Championship

The Hillsboro girls' basketball team capped off an outstanding holiday break with a first-place finish at the West County/Kingston Holiday Tournament, putting together a dominant and disciplined run to claim the championship.

After earning the No. 1 seed in the tournament, the Hawks received a first-round bye, setting the stage for a strong postseason push. Hillsboro wasted no time making a statement in the quarterfinals, defeating Jefferson 55–21 behind stifling defense and balanced offensive production.

The momentum carried into the semifinals, where the Hawks controlled the game from start to finish in a 49–24 victory over Bismarck. Once again, Hillsboro's defensive intensity and unselfish play proved to be the difference.

In the championship game, the Hawks faced a tough North County squad and rose to the challenge. With composure and determination, Hillsboro secured a 42–32 win, sealing the tournament title and completing an impressive week of basketball.

The championship run highlights the team's preparation, depth, and commitment to playing together. Congratulations to the players and coaching staff on a well-earned tournament championship and a strong foundation as the Hawks move forward into the heart of the season.

Hawks

#BoroBuilt

Athletics & Activities *News*



Hillsboro Boys' Basketball Makes Strong Showing at Bob Sechrest Christmas Tournament

The Hillsboro boys' basketball team turned in an impressive performance at the 70th Annual Bob Sechrest Christmas Tournament, showcasing resilience, toughness, and the ability to rise to the moment against quality competition.

Entering the tournament as the No. 5 seed, the Hawks opened play with a thrilling 65–61 overtime victory over West County. Hillsboro made key plays down the stretch and executed in extra time to secure the hard-fought win and set the tone for the rest of the week.

The Hawks followed that effort with another statement win, knocking off the No. 4 seed Ste. Genevieve Dragons, 75–69. Once again, Hillsboro delivered timely baskets and matched Ste. Genevieve's physicality, earning a spot in the semifinals.

Hillsboro's run toward the championship game met a challenge in a back-and-forth semifinal matchup with Potosi, where the Hawks came up just short in a 74–69 loss. Despite the setback, the team responded with determination and focus in the third-place game.

In one of the most exciting contests of the tournament, the Hawks defeated Farmington 74–68 in overtime to claim third place. The game featured clutch shooting, strong defensive effort, and relentless competitiveness until the final buzzer.

Throughout the tournament, Hillsboro's players made numerous big shots and competed extremely hard, reflecting the growth and grit of the program. The Hawks' performance at the Bob Sechrest Christmas Tournament was a strong indicator of their potential as they move forward into the remainder of the season.

Athletics & Activities *News*





Griffin Morris Reaches 100 Career Wins: Hawks Celebrate Senior Night

Hillsboro wrestling standout Griffin Morris reached a major career milestone on January 17, 2026, earning his 100th career victory at the Branson Invitational. The accomplishment is a testament to Griffin's consistency, dedication, and competitiveness throughout his high school career.

A four-year wrestler for the Hawks, Griffin has been a mainstay in the Hillsboro lineup and a leader within the program. As the season moves forward, he is aiming to qualify for his fourth trip to the MSHSAA State Wrestling Tournament, an achievement that would further cement an already impressive career.

In addition to celebrating individual success, the Hillsboro wrestling program also took time to recognize its seniors. The Hawks hosted Lafayette on Senior Night on January 21, 2026, honoring the senior wrestlers for their commitment, leadership, and contributions to the program over the years.

Congratulations to Griffin Morris on reaching the 100-win milestone, and thank you to Hillsboro's senior wrestlers for the impact they have made on the program. The Hillsboro community is proud of all our Hawks as they continue through the heart of the wrestling season.



Hilton and Carey Earn Regional Radio Dream Team Honors

Hillsboro student-athletes Ashley Hilton and Andrew Carey have been recognized for their outstanding performances, earning selection to the Regional Radio Dream Team in their respective sports.

Ashley Hilton was selected as a member of the Regional Radio Dream Team for softball, highlighting her strong play, solid pitching, and impact on the field throughout the season.

Andrew Carey earned Regional Radio Dream Team honors in boys' soccer, recognizing his skill, work ethic, and contributions to the Hawks' season this year.

Congratulations to Ashley and Andrew on this well-deserved recognition. The Hillsboro community is proud to see our student-athletes honored for their hard work and dedication.



HILLSBORO AGRICULTURAL FARM *News*

Bridle Ridge Acres

Bridle Ridge FFA: A Season of Leadership, Learning, and Service

Students at Bridle Ridge have been quite active lately! We hosted several after-school Farm Camps, providing students from younger grades with hands-on experiences at the farm, thanks to the support of dedicated FFA volunteers. In addition, we participated in open houses and resource nights at various buildings, engaging with families in our community.

In livestock management classes, students assisted during a vet visit for the ponies' annual care and learned how to draw blood for pregnancy tests on our sheep flock, which was bred earlier in the semester and confirmed with ultrasound images. We are now eagerly anticipating the arrival of lambs!

Our officer team traveled to Indianapolis for the 2025 FFA National Convention, where they attended leadership sessions, connected with industry leaders and businesses, networked with other chapters, and took part in the National Day of Service.

Finally, our FFA trap team has successfully wrapped up their 2025 season.















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As a supporter of **"The NEST: News from Hawk Nation,"** your business will gain exposure through both digital and print media. Our publication reaches over 9,000 households through USPS mailing and is electronically shared with district families and across social media platforms. Your advertisement will be strategically placed to maximize visibility and engagement. Moreover, your investment will play a crucial role in offsetting the costs of printing and mailing, enabling us to continue delivering these updates to our cherished district patrons. Join us in celebrating our students' accomplishments, promoting your business, and fostering community spirit. Contact us today to explore advertising options that align with your goals!

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