



The Viking Voice

Monthly

December 2025



Greetings Cook County Schools!

Winter has arrived, and with it comes a wide range of student reactions! All the way from pure excitement to hesitant shivers. As we settle into the colder season, I wanted to take a moment to remind families of our weather guidelines. Students will go outside for recess or class unless the temperature or wind chill reaches -10°F. Because we still head outdoors in some very chilly conditions, please make sure your child comes to school prepared with appropriate winter gear. If your family is in need of assistance with cold weather clothing, please reach out. We can help fill those needs.

On Thursday, our Sawtooth Mountain Elementary Students will take in a matinee performance of *The Witch's Princess*. This is the community theatre performance being put on by the Grand Marais Playhouse. We are very fortunate to have this opportunity for our students to be able to just walk down the hall to the ACA to see their friends, family, and community members perform. A big thanks to Sue Hennessy and all of the volunteers, workers, and performers from the Grand Marais Playhouse for putting this experience on for our students.

Our 6th graders recently spent a day in the Twin Cities and it was a wonderful experience. They attended the morning performance of *A Christmas Carol* at the Guthrie Theatre as part of their English class study of Charles Dickens' work. Afterward they toured the Minnesota State Capitol, exploring its art, history, and architecture while connecting their learning across English and Social Studies. These kinds of interdisciplinary experiences make learning come alive, and we are grateful for the Education Foundation for helping make this trip possible.

In the High School our winter activities are starting up. Please check the activities calendar and come support our students at upcoming events. Our student athletes and performers love seeing familiar faces in the crowd. We also have a number of open positions in our school. Please be sure to check our employment postings on our webpage if you, or anyone you know, may be interested in joining that team at ISD 166.

Finally, a quick reminder that our winter break starts on Wednesday, December 24th and students return to school on Monday, January 5th.

All the best,
Josh Belanger
Principal Cook County Public Schools


**Cook County Schools
Winter Band Concert!
December 18th in the ACA
6:30pm-Middle School
7:30pm-High School**



Holiday Spirit & Generosity Days

Dec. 15th - Dec. 23rd

 **Monday**
Dec. 15th
Festive is always in style:
Wear your favorite
Holiday attire.
Color a picture for
someone.

 **Tuesday**
Dec. 16th
Winter Wonderland:
Wear blue and white
today or dress like a
snowman.
Help someone in need.

 **Wednesday**
Dec. 17th
Spread Holiday Cheer
and dress up as your
favorite Holiday
Character.
Give a kind note to
new friend.

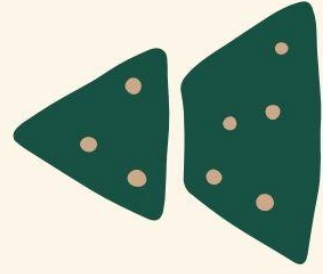
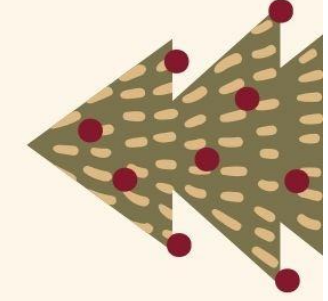
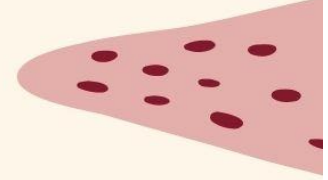
 **Thursday**
Dec. 18th
Rad with Plaid: Wear
your favorite
plaid/flannel.
Create a kind note and
leave it on someone's
locker/cubby.

 **Friday**
Dec. 19th
Sweater Weather: Wear
an "Ugly" Festive
Sweater/Shirt
Be generous with
compliments today!

 **Monday**
Dec. 22nd
Candy Cane Day:
Wear Red and White.
Make and give a card to
someone.

 **Tuesday**
Dec. 23rd
Wear your favorite
pajamas!
Share a thank you note
with someone who
helped you.

See you in the New Year! Back
to school, January 5th.



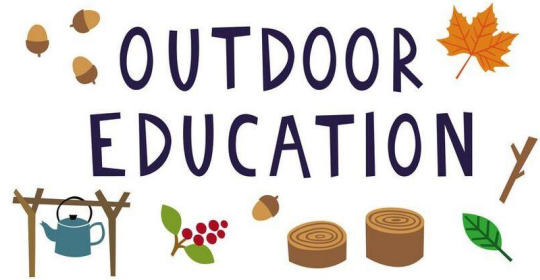
Veterans Day 2025

Another meaningful Veterans Day program took place at Cook County Schools on Nov 11, 2025. The Color Guard opened and closed the program, Keynote speakers Alec Gugala and Ann Sullivan shared their perspectives on serving our country, while the Cook County Community band directed by band teacher Reece Wright played patriotic music accompanied by the Sawtooth Elementary 2nd and 3rd grades, music teacher Mrs. Cindy Johnson and the CCHS choir. Thank you for your service, veterans!

