Volume Four Issue 1 - Fall 2026

the NEST

News from Hawk Nation















ONE **DISTRICT.** | ONE **COMMUNITY.** | ONE **FUTURE.**

Hillsboro R-3 School District

www.hsdr3.org

PROPOSITION H INFORMATION INCLUDED

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Hello and welcome from the Board of Education to the Fall 2026 edition of The NEST. As we move through another busy fall season, we are reminded of the many people who make Hillsboro R-3 a special place for students to learn and grow. We extend our sincere appreciation to our employees, families, and community members for the countless ways you support our schools and contribute to the strength of Hawk Nation.

As you will read in this edition of The NEST, our district stands at an important strategic crossroads. As we consider the opportunities and challenges ahead, the continued involvement of our entire community will be critical. The future of Hillsboro R-3 is something we must navigate together, with shared purpose, thoughtful engagement, and a continued commitment to what is best for our students.

By moving forward as one Hawk Nation, we can help ensure that Hillsboro R-3 remains prepared to serve our students now and well into the future. On behalf of the Board of Education, thank you for your continued partnership and support. With Hawk Pride, we invite you to enjoy this edition of The NEST | News from Hawk Nation. Go Hawks!



John Linhorst
Hillsboro R-3 Board President

Upcoming Meetings
Thursday, October 29, 2026
Thursday, November 19, 2026
Thursday, December 17, 2026
Thursday, January 28, 2027
Thursday, February 18, 2027
Thursday, March 18, 2027

YouTube
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National School Public Relations Association
Publications and Digital Media Excellence Award
2026
Award of Merit
Magazine

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Hillsboro Intermediate (grades 4, 5 & 6): (636) 789-0030
Hillsboro Junior High (grades 7 & 8): (636) 789-0020
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
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Amy Phillips-Early Childhood Principal
Shannon Murray - Primary Principal
Eric Detweiler - Elementary Principal
Leslie Marchetti - Intermediate Principal
Dr. Bill Murphy - Junior High Principal
Billy Reece- 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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One District. One Community. One Future.

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UNDERSTANDING PROPOSITION H-*A Decision for Our Community*



Dr. Jon Isaacson
Superintendent

Dear Hillsboro Community,

On November 3, 2026, Hillsboro R-3 voters will consider Proposition H, a proposed $1.39 increase per $100 of assessed valuation to the District's operating tax levy ceiling, beginning with the 2027 assessment year. If approved, the additional revenue would support District operations, existing programs and staffing, as well as identified safety, facility, and instructional needs.

The proposal comes after years of reductions in the District's overall tax rate. Hillsboro's tax rate today is lower than it was in 1993. Even at the proposed rate of $4.73, the District's tax rate would remain below its 2014 rate. The District has also paid down nearly all of its general obligation bond debt while reducing its overall tax rate in recent years.

Proposition H represents a significant request of our community. Questions about its cost, purpose, timing, and long-term impact are important and deserve clear, factual, and transparent answers.

Our community has much to be proud of. Hillsboro's traditions, dedicated employees, and commitment to students provide a strong foundation for the future. We have reduced debt and lowered tax rates while continuing to invest in our schools. That history of stewardship matters, and our responsibility to use taxpayer dollars carefully will not change.

In February, community members asked the Board of Education to explore a tax increase for school improvements. They recognized the District's financial progress while raising concerns about safety, facilities, and future planning. Facility assessments, community discussions, and surveys helped shape the proposal explained in these pages.

This is a pivotal moment in our district's history, not simply because of what we might build, but because of the kind of school district we want Hillsboro to be.

There is reason to be encouraged by the possibilities ahead, but we must also be candid about the challenges. State funding shortfalls are placing additional pressure on our budget. Proposition H is therefore about more than new projects. It would also support the daily operations, people, and programs that serve our students. We must consider both the opportunities we hope to provide and our ability to sustain them.

The importance of our schools extends beyond families with children in our classrooms. Schools contribute to a community's appeal, and research shows that investments in school facilities can influence home values, although effects vary. Property values, in turn, can affect homeowners' equity and refinancing options. Schools are one of many factors involved, not a guarantee of any particular financial outcome, but they are an important part of a community's long-term strength and desirability.

The District will live within its means, regardless of the outcome of Proposition H. That is our responsibility to taxpayers, and it will not change. The question before us is also whether we are comfortable with what those means allow us to provide for our students and whether the programs, services, and facilities we can sustain meet our expectations for Hillsboro's future.

That discussion should include how Hillsboro compares with other school districts in Jefferson County, both in the opportunities available to students and in the financial commitment asked of taxpayers. We should consider what we provide today, what we can maintain over time, and what we expect from our schools.

Living within our means is a commitment. Deciding what we expect those means to provide is a community conversation. We recognize that our families and taxpayers must live within their means as well, and both responsibilities deserve careful consideration.

I encourage every resident to review the detailed information included in this edition of the Nest and on the District's Proposition H webpage and to ask questions. If I can provide additional information or help clarify any part of the proposal, please contact me directly at isaacson_jon@hsdr3.org or call my direct line at 636-789-0064.

Please take the time to review the facts, ask questions, and make an informed decision.

Dr. Jon Isaacson

Superintendent

A History of Financial Stewardship

Decisions already made to manage District resources

GRANTS SECURED

$739,516

Greenhouse and new high school CTE culinary kitchen, plus other student resources.

LESS HVAC BORROWING

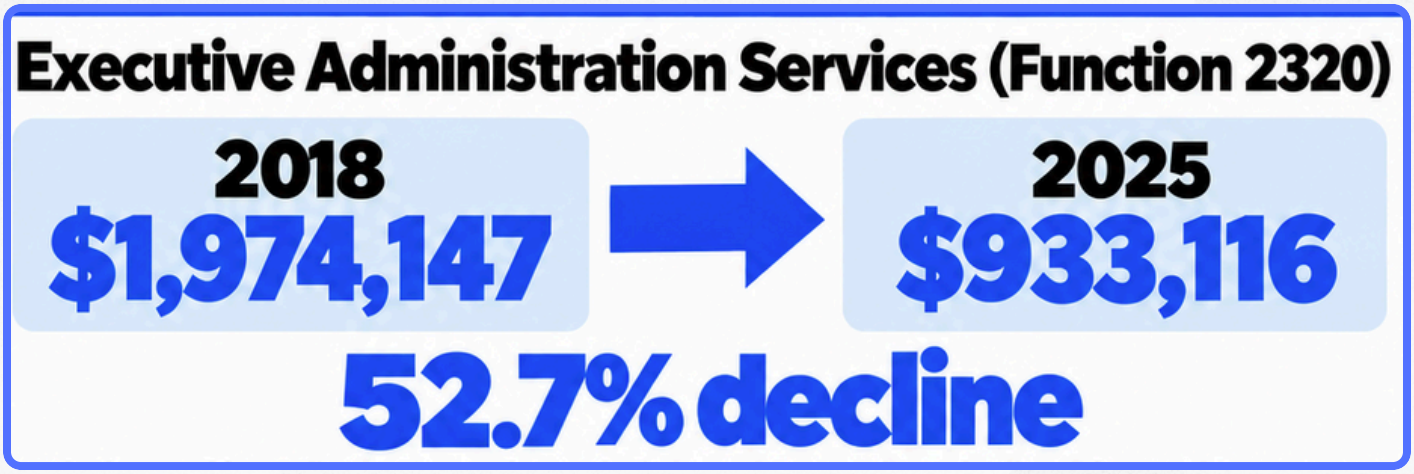
$2.5 million

High school HVAC down payment; estimated $878,349 in interest avoided.

