



WINTER 2025

CARDINAL CONNECTIONS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESCOTT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Highlights
of this
Edition

A FIGHT FOR FAIR FUNDING: YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Dr. Rick Spicuzza, Superintendent of Schools

Prescott continues to beat the odds in so many positive ways. While our staff and employees should be celebrating outstanding accomplishments, there remain strong headwinds that require a broader community awareness. Wisconsin's legislative representatives need to hear from their informed constituents to ensure that the *taxes collected by the state are returned fairly to its public school districts.*

- Did you know that WI public schools are funded on a per-pupil basis? That is, each district receives a different amount of funding per student than others.
- Did you know for the 2024-25 school year and prior years, Prescott was in the bottom 4th percentile in statewide educational funding?
- In spite of this financial challenge, PSD has achieved remarkable success in academics and in its extracurricular programming.

THIS IS CALL TO ACTION. Wisconsin's public schools cannot continue to meet the expectations of their local communities without real dollars fairly appropriated to each district across the state. Conversely, our school board will require input, partnership, and support as it will be faced with tough choices to sustain current programs while dealing with rising expenses.

Did you know?

Fifty million dollars in Early Literacy funds remain 'hostage' by the Wisconsin's Joint Finance Committee over a dispute between the State Superintendent, Governor and elected officials. This has to stop and schools cannot do it alone; this requires citizens willing to speak up.

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SOLID GOLD

CARDINALS CLAIM JAZZ & POM STATE DANCE TITLES

Definitions of athletic dynasties vary but have similar characteristics: "In sports, a dynasty denotes a team that has dominated their sport or league for an extended period." Another states, "A sports dynasty requires back-to-back championships or three titles within a six-year span." In either case, Prescott Dance Team meets/exceeds the criteria, although its humble coaches Samantha Marks, Emma Carlson and Bri Shirley may shy away from such a label.

Samantha Marks has been head coach for the past 10 years and is assisted by lifelong dancers, Emma and Bri, who both competed for the Prescott Cardinals as well as at the collegiate level. Their experienced leadership and seasoned dance team members headed into the 2024-25 season determined to reach their potential. "This year, we had a nine count senior class, the largest I've had since coaching - and they were hungry!" stated Marks, "The team was not only exceptionally athletically talented, they also demonstrated incredible leadership."

The coaches approached the season by curating routines that best showcased the team as a whole. "It is truly a meticulous work of art and strategy," Marks commented. The girls started to learn the routines in September/October and continuously refined them throughout the competitive season - as late as the week of state!

Regional competition was a highlight for the dance team when they defeated their toughest opponent in the Pom category for the first time in 10 years. “We were anticipating to hear ‘Prescott’ named prior to the first place spot simply because it had become the ‘norm,’” Coach Marks shared.

At the State Eve dinner, the team surprised the coaches by revealing they’d secretly kept track of how many full outs (running the entire dance routine) they performed throughout their practices. The coaches were floored with the total!

“This was a testimony to the dancers’ resilience. This year’s team was exceptionally tough and knew we would not tolerate complaining. We are so happy that their hard work received the recognition they so greatly deserve,” she added. It’s been 14 years since the Prescott Dance Team has secured both the Pom and Jazz State Championship Titles.

Raising our Regional Championship Plaques at DC Everest High School



Prescott Dance Coaches Samantha Marks, Emma Carlson and Bri Shirley



Raising the State Championship Trophies for Jazz and Pom at the La Crosse Center



SHINING SENIORS

BIANCA GANGI: She was always willing to put in extra effort. Bianca’s reliability and support of teammates created a strong foundation for our success.

CLAIRE HINCE: Claire’s work ethic sets her apart. She faced challenges head on and used feedback as an opportunity to grow and improve.

LUCY LAMB: Lucy is consistent - in her dancing and her attitude. She came in every day with an urgency in her eyes to achieve her goals.

DAISY MAREK: Daisy is the definition of “teammate.” Her confidence was infectious to the entire team and we couldn’t love her more for her presence this year.

EVELYN NANCE: She is a polished dancer and a driven, encouraging teammate. Evelyn’s confidence and enthusiasm radiated during each performance.

ELLIE NAWROCKI: Her willingness to help others made Ellie someone the team could count on - whether lending a hand during practice or encouraging her teammates.

CLAIRE SCHOMMER: She is kind, driven, smart and, oh, so reliable on and off the dance floor. Claire will leave behind a legacy of enthusiasm for Prescott Dance.