The entire program is available to watch on the Cook County Schools youtube channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0ePPRiSdIo>



Sawtooth Mountain Elementary News



Thomas Foster's Kindergarten and First Grade Outdoor Education class has been working on their fort this quarter! It has been one of the central points of their class and taken some serious effort and teamwork. The First Grade class voted on a name, and so it is now called The Fort of Friends. Although you can't really tell, the entire First Grade was inside the fort at once for this picture!

Sawtooth Mt. Elementary and Cook County Middle Schools were visited by children's book author Erin Soderberg Downing in November where she shared about her writing process and the importance of reading. Students learned about many of her books which take place in Northern Minnesota.



Sawtooth Mountain Elementary News

In recognition of Native American Heritage Month, Kindergarten students learned about two Native American artists: Jim Oskineegish and Norval Morriseau. These artists painted in the Woodland style. The students learned about the different aspects of this style and meaning behind lines, shapes, and animals. They then painted their own Woodland styled animal and a group floral mural.



Congratulations to the students elected into Sawtooth Student Council! On Election Day, Sawtooth students in grades 2-5th voted to fill the 4 open Student Council positions. 4th grade students Harper and Sam and 5th grade students Andrew and Bella were elected to join Brynn, Brennan, and Oscar in Student Council. Some candidates who ran for Student Council but were not elected have taken on the role of Supporters and are excited to help Student Council members with projects!

Sawtooth Student Council is holding a Winter Clothes Drive to restock our stash of extra winter gear. This extra winter gear is either given to students who need it or can be used by students who misplaced or forgot to bring winter clothes. This stash is a life saver for our students, especially at recess! By student request, we are also collecting food for the Food Shelf. There will be boxes located by the Eagle Doors (Main Entrance) for donations to be dropped off. Donations can be sent with students or dropped off by adults. Student Council will help manage and organize the donations. Please see the flyer for the Winter Clothes and Food Drives for more information.



The Sawtooth Mt. Elementary 25-26 Student Council & Supporters

Sawtooth Mountain Elementary Student Council



FOOD & WINTER GEAR DRIVE DECEMBER 1ST – DEC 12TH

TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

YOUTH WINTER GEAR:

- Snowpants (Size YS-YXL)
- Jackets (Size 7/8-16)
- Mittens
- Hats
- Boots (Size 11, 12 BK 1-5)



PLEASE DO NOT DONATE:

- Items with stains
- Items with holes
- Items that cannot be washed

FOOD ITEMS:

- Canned soups, fruit vegetables, beans, Spaghettios, Ravioli, Pasta Sauce etc.
- Rice, pasta & cereal
- Shelf-stable milk
- Peanut butter & Jelly
- Hamburger or Tuna Helper
- Pancake or Bisquick mix
- Instant Mashed Potatoes
- Ramen Noodles/Macaroni & Cheese
- Anything else non-perishable



PLEASE DO NOT DONATE:

- Expired or opened items
- Homemade or perishable items
- Items requiring refrigeration or freezing



DROP OFF LOCATION:

Cook County Schools
101 West 5th Street
Grand Marais, MN 55604



The sixth graders had a great experience in the Twin Cities in November! Thanks to the generosity of the Cook County Education Foundation, they enjoyed a performance of “A Christmas Carol” at the Guthrie Theater and tour of the state capitol.



Cook County High School News



FIRST® is the sport where every kid can go pro!

High school robotics has officially started, and we're excited to welcome new and returning students to another year of innovation, teamwork, and competition. Practices are held after school on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., with additional Saturday work sessions from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. during the build season (Sat Jan 9th through Saturday Feb 27th). Students interested in joining the team still have time—high school participants may enroll until December 4th. For more information or to sign up, please contact Coach SarahLynn Anderson. This year's 2025–2026 FIRST® Robotics Competition promises to be especially exciting with its archaeology-inspired theme, FIRST® AGE. Our official game, titled REBUILTTM, will be revealed on the first Saturday in January, and our team has been preparing and are eager to begin strategizing and bringing creative solutions to life once the challenge is announced.

We also want to extend a huge thank-you to the individuals who helped create our new STEM laptop cart on wheels from the Windows 11 update e-waste, complete with eight brand new Arduino Inventor's Kits. This valuable resource was made possible through the support of Community Mentor Marie Tessier, IT Specialist Kevin Anderson, the CCEA Board, and Doug and Mary Sanders. Their contributions continue to strengthen hands-on STEM learning for all our students.

FIRST® Robotics is an expensive program to provide for our young community of students. We have budgeted a need for \$23,726.98 to compete at the DECC March 4th through the 7th, 2026. If you would like to donate to our program, please send a check to the district office made out to "Cook County ISD 166" with "Robotics" in the memo. Thank you for considering a donation!