PURCHASES ADJUSTED

$359,000

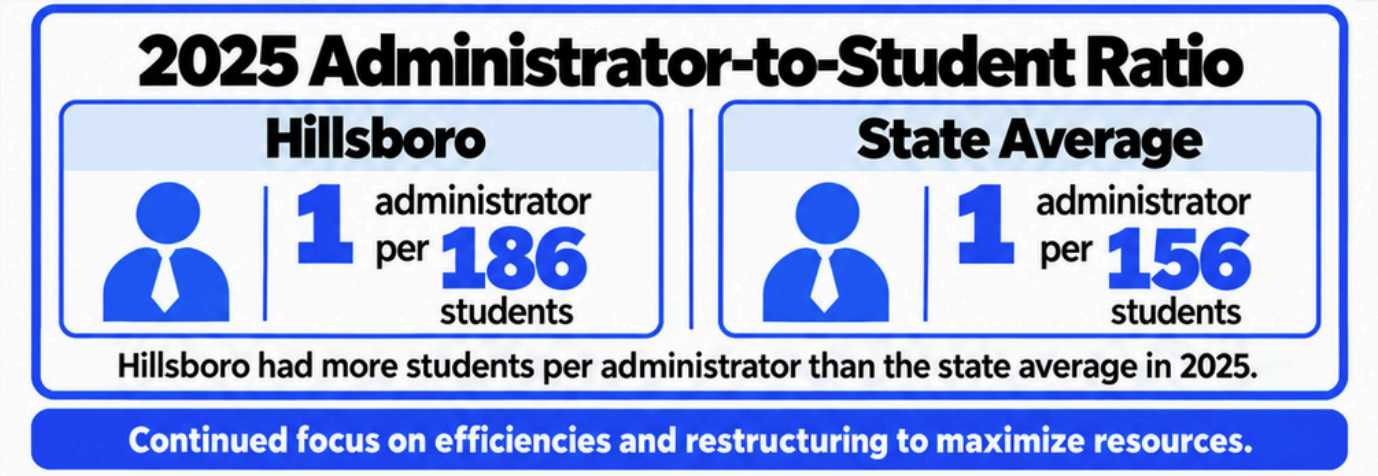
Deferred purchases included two buses and Intermediate playground fencing.



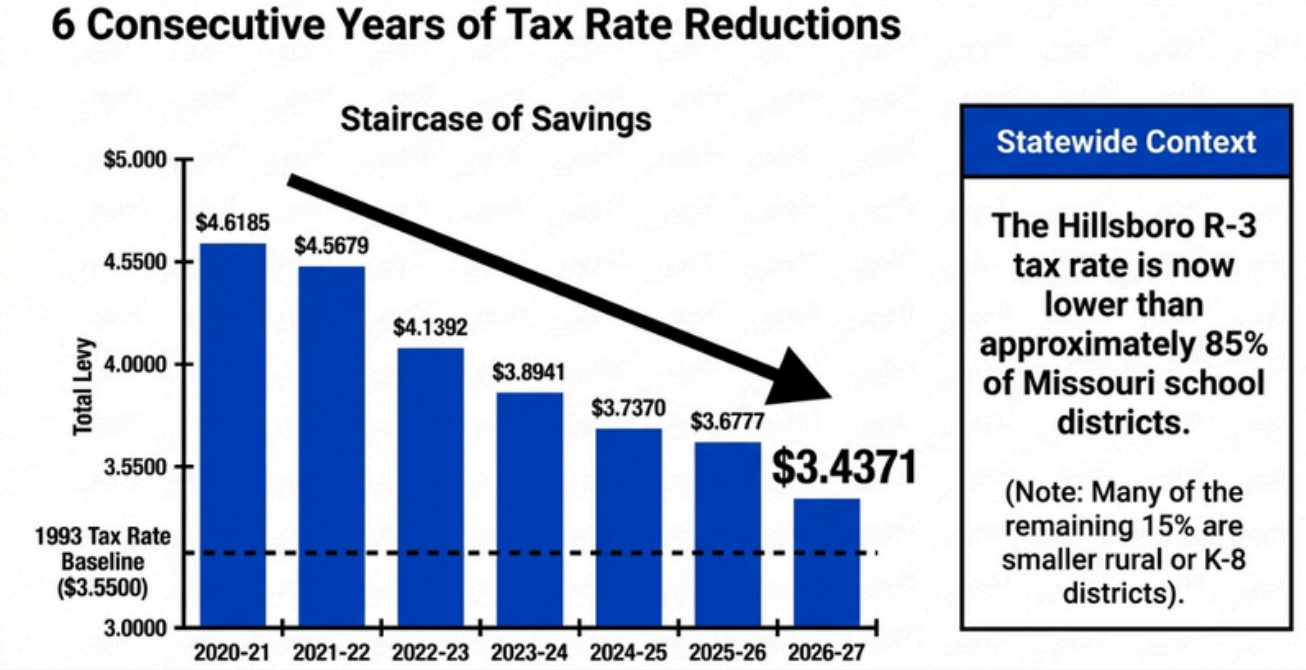
Salaries and benefits in Executive Administration Services declined from 2018 to 2025.

The district has remained committed to evaluating staffing needs and ensuring that resources are used as efficiently and effectively as possible. While employee salaries have increased, overall spending has decreased as the district has carefully reviewed positions and vacancies, particularly within the Administrative Office. This ongoing evaluation has allowed the district to maximize available resources while continuing to meet the needs of students and staff.

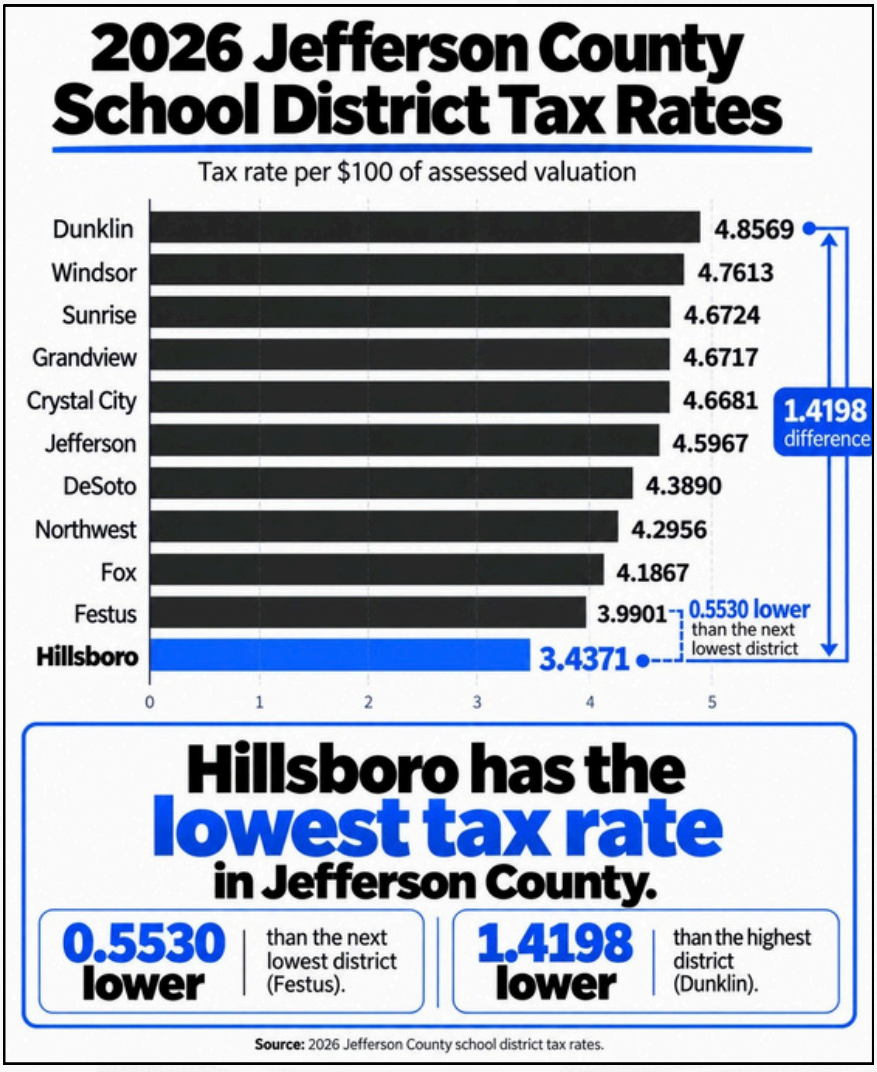
Source: DESE Annual Secretary Board Report.