MAKENNA WILLIAMSON: MaKenna is the kind of athlete coaches hope for. She is never complacent and always pushes to grow. She has grit, resilience and is an undeniable talent on the dance floor.

ALISSA ZERNEKE: Alissa’s light never dims, no matter how long or hard the days get. She encourages others during tough practices and is the epitome of a positive leader.



Prescott's Theatre Department has produced 16 high school and middle school shows since the completion of the Performing Arts Center in 2017. Our theatre program continues to flourish under the direction of Brittany Kamrath, Thomas Speltz, Abigail Mattmiro, Dianna Krahulec and countless additional contributors who play a vital role to bring each script to life. Director Thomas Speltz detailed the process of Making Musical Magic!

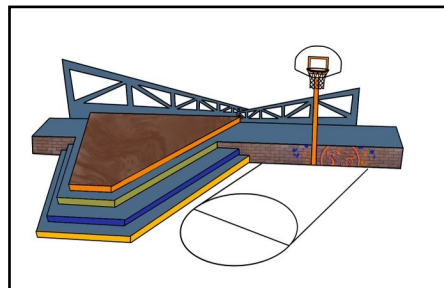
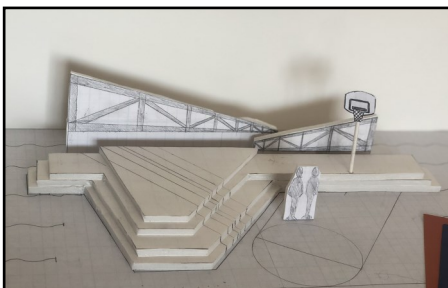


Have you ever imagined what it takes to bring a musical to life? Whether you're a director, performer, or a member of the crew, creating a musical is an exciting yet intricate journey that blends storytelling, music, and stagecraft into an unforgettable experience. Here's a glimpse into the intricacies of the creative process that Prescott School District's Theatre Department teams go through to create their middle and high school musical productions.

Show Selection – Choosing the right show involves consideration of many things, including cast size, subject matter, and previous programming to create variety for our students and audiences. The creative team assesses the participating students and selects shows that provide opportunities for growth, allowing them to stretch their artistic skills. Examples include the selection of *Beauty and the*

Beast Jr. to provide a variety of characters for the growing middle school participation, or selecting *Sweeney Todd* for this spring's high school musical to showcase the students' vocal techniques.

Pre-Production Design – This process happens before we even begin working with actors. Working alongside the production's designers, the director establishes the show's visual aesthetic, starting with rough sketches and vision boards that evolve into official set designs and 3D models. Knowing what the set will look like and how it functions on stage is crucial. Costume inspirations are gathered as part of the show's visual aesthetic; costumes are primarily sourced from rental houses, but sometimes custom pieces are required. Each show varies.



Evolution of a set: physical model, to digital rendering, to a completed set for Disney's *High School Musical*.



Cast of Disney's *High School Musical* (spring 2024), newsletter cover photo, cast of *Annie Jr.* (fall, 2024)

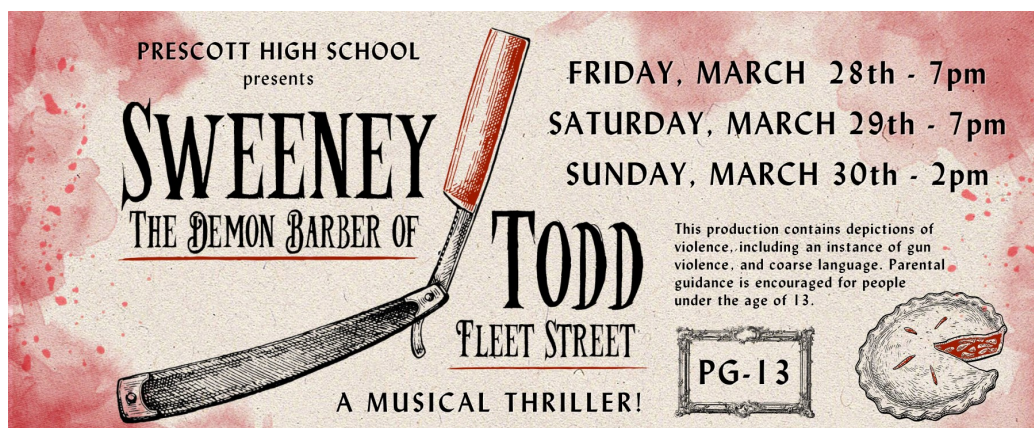
AUDITIONS & CALLBACKS: Actors audition with provided music and readings from the script and score. Depending on the level of dance and movement in the production, a dance component is sometimes part of the audition process. After all students audition, a list of actors is created who will be part of the callback process. In callbacks, actors read and sing for specific characters to make sure they are the best fit for the role.