Community Education

ISD 166 COMMUNITY EDUCATION **DRIVER'S EDUCATION**



COOK COUNTY
COMMUNITY EDUCATION
ISD #166



CAP OF 25 STUDENTS

2026 WINTER SESSION

DATES & TIME

Time

3:30-6:30 pm

Dates: Jan. 29, Feb. 3, 5, 10, 17, 19, 24, 26, Mar. 3, 10

Location: ISD 166 MSHS Library

Eligibility: 14 years of age or older
(Recommended to be within a few months of turning 15 years old)

Makeup Date: Mar. 19 (Snow Day/Teacher Illness Make-up Mar. 18 only if these events occur)

Behind-the-Wheel: Summer 2026

Registration Deadline: Jan. 20, 2026

Students are required to attend 10 classroom sessions (30 hours)

Fee: \$150 (Classroom)

\$320 (Behind the wheel - BTW)

\$470 Package (Classroom & BTW)

Registration Opens: Dec. 1

(Register Online)



SCAN ME

QUESTIONS?

Contact: Kaye Raden (District Office)

(218) 387-2271 ext 606 or email

kraden@isd166.org



COOK COUNTY
COMMUNITY EDUCATION
ISD #166

BEGINNER YOUTH HOCKEY SKILLS

GROUP 1: PRESCHOOL (4 YEARS OLD)-1ST GRADE (BEGINNER)&

GROUP 2: 2ND - 5TH GRADE (BEGINNER/INTERMEDIATE)

Practice Dates: Mondays & Wednesdays (Jan. 5-Feb. 18)

Time: 4-5 pm (Group 1) & 5-6 pm (Group 2)

Season Starts: Jan. 5 **Season Ends:** Feb. 18 (Weather permitting)

Cap of 15 per group (Sign up before it fills up)

Key Details

Youth hockey offers an action-packed experience where young players can build their skills in a positive and encouraging setting. The program focuses on fostering teamwork, enhancing agility, and mastering puck handling, all while keeping kids active and engaged on the ice.

REGISTER ONLINE

Register through ISD #166 Community Ed:
<https://www.cookcountyschools.org/o/ce>
Email kraden@isd166.org for payment information or
call 218-387-2271 ext. 606



FEE: \$35

(SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE)

DEADLINE TO REGISTER: JAN. 5

Location: Rink by the Community Center

EQUIPMENT & LOCATION:

- It is recommended to have your own skates and hockey sticks. Skates are available for rent at the warming house, but limited availability.
- Equipment Handout: On the first day of practice at the warming house by the Community Center.
- All practices are held at the hockey rink by the community center. Arrive early to get equipment on and be prepared to be on the ice at the start of practice

HOCKEY



SOCCER SKILLS SERIES: CLINIC 1: FAST FEET FUNDAMENTALS

As the first of a three-part series, this 5-week clinic introduces foundational footwork and ball control techniques in a playful, structured and safe environment. For both novice and experienced players, this clinic is designed to impart essential soccer skills, while building confidence and fostering greater enjoyment and understanding of the game of soccer.

Sawtooth Mountain Elementary Gym

Dates: Saturdays (Jan. 10-Feb. 7)

Session #1: 10:45 am - 12:15 pm

Additional Session: 9 - 10:30 am. (will be added if there is an extended waitlist)

Age of Participants: Grades 3-7

Instructor: Christopher Carruthers

About the Instructor: Trained in a European soccer lineage, Christopher played at the club, college and semi-pro levels, before discovering his calling as a youth trainer and coach. For decades he has taught, trained and coached youth players, arriving at the simple philosophy that soccer is a game that should be played with as much joy, skill and creativity as possible.

REGISTER NOW (DEADLINE JAN. 6)

Register through ISD #166 Community Ed:
<https://www.cookcountyschools.org/o/ce>
Email kraden@isd166.org for payment information or
call 218-387-2271 ext. 606

Fee: **\$30**
(Scholarships Available)



Limit of 12 Participants Per Session



ADULT COED INDOOR SOCCER (FUTSAL)

DATES:

- DEC. 10 - FEB. 25 (EXCLUDING HOLIDAY BREAKS)

TIME:

- 5:15-6:30 PM

LOCATION:

- SAWTOOTH ELEMENTARY GYM (COOK COUNTY SCHOOLS)

FEE: \$40 (SEASON) OR \$5 AT THE DOOR

ALL LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE WELCOME

REGISTER ONLINE



Register through ISD #166 Community Ed:
<https://www.cookcountyschools.org/o/ce>
Email kradeneisd166.org for payment information or
call 218-387-2271 ext. 606



OPEN GYM: YOUTH SOCCER (FUTSAL) PICK-UP GAMES

DATES:

- **SESSION 1 SATURDAYS (JAN. 10-FEB. 7) (MUST BE REGISTERED)**

TIME:

- 10:45 AM - 12:15 PM

LOCATION:

- SAWTOOTH ELEMENTARY GYM (COOK COUNTY SCHOOLS)

GRADES:

- 3-7

REGISTER ONLINE



Register through ISD #166 Community Ed:
<https://www.cookcountyschools.org/o/ce>
Email kradeneisd166.org for payment information or
call 218-387-2271 ext. 606



FEE: \$15
Cap of 18 participants

COOK COUNTY
COMMUNITY EDUCATION
ISD #166

Cap of 10 youth (Sign up
before it fills up).
Registration Opens Dec