Tax Rates in Context

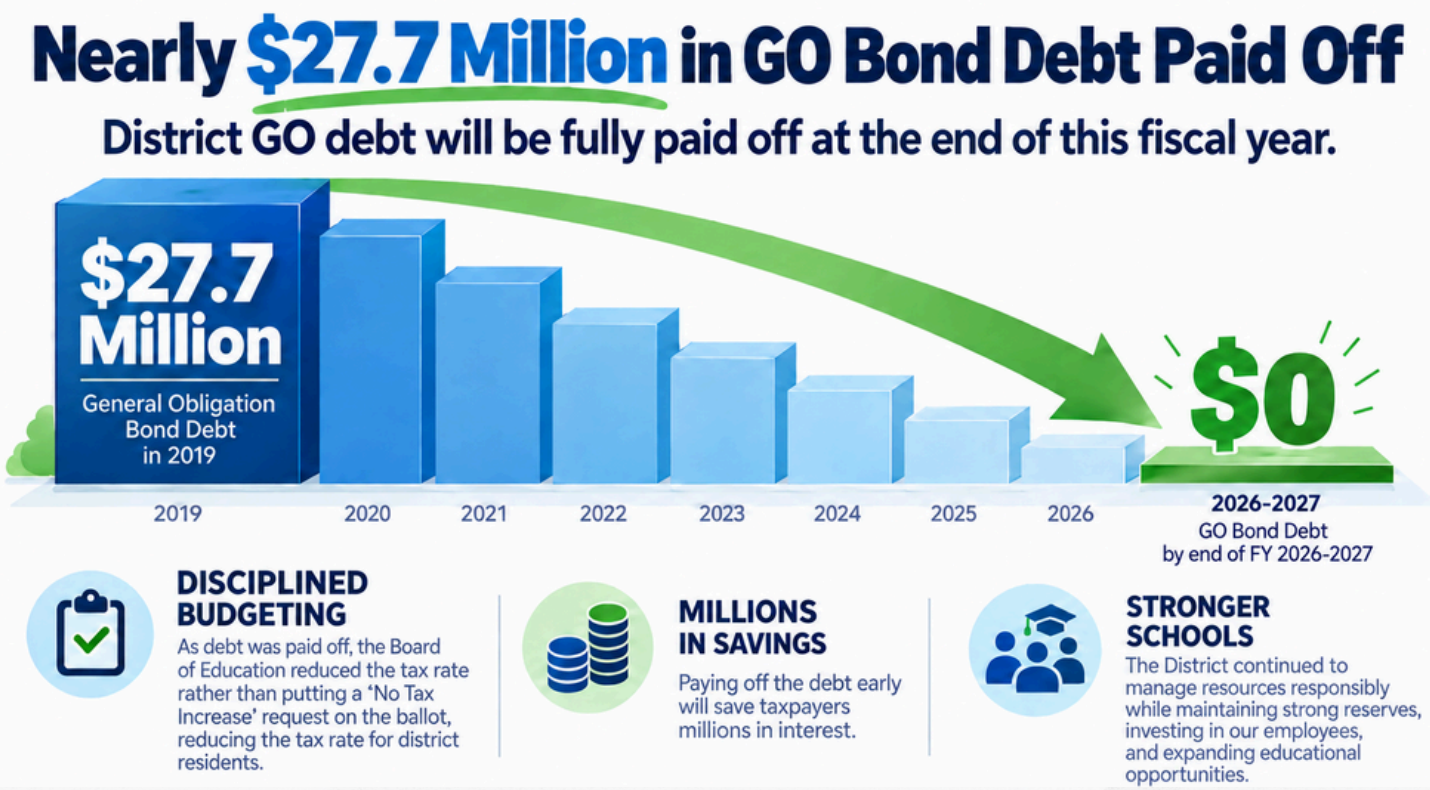


How **HILLSBORO** Compares



LEARN MORE ON OUR WEBSITE

Debt and State Funding



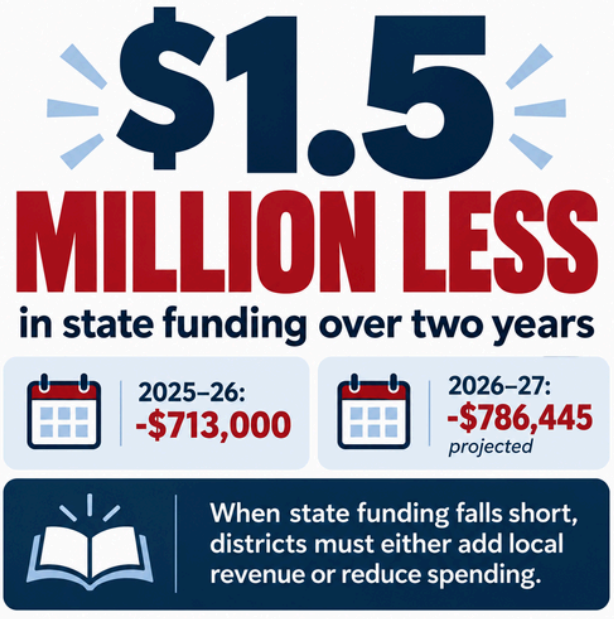
What Changed in State Funding?

Missouri is not fully funding its school funding formula, and Hillsboro is feeling the impact.

Hillsboro's estimated state funding reductions:
2025–26: $713,000
2026–27: $786,445 projected

That is approximately $1.5 million less over two years.
When state funding falls short, the difference has to be addressed locally. For Hillsboro, that means either additional local revenue or additional budget reductions. Because the District already operates lean, continued reductions increasingly affect students, staffing, programs, services, and opportunities. This is one of the financial realities behind Proposition H.

Simply put: if revenue does not come in, the District must reduce spending. We will live within our means.



What Would Proposition H Support?

OPERATIONS COME FIRST

Existing programs, staffing, student services, daily operations, and facility needs.

SAFETY + ACCESS

Secured high school entrance; cameras and doors; playground safety, security, and accessibility.

TRAFFIC + FACILITIES

Road, parking, pickup, athletic, and fine arts facility improvements districtwide.

LEARNING SPACES

High school fine arts rooms and storm shelter; Bridle Ridge CTE facility that may also serve as a community storm shelter.

SAFE SCHOOLS. STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG COMMUNITY.

On November 3, the Hillsboro School District will ask voters to consider Proposition H, which would bring impactful upgrades to district facilities and educational programs benefiting our students, staff and community. The ballot initiative would help enhance our community schools, improving security while preparing the future workforce and elevating the staff and student experience through high-quality learning environments and expanded amenities.