"As directors, we remain open-minded, as standout performances can redefine our perception of a character. Sometimes, actors teach us things about their characters," stated Speltz.

REHEARSALS: Productions typically involve 12-14 weeks of after school rehearsals for students to learn music, choreography, and dialogue. We often enter rehearsals with a vision, but collaborate with the actors to shape the scenes. At the same time, complex musical sequences require detailed planning to keep the process running smoothly and efficiently.

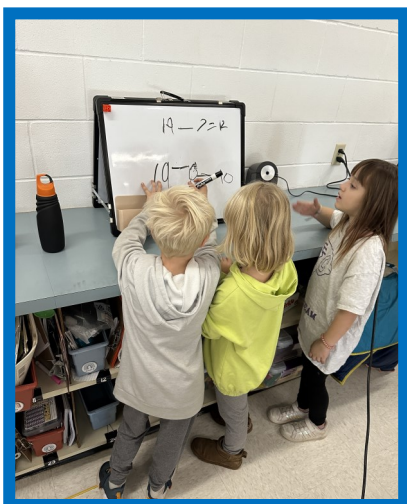
TECH REHEARSAL: We integrate all technical elements into the production in the week leading up to opening night. Lighting designers adjust fixtures, the set is installed onstage, mics are checked, props and costumes are organized offstage as part of the "load-in" process. The actors rehearse with the set, props and in full costume, running "cue to cue" through the show to synchronize lighting and sound. "Dress runs" follow nightly to fine-tune the show before a final preview.

SHOWTIME: Opening night is here; the final step is adding you, the audience. That's the magic of the opening night, when all the pieces of the production come together as we gather in the theater to go on a journey together.

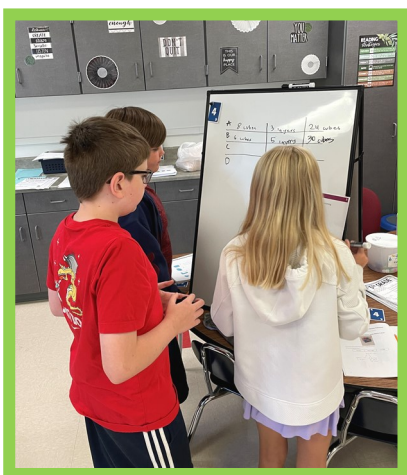




LEARNING IN ACTION: BTC is Transforming the Student Learning Experience

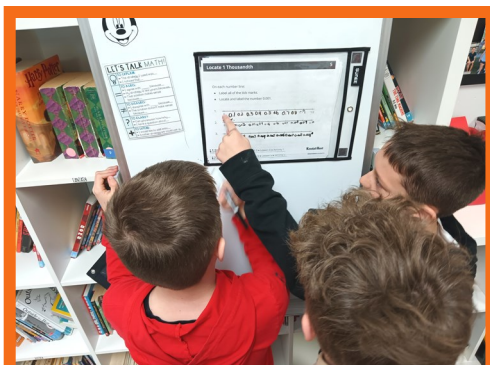


With the continued implementation of the instructional approach, Building Thinking Classrooms (BTC) this year, Prescott School District students are literally “thinking on their feet.” BTC prioritizes active student engagement using 14 strategies to get students thinking longer and deeper. A few strategies include having students work in random groups, students solving problems on vertical surfaces, and classrooms that are uniquely arranged to encourage collaboration.



This new approach to visible learning is led by Michael Kosmalski, Teaching and Learning Director, and a BTC teacher-leader team including Kayla Kinneman (PHS), Nathan McPhetres (PMS), Alexis Magnino (PIS), and Jen Langer (MES). McPhetres shared, “BTC plays a large part in Prescott’s goal of visual learning. When students are standing at the vertical surfaces and writing down their ideas, you can see the thinking that is going on from across the classroom .”

The goal behind BTC is to have students actively thinking and building their own knowledge. Teachers are gradually implementing these practices into their instruction, “I decided that the best way for me personally was to just dive right in headfirst, so that’s what I started with,” McPhetres commented.



Classrooms start with a non-curricular thinking task to ignite a culture of problem-solving through collaboration before using these strategies to tackle new content. Across the district, students are sharing that they like the new style of active learning much more than the previous lecture style.