Throughout the summer, we've listened intently to community input to develop a list of priorities for the future of Hillsboro schools. Phase one of these projects, if funded through the ballot initiative, could include:

- Hillsboro High School Secure Entry
- District-Wide Security Improvements, including cameras and keyless entry
- Playground Upgrades
- Road, Parking, and Traffic improvements
- Safer Student Drop-off/Pick Up Areas
- Athletic Facility Improvements
- Fine Arts & Performing Arts Upgrades
- High School Band, Choir, and Drama Classrooms

Sample Secure Entry



Please vote on November 3 as we work to protect our legacy while we plan for what comes next for our students, staff and Hawk community.

To learn more, visit www.hsdr3.org/page/referendum-2026

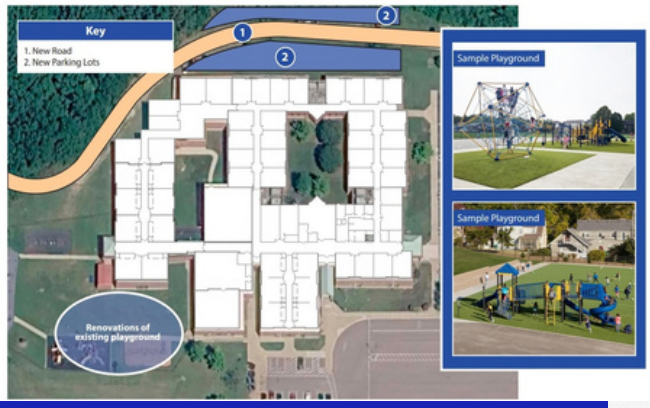
PROP H

PLEASE VOTE NOVEMBER 3RD

Potential Projects

****These conceptual examples are planning tools used to estimate costs and illustrate the proposed space. They are not final renderings. Final projects and designs will be developed if the referendum is approved.*

Hillsboro Primary School



Hillsboro Elementary School



Hillsboro Junior High School



Bridle Ridge Acres Farm



Hillsboro High School Athletic Complex



Hillsboro Intermediate School Field



Hillsboro High School



SAFE SCHOOLS.
STRONG SCHOOLS.
STRONG COMMUNITY.

What Would the Increase Cost?

The proposed increase is significant, but it follows nearly a decade of tax-rate reductions. For a $200,000 appraised-total home, school taxes would rise from about $1,306 today to $1,797 under Proposition H. That is close to what the same-value home would have paid 20 years ago ($1,744), 10 years ago ($1,784), and 5 years ago ($1,755). The proposed tax rate of about $4.73 would be about 4 cents higher than in 2017 and would still be lower than Hillsboro's tax rate in 2014.

Hawks

SAFE SCHOOLS. STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG COMMUNITY.

PROPOSITION H
INVESTING IN OUR SCHOOLS. INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY.

TAX RATE HISTORY & TAX IMPACT

Jefferson County Assessor Appraised Total	2007 20 years ago Tax Rate: 4.589 Taxes Paid	2017 10 years ago Tax Rate: 4.6944 Taxes Paid	2021 5 years ago Tax Rate: 4.6185 Taxes Paid	2026 Current Tax Rate: 3.4371 Taxes Paid	2027 Proposed - Prop H Tax Rate: 4.73 Taxes Paid
$100,000	$872	$892	$878	**$653**	**$899**
$200,000	$1,744	$1,784	$1,755	**$1,306**	**$1,797**
$300,000	$2,616	$2,676	$2,633	**$1,959**	**$2,696**
$400,000	$3,488	$3,568	$3,510	**$2,612**	**$3,595**
$500,000	$4,360	$4,460	$4,388	**$3,265**	**$4,494**
$600,000	$5,231	$5,352	$5,265	**$3,918**	**$5,392**
$700,000	$6,103	$6,244	$6,143	**$4,571**	**$6,291**
$800,000	$6,975	$7,135	$7,020	**$5,224**	**$7,190**

To find the value used to figure out your property taxes, visit the Jefferson County Property Viewer at https://www.jeffcomo.gov/168/GIS-Data-Maps. You can search for your home or property and see the appraised total and assessed value set by the Jefferson County Assessor. Your property taxes are based on the assessed value—not on what you paid for your home or what you think it could sell for today.

Jefferson County Assessor

Think about it like buying a car. Imagine two families are shopping for a dependable vehicle. One family has a $34,300 budget, while the other has a $48,500 budget. Both families can purchase a car, but their choices may be different. The larger budget may provide the opportunity to purchase a newer vehicle with lower mileage, additional safety features, or other options.

School funding works similarly. Communities can choose different levels of local investment, and there is nothing inherently right or wrong about those choices. ***But districts operating with substantially different tax rates do not have the same amount of comparable local revenue available to provide staffing, programs, facilities, safety improvements, and opportunities for their students and community.***

You can choose the lower price. You just cannot reasonably expect it to buy the same thing.



Review the Facts. Ask Questions

What the two outcomes would mean for the District

IF APPROVED

The proposed increase would begin in the 2027 tax year. Additional local revenue would support operations and the identified projects. Planning and budget oversight would continue.

IF NOT APPROVED

The increase would not take effect, and the projects would not proceed as proposed. Additional reductions would begin, with programs, services, transportation and staffing increasingly part of the review. The Board would determine specific changes.

BEFORE YOU VOTE

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

Read the ballot language, project information, videos, surveys, and planning records at hsdr3.org/page/referendum-2026.

Questions?

Contact Dr. Jon Isaacson at isaacson_jon@hsdr3.org or 636-789-0064. The District information page also lists 636-789-0000, ext. 6004.

SAFE SCHOOLS.
STRONG SCHOOLS.
STRONG COMMUNITY.

PROP H | **PLEASE VOTE NOVEMBER 3RD**

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT NEWS

Understanding Missouri's A–F Report Card and Annual Performance Report



Melissa Hildebrand, Ed.S.
Associate Superintendent

Welcome back to another school year! We are excited to have our students and staff back in our buildings, and we are pleased to share that the year is off to a great start. There is always a special energy that comes with the beginning of a new school year as students reconnect with friends, teachers welcome new classes, and our school community settles into new routines. We appreciate the continued support of our families and community as we work together to provide the best possible educational experiences for our students.

As we begin the year, we also want to help our families and community better understand how school performance is measured and reported in Missouri. You may hear more this year about the state's **A–F School Report Card**, while also being familiar with the **Annual Performance Report (APR)**. Although both provide information about school performance, they are different accountability measures and serve different purposes. Understanding those differences can help put the information you see and hear about our schools into the proper context.

What is the A–F School Report Card?

Missouri's **A–F School Report Card** is designed to provide the public with a snapshot of school performance. Schools receive a letter grade—A, B, C, D, or F—based on measures established by the state.

The goal of the A–F system is to take pieces of school performance information and summarize them in a format that is familiar to families and community members. Because the information is condensed into a single letter grade, it provides a quick overview but does not tell the complete story of a school or district.

What is the Annual Performance Report?

The **Annual Performance Report (APR)** is part of Missouri's school accountability system and provides a much more detailed look at district and school performance. The APR is connected to the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP 6), the state's framework for reviewing and accrediting public school districts.

Rather than reducing performance to a single letter grade, the APR examines multiple measures and trends. These include areas such as academic achievement, student growth, subgroup performance, attendance, graduation rates, and college and career readiness.

The APR also allows districts to look more closely at performance over time. This is particularly important because one year of assessment results provides only a snapshot. Examining trends, student growth, and cohort information helps educators better understand where students are succeeding and where additional attention may be needed.

Why Might the Two Look Different?

It is possible for a school's A–F grade and its APR results to appear different because the two systems are not calculated in exactly the same way. They may use some of the same underlying data, but the measures, calculations, weighting, and purposes of the two systems differ.

Think of it this way: the A–F Report Card is a simplified public snapshot, while the APR is a more detailed accountability report used to examine performance across multiple indicators and over time.

Neither measure should be considered in isolation. Assessment scores, student growth, attendance, graduation, college and career readiness, classroom performance, and other local measures all contribute to understanding how well a school district is serving its students.

Looking Beyond a Single Number or Letter

At Hillsboro R-III, we believe meaningful school improvement requires looking beyond any single score, percentage, or letter grade. State accountability measures provide valuable information, but they are most useful when combined with the many other data points our teachers and administrators use throughout the year.

Our focus remains on identifying areas of strength, recognizing opportunities for growth, and using reliable data to make instructional decisions that benefit students.

As additional state accountability information becomes available, we will continue sharing results with our Board of Education, staff, families, and community. Most importantly, we will continue using that information to support our commitment to educating and inspiring the learners of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

DISTRICT OPERATIONS NEWS

Planning Today, Protecting Tomorrow: Hillsboro R-3 Operations Update



Dr. Clay LaRue
Assistant Superintendent

Much of the work of Hillsboro R-3's Operations Department happens behind the scenes. From maintaining facilities and improving school security to keeping buses safely on the road, our goal is simple: provide safe, functional, and well-maintained environments while being responsible stewards of district resources.



Planning for Our Facilities

Hillsboro R-3 continues to move from reactive repairs toward a more proactive approach to facility maintenance. By establishing predictable maintenance and replacement schedules for roofs, HVAC equipment, asphalt, masonry, and other major systems, we can extend the life of district assets, reduce unexpected expenses, and better plan for future costs.

To support this effort, the district has partnered with **Hollis + Miller Architects and Bond Architect** to complete a comprehensive facilities assessment and develop a long-term planning platform. This work will help us identify deferred maintenance needs, estimate costs, prioritize projects, and plan expenses across multiple budget years—providing better information for thoughtful and financially responsible decisions.

Strengthening Safety Across the District

Safety remains a major priority. This year, Hillsboro R-3 added dedicated School Safety Officers throughout the district and implemented weapons screening at Hillsboro High School and Junior High.



Beginning October 2, our current metal detectors will be replaced by the Evolv Express weapons detection system. Used in healthcare facilities, museums, parks, zoos, and other high-traffic environments across the country, Evolv allows individuals to move through screening at a normal walking pace while helping safety personnel identify potential threats. Hillsboro R-3 will be the first school district in Missouri to implement this technology.

Technology is only one part of school safety. Our approach includes trained personnel, controlled access, cameras, emergency preparedness, weapons screening, partnerships with first responders, and strong relationships with students and staff. The proposed tax levy will only strengthen district security efforts. The goal is to remain proactive rather than reactive.

Transportation Fleet Cost Rising

Maintaining a safe and dependable transportation fleet also requires careful planning as the cost of buses, parts, fuel, and maintenance continues to rise. In 2020, the district purchased a 77-passenger bus with air conditioning for $91,421. By December 2024, a comparable bid had risen to **$149,539—an increase of more than $58,000, or 63.5% in four years**. Those increases make responsible fleet management more important than ever. Our Transportation and Operations teams continue to carefully evaluate replacement schedules and maintain our existing buses while keeping student safety at the forefront.

Whether maintaining a roof, planning future facility needs, investing in school safety, or extending the life of a bus, the common theme is planning ahead. By making informed decisions today, we can protect our community's investment and better prepare Hillsboro R-3 for the needs of tomorrow.

Join Our Team!
Now hiring **BUS DRIVERS** and **MAINTENANCE** workers for the 2026-27 school year.



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ONE DISTRICT. *One Community.* ONE FUTURE.

One Journey

A student's journey through the Hillsboro R-3 School District is made up of thousands of moments.

The first question asked. The first book read independently. The first time a student discovers a talent, takes the lead or begins imagining what life after graduation could look like.

Individually, these moments may seem small. Together, they become something much bigger.

Look across our district, and you can see how the pieces connect.

A preschool student stacking blocks is learning to ***solve a problem***. A primary student sounding out a difficult word is ***learning to persevere***. An elementary student presenting a project is ***developing confidence***. An intermediate student managing an assignment is ***practicing independence***. A junior high student trying something new is ***discovering an interest***. A high school student is beginning to ***turn that interest into a plan***. And a Career and Technical Education student applying skills in an authentic setting is seeing ***how learning connects to life beyond school***.

Each moment builds upon the one before it.

Every building plays a unique role in that journey, but no classroom, teacher or school carries the responsibility alone. Our students grow through years of learning and experiences, supported by educators, staff, families and a community invested in their future.

Different ages. Different needs. Different milestones.

But one connected journey.

One DISTRICT. One COMMUNITY. One FUTURE.

We are #BoroBuilt.
WE ARE HILLSBORO.
We are #HawkStrong.



BUILDING CURIOUS MINDS
Early Childhood



BUILDING THE FOUNDATION
Primary



SMALL FEET. BIG STEPS.
Elementary



DEVELOPING INDEPENDENCE
Intermediate



FINDING YOUR PASSION
Junior High



PREPARING FOR WHAT'S NEXT
High School



PAVING PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS
College & Career Readiness

EARLY CHILDHOOD

BUILDING CURIOUS *Minds*



Hillsboro Early Childhood: Discovering a Love for Learning

Early childhood is a special time filled with ***growth, wonder, and discovery***. During these important early years, children begin to understand who they are as learners and as members of their school community. With the encouragement of our dedicated staff, students follow their natural curiosity by ***asking questions, exploring new ideas, and making connections to the world around them***.

At Hillsboro Early Childhood, we create an environment where children feel supported and encouraged to learn, grow, and be themselves. Each day brings opportunities to ***explore, create, and discover*** through art, music, movement, play, and other hands-on experiences. These meaningful activities allow children to express themselves, follow their interests, and experience the joy of learning.



Students are also developing important ***social and emotional skills.*** They learn to make friends, share, work together, and become more independent. Through these everyday interactions, children build confidence and discover what it means to be part of a caring classroom community.



We are grateful to be part of these important early years and to provide a place where students feel ***valued, encouraged, and excited to learn.***

Every question, every discovery, and every new experience helps build the confidence and curiosity to take the next step.







PLAY | EXPLORE | DISCOVER | BELONG

HILLSBORO EARLY CHILDHOOD NEWS

Grandparents Day



Hillsboro Early Childhood celebrated its first official Grandparents Day, welcoming more than 300 grandparents and special guests for a memorable day together.

Students kicked off the celebration by singing a special song before spending time with their guests making matching friendship bracelets and enjoying a special treat.

The day was a wonderful reminder of the important role grandparents, family members, and other special people play in the lives of our students—loving, encouraging, and supporting them as they learn and grow.







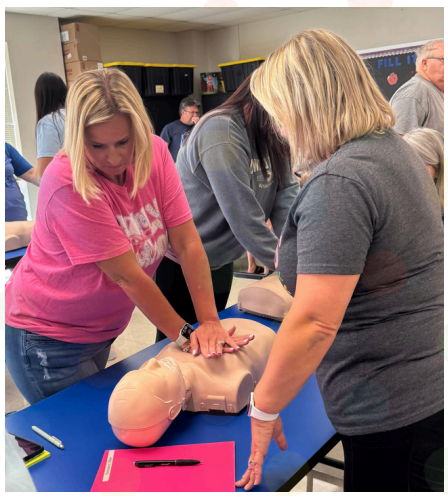




BIG *discoveries*

start with little questions







Hillsboro Early Childhood Puts Safety First

Hillsboro Early Childhood faculty and staff prepared for the new school year by completing CPR and AED training. The training strengthened their knowledge and skills to respond quickly and appropriately in an emergency.

This important preparation reflects our commitment to providing a safe, caring environment where the health and well-being of every student and staff member is a priority.