“A Thinking Classroom puts students at the center of learning,” stated Kosmalski. This approach empowers students to learn through collaborative discussions and productive struggle while building a growth mindset. “A thinking classroom affords teachers the opportunity to see and hear where the students are in their learning journey, allowing them to seize those teachable moments and better meet the needs of all students while being a guide on the side,” Kosmalski commented.

PRESCOTT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

COMMUNITY EVENTS

DAY OF SERVICE

Sunday, April 6 ~ 2-4 pm
Middle School Cafeteria

Join others in our community to make a difference in Prescott and beyond. This event is open to people of all ages and abilities. With a variety of projects to choose from there's an opportunity for everyone to get involved and make a positive impact in the lives of others.

Do you have a project idea or do you want to join the planning committee? Does your business or organization want to financially support a project? Email Penny at ppeters2@prescott.k12.wi.us or call 715-262-4676.

If you'd like to volunteer on April 6, just show up! In March, Community Ed will launch an event page on Facebook with project details and announcements.

PRESCOTT BIKE RODEO

Saturday, May 17 ~ 9-11 am Magee Park
Rain Location: Prescott Middle School

This event is free and open to all ages. There will be bike safety education, skill demonstrations, youth helmet giveaways and games/competitions. Just show up - no pre-registration required!

YOUTH/ADULT EVENT

LIGHT UP THE NIGHT- KIDS PROM
4K-5th grade boys and girls will invite a favorite grown-up (mom, dad, grandparent, aunt, uncle or a special guest)

Shine Bright and Dance all Night!

Date: Saturday, April 26 ~ 6-8 pm
Location: Prescott Middle School

Join us for a night of music, dancing, and fun activities! With a DJ spinning tunes and a neon-lit atmosphere, it's the perfect night to dress and make unforgettable memories. Register soon at QR code below.



ADULT ENRICHMENT

UKRANIAN EGG WORKSHOP Thursday, April 3 ~ 6-8 pm

Discover a fun and fascinating method to decorate eggs. Learn the tools needed and how to create designs, along with demonstrations of the wax resist dying method. There will be hands-on practice in class and it's recommended to wear old clothing.

Prescott High School Art Room #110

Class Fee: \$25 (plus \$10 for supplies to be paid to the instructor at class)

Instructor: Jane Mannetter Register at QR code below.

**SCAN QR CODE TO VIEW WINTER
CE OFFERINGS AND TO REGISTER**



R5 Manufacturing
Experience Innovation. Support the Future.

OPEN HOUSE

📅 Wednesday, April 16, 2025
🕒 6:00pm
📍 1010 Dexter St
Prescott, WI 54021



About the R5 Manufacturing Program

R5 Manufacturing is a student-run business at Prescott High School where students get hands-on experience in trades like woodworking, marketing, engineering, welding and more!

Ways to Support:

BUY RAFFLE TICKETS!

Every ticket helps fund tools, materials, and student opportunities

Raffle Prizes Include

Traeger Smoker, M12 Drill Set and more!

PARTNER WITH US! Local businesses and individuals can request custom design, machining and repair services.



R5
Manufacturing

"A FIGHT continued



Among most of Wisconsin's school districts, large or small, urban or rural, here are the two key funding issues to advocate for:

SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING

- Shared legislative proposals are asking for 60% of SPED costs to be covered. We need to move to a sufficiently-funded basis.
- Historically, underfunding of SPED services has forced more districts to rely on taxpayers, while Madison legislators sit on a **\$4 billion** surplus.
- Wisconsin schools are using their General Fund dollars to cover the shortfall between what was promised vs. what is allocated for SPED services .
- This funding gap amounts to \$1.8 million annually for Prescott Schools.

REINSTATE PER PUPIL FUNDING THAT IS TIED TO INFLATION

- Wisconsin school districts have continued to fall behind since the legislature uncoupled per-pupil revenue from inflation (2009). There needs to be advocacy to reinstate funding that is tied to inflation, otherwise districts will be required to make reciprocal cuts each year as operating costs rise.
- The State of Wisconsin has moved from **above** the national average to **below** the national average in per-pupil funding.

I encourage our proud community to stand up for schools and demand that the dollars collected from citizens are funneled back to core organizations that support the best possible outcomes for kids. **YOU** can make an impact on the future of public education funding by staying informed: visit the district's "School Funding 101" page on our website: **www.prescott.k12.wi.us/district/fiscal-planning.cfm**, or by personally contacting your legislators (see contact information below).

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