BUILDING THE *Foundation*



At Hillsboro Primary School, we believe the earliest years of a child's education establish the ***foundation for a lifetime of learning***. Kindergarten and first grade are pivotal years when students develop the knowledge, skills, confidence, and curiosity that will shape their educational journey.

We are the foundation.



Our mission is to create a safe, welcoming, and engaging learning environment where every child is challenged, supported, and inspired to grow. We believe all students are capable of learning, and we are committed to providing high-quality instruction and meaningful learning experiences that help each child reach their potential.

We build ***strong academic foundations in literacy and mathematics***. Through intentional instruction, students develop phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing skills, number sense, mathematical reasoning, and problem-solving abilities. These essential skills provide the building blocks for continued academic success.



But the foundation extends beyond academics. Students learn to ***ask questions, think critically, persevere through challenges, collaborate with others, and take increasing ownership of their learning***.

At Hillsboro Primary, every child deserves a strong start. We strive to make these first years purposeful, joyful, and academically rich—building not only what students know, but ***who they are becoming as learners***.

We build strong beginnings.
We grow confident learners.
We lay the foundation for a lifetime of possibility.

READ | LEARN | GROW | BELONG

HILLSBORO PRIMARY NEWS

Summer Reading BINGO!

Congratulations to our three students who completed the ***Summer Reading BINGO Challenge***! They read books of their choice and found unique and creative ways to enjoy reading all summer long. We are so proud of their ***dedication and love of reading***! Way to go, readers!

In picture (L to R): Bennett Mesey, Maci Jones, & Leighton Gillman





Morning Meetings

Morning meetings bring students and staff together four days each week to begin the day ***connected, informed, and ready to learn***.

Each morning includes the Pledge of Allegiance, Hawk Ready Code of Conduct, daily announcements, student recognitions, staff shout-outs, and our daily chant.

These gatherings reinforce ***schoolwide expectations, celebrate successes, build school pride, and strengthen a sense of belonging***. Students begin the day knowing what is expected, what is happening, and that they are an important part of our school community.

When students feel connected, they are better prepared to learn, participate, and grow.

The NED Show: The Power of Yet!

Primary students kicked off the school year with The NED Show, an engaging assembly that combined impressive yo-yo tricks with lessons about growth mindset, perseverance, and encouraging others.

Students learned about the power of "yet"—changing "I can't do it" to "I can't do it… yet!" This simple shift reminds students that learning and growth take practice, patience, and perseverance.

These lessons encourage our Hawks to embrace challenges, support one another, and believe in their ability to learn and grow.



N – Never Give Up
E – Encourage Others
D – Do Your Best

#HAWKSTRONG



SMALL FEET. Big Steps.

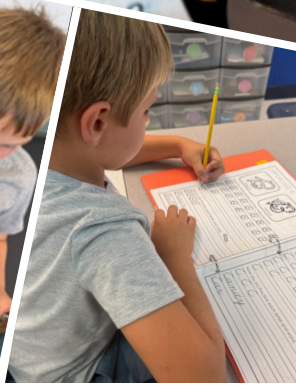


At Hillsboro Elementary, the early elementary years are an important part of a child's educational journey. Each day, students build a strong foundation while developing the ***confidence, independence, and love of learning*** they will carry with them throughout Hillsboro R-3.

Building Strong Academic Skills

Reading, writing, and mathematics are at the heart of learning. Students grow into more ***confident readers, writers, and problem-solvers*** as they progress from writing simple sentences to creating stories, from basic math facts to multi-digit addition and subtraction, and from proper letter formation to learning cursive in third grade. Along the way, students are encouraged to discover books they enjoy and develop a love of reading.





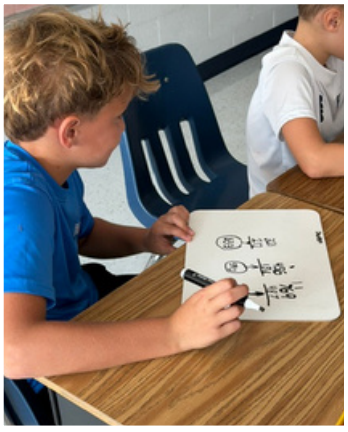
Supporting Our Gifted Learners

Our ***Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program*** provides identified students with opportunities to explore new ideas, think critically and creatively, solve problems, and challenge themselves while supporting their individual learning needs.

Growing Great Students and Great Citizens

Learning extends beyond academics. Through our Character Education program, students develop qualities such as ***respect, kindness, honesty, responsibility, and perseverance.*** They learn that being a great student also means being a good friend, classmate, and member of their community.

At Hillsboro Elementary, each new skill, challenge, and accomplishment is another step forward—***little feet taking big steps toward all that comes next***.





LEARN | EXPLORE | ACHIEVE | BELONG

HILLSBORO ELEMENTARY NEWS

Elementary Open House

Hillsboro Elementary welcomed families back for Open House on August 19, with an incredible ***95% of families in attendance!*** Students toured the school, met their teachers, and got a first look at the newly renovated library before kicking off the new school year.






Friendship in a Cup

Mrs. Gentry's second graders kicked off the school year by learning what it means to be a good friend. After reading about friendship, students worked together to make "Friendship in a Cup"—a fun way to build ***kindness, connection, and a positive classroom community***.



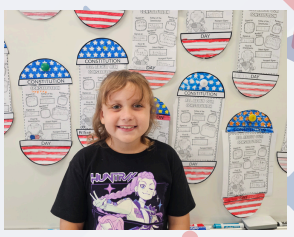
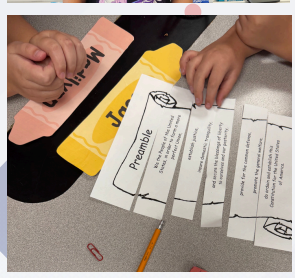


Constitution Day

Each year on September 17, Americans recognize ***Constitution Day***, marking the signing of the United States Constitution in 1787.

At Hillsboro Elementary, students participated in activities to learn ***why the Constitution was created, how it established the framework for our government, and the role it continues to play today***.

These experiences helped students connect classroom learning to the ***history and principles that helped shape our nation***.



Hawks #HAWKSTRONG

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DEVELOPING *Independence*









The intermediate years are an important bridge in a student's educational journey. At Hillsboro Intermediate, we intentionally help students move from the structure of elementary school toward the greater independence they will experience in junior high and high school.

Building Independence by Design

That transition happens gradually. In fourth grade, students begin learning to balance the expectations and routines of two core teachers. As they progress through fifth and sixth grade, they experience more transitions, work with additional teachers, and take greater responsibility for managing their school day.

Each step is intentional. ***We don't expect independence to happen overnight—we build it by design.*** Students are given the support they need while learning to manage responsibilities, adapt to new expectations, and become more confident in their abilities.

Growing Beyond the Classroom

Independence is about more than academics. It also means discovering interests, developing leadership skills, building relationships, and learning how to contribute to a community.





Students have opportunities to grow through ***Student Council and Character Council***, where they can take an active role in shaping their school community. Experiences such as the ***POW/MIA Vigil*** and an upcoming ***music and choir trip to a Cardinals game*** help students connect classroom learning with the world around them.

Through ***Drama Club, Running Club, Game Club, Reading Club***, and other activities, students can explore interests, build friendships, and discover new ways to become involved.

Ready for the Next Step

Throughout these intermediate years, students are learning to take more ownership of their education and of themselves. With educators providing a steady safety net, students have room to practice, make decisions, take on new responsibilities, and build confidence.

Step by step, they are developing the independence they will need for junior high, high school, and the journey ahead.

TAKE OWNERSHIP | **BUILD SKILLS** | **FIND INTERESTS** | **PREPARE**

HILLSBORO INTERMEDIATE NEWS

Remembering Through Learning

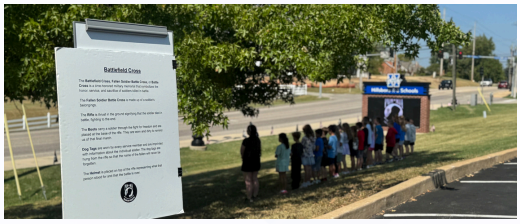


On September 18, Hillsboro R-3 students and community members participated in our ***POW/MIA Vigil***, held from 6:00 a.m. to midnight to honor our Nation's Prisoners of War and those who remain Missing in Action.

Students stood outside in silence, holding flags and signs as a visible reminder that ***they are not forgotten***. They also learned about the ***Missing Man Table*** and the symbolism of each item, ***"The Box,"*** representing conditions endured by prisoners of war, and the ***Battlefield Cross***, honoring fallen service members.

Through participation, learning, and reflection, students gained a deeper understanding of ***sacrifice, remembrance, and gratitude***.

We remember. We honor. We do not forget.











Learning to Lead

With greater independence comes greater opportunity to ***take ownership and lead***. At Hillsboro Intermediate, students can step into leadership roles through ***Student Council, Character Council, clubs, and other school activities***.

These opportunities give students a voice, encourage them to take initiative, and teach them how to work with others, make decisions, and take responsibility.

As students discover that their ideas and actions matter, they begin to see themselves not just as participants in their school—but as ***leaders within it***.

Leadership in Action: Red Ribbon Week

Hillsboro Intermediate Character Council students recently prepared for Red Ribbon Week through special training focused on ***healthy choices and substance-use prevention.***

Students learned about the meaning behind Red Ribbon Week and participated in discussions and activities about making safe decisions and encouraging their peers to do the same.

The experience gave Character Council students an opportunity to take what they learned and put their ***leadership into action***, helping share the message of healthy choices throughout their school.







Junior High

FINDING YOUR *Passion*








Junior high is a time when students begin asking new questions: ***What interests me? What am I good at? What could my future look like?***

Although students spend only two years at Hillsboro Junior High, those years provide an important opportunity to explore those questions. Along with a strong academic foundation, HJH continues to expand learning experiences that introduce students to potential careers, develop practical skills and create connections to opportunities awaiting them in high school and beyond.

Through ***Medical Detectives***, part of the Project Lead The Way Gateway program, students investigate concepts connected to medicine and biomedical science. The course provides an early introduction to a pathway that can continue through Hillsboro High School and Jefferson College. Coding offers a similar opportunity, introducing students to computer science through hands-on learning and exploration of careers in technology.

Students interested in culinary and life skills can explore ***Introduction and Advanced Consumer Science*** as well as the popular ***Taste of Cultures*** course. These experiences build practical skills while creating a foundation for Hillsboro High School's professional culinary program.

Learning also extends beyond the traditional classroom. ***Outdoor Education*** introduces survival and orienteering skills, with students having the opportunity to earn their Missouri Department of Conservation certification through the Hunter Education exam. Through ***Agriculture in America***, students attend class at Bridle Ridge, where they experience agriculture firsthand and begin learning about an industry that plays an important role in our community.

Qualified students can even begin challenging themselves with ***high school-level math and English courses for high school credit***.

And these are only part of the opportunities available. Fine arts, performing arts, athletics, leadership organizations and student activities give students additional ways to try something new, develop their talents and discover where they belong.

Junior high isn't about having the future figured out. It's about having opportunities to explore it.

Every class taken, activity tried and new experience gives students another chance to discover an interest, recognize a strength or imagine a possibility they hadn't considered before.

At Hillsboro Junior High, that's what ***Finding Your Passion*** is all about.

ACADEMICS | ELECTIVES | CLUBS & ATHLETICS | EXPLORATION | LEADERSHIP

HILLSBORO JUNIOR HIGH NEWS

Finding Your Place on the Stage



We are extremely proud of our award winning performing arts programs at Hillsboro Junior High. This year alone we have ***nearly 100 students in Choir, and over 100 students in band.***

These groups put on some impressive performances both at our school concerts and at regional competitions. If you haven't had a chance to see them in action, mark your calendars for the Band **Concert on 12/15 and the Choir Concert on 12/21**!













Photos courtesy of Teresa Gau

Winning On and Off the Field

Our sports teams are off to a great start this school year. Our ***football team is 3-1, volleyball is 9-4, boys cross country has 3 wins, girls cross country has 3 top ten finishes***, and our cheerleaders and Jr Hawkettes dance team have been there to cheer on our teams and show their support the whole way.

Even more exciting is the **combined 3.606 GPA** our ***150+ student-athletes*** posted at mid-quarter. Representing the Junior High and Hillsboro R3, they recognize the importance of ***performing in the classroom just as much as they do on the court or on the field***. If you haven't already had a chance, come out to one of our games or meets and cheer on our kids. **Go Hawks!**



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PREPARING FOR *What's Next*









At Hillsboro High School, the interests and skills students have developed throughout their educational journey begin to turn into plans for what comes next.

For some students, that means college. For others, it means career training, earning industry credentials, entering the workforce, or exploring a path they may not have considered before. ***Our goal is to provide opportunities that help every student discover where they want to go—and prepare them to get there.***

Through partnerships with area colleges, HHS students can begin earning college credit before graduation. Those colleges and universities include ***Jefferson College, Missouri Baptist University, Southeast Missouri University, and Saint Louis University.*** Last year, students completed ***1,647 Dual Credit hours and 1,076 Dual Enrollment hours,*** while eight students earned an associate degree alongside their high school diploma. More than ***100 graduates qualified for the A+ Scholarship,*** representing over ***$1.5 million in scholarship funds.***

Career preparation is another important pathway. This year, ***98 HHS students are enrolled in Jefferson College's ATS program***, exploring careers ranging from welding, construction and automotive technology to health sciences, education, digital media and culinary arts.

Opportunities continue on the HHS campus through courses in ***Industrial Arts, Business, Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, Project Lead the Way, fine arts and more.*** Last year, ***23 students earned Industry Recognized Credentials,*** gaining skills that can help prepare them for employment or continued education.

Courses are only part of the high school experience. Clubs, athletics, organizations and extracurricular activities give students additional opportunities to ***explore interests, build confidence, develop leadership skills and find where they belong.***

At HHS, preparing for what's next doesn't mean preparing every student for the same destination. It means helping each student find a pathway forward.

Different pathways. Different goals. One future.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE | LEADERSHIP | REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE | COLLEGE/CAREER/MILITARY | BRIGHT FUTURES

HILLSBORO HIGH SCHOOL NEWS



Homecoming Week: Hawk Pride in Action

Homecoming Week was packed with ***school spirit, friendly competition, and Hawk Pride***! Students celebrated throughout the week with spirit days and competitions, leading up to a full day of Homecoming traditions on Friday.

The day featured the return of ***Powder Puff Football and Glitter Puff Volleyball***, along with cornhole, karaoke, crafts, face painting, games, and a Homecoming Pep Assembly. The Senior Class earned bragging rights, taking home victories in both Powder Puff and Glitter Puff.

That afternoon, Hawk Pride filled the community during the Homecoming Parade, bringing students, programs, youth organizations, families, and community members together in celebration. The excitement continued that evening with a rivalry football game against Festus and a packed stadium.

Homecoming festivities concluded Saturday with nearly **700 students attending the Homecoming Dance**. Congratulations to the ***2026 HHS Homecoming King and Queen, Ryan Russell and Charli Strite***!

A special thank-you goes to ***HHS Student Council*** for the planning, leadership, and hard work that made Homecoming Week a success.













Game Photos courtesy of Teresa Gau







PAVING PATHWAYS TO POST-SECONDARY *Success*









The Hillsboro R-III School District is proud to provide students with a variety of opportunities designed to prepare them for success after high school. Through Career and Technical Education (CTE), the Area Technical School at Jefferson College, dual credit, dual enrollment, and Early College opportunities, Hillsboro students can explore career interests, develop valuable skills, earn industry credentials, and begin accumulating college credit before graduation.

Our goal is to help students discover the pathway that is right for them. Whether a student plans to attend college, enter the workforce, pursue technical training, or earn an industry credential, these programs provide meaningful experiences that connect classroom learning with future opportunities.

Career and Technical Education: Learning With a Purpose

Career and Technical Education gives students the opportunity to connect academics with practical, hands-on learning. Hillsboro High School offers a broad range of CTE courses that allow students to explore potential careers while developing technical skills, problem-solving abilities, teamwork, communication, and other skills that will benefit them long after graduation.

This year, student participation across our on-campus career clusters demonstrates the wide variety of opportunities available:

- **Agriculture — 131 students**
- **Business Finance — 202 students**
- **Business Management — 224 students**
- **Marketing — 93 students**
- **Child Development — 72 students**
- **ProStart — 174 students**
- **Project Lead The Way Computer Science — 34 students**
- **Project Lead The Way Engineering — 32 students**

Together, these programs represent ***962 student enrollments across our career clusters***. Because students may participate in more than one course or career area, these numbers represent enrollments rather than 962 individual students.

From agriculture and business to early childhood, culinary arts, computer science, and engineering, students have opportunities to discover their interests while building skills they can carry into college, technical education, and the workforce.

Hawks

#HAWKSTRONG

PAVING PATHWAYS TO POST-SECONDARY *Success*



Career Ready Through Jefferson College

Our partnership with Jefferson College further expands the opportunities available to Hillsboro students. Through the ***Area Technical School (ATS)***, students can access specialized career and technical programs that may not otherwise be available within the district.

Students participating in these programs gain hands-on experience in career fields while having opportunities to earn college credit, Industry Recognized Credentials, and Career and Technical Education Certificates. These experiences can give students a valuable head start toward continued education, technical training, or employment after graduation. The district currently has 98 students enrolled in the ATS program at Jefferson College.



Getting a Head Start on College

Hillsboro students also have several opportunities to begin their college education while still in high school. Through our partnership with ***Post-Secondary Institutions***, students can earn both high school and college credit through ***dual credit and dual enrollment*** courses.

Dual credit courses are taught at Hillsboro High School by qualified Hillsboro educators, while dual enrollment courses are taught by college instructors. Both options allow students to experience college-level coursework while working toward high school graduation.

Our ***Early College program*** takes this opportunity even further, allowing eligible students to work toward earning an ***Associate of Arts degree while completing their high school diploma***.



Preparing Students for What Comes Next

There is no single pathway to success after high school, and that is why providing students with choices is so important. Some students will pursue a four-year degree, while others may attend a community college, enter a technical program, begin a career, or continue training in a skilled profession.

At Hillsboro R-III, we want students to graduate with more than a diploma. We want them to leave us with experiences, skills, credentials, college credit, and—most importantly—a clearer understanding of where they want to go next.

Through strong academic programs, Career and Technical Education, Early College, and our partnership with Jefferson College, **Hillsboro R-III is helping students turn today's opportunities into tomorrow's possibilities**.

HANDS-ON LEARNING | INDUSTRY SKILLS | CAREER PATHWAYS | REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE | LIFELONG OPPORTUNITIES

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Photo courtesy of Teresa Gau

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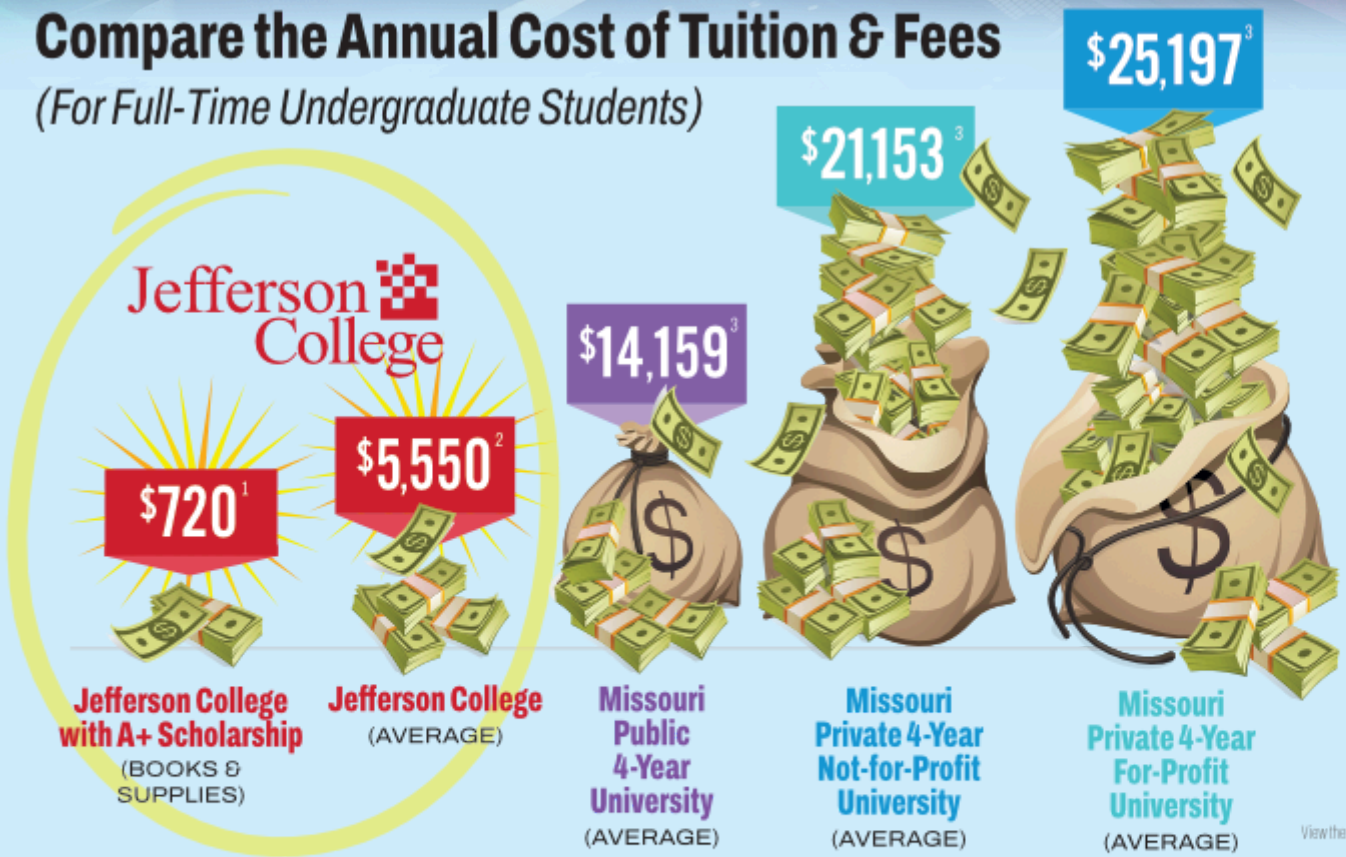
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[1] Effective 2026, includes cost of books and supplies at Jefferson College. Tuition covered by A+ scholarship. [2] Effective 2026, based on the average cost of tuition at Jefferson College. [3] Source: IPEDS Data Center (*nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data* along with the selection criteria.)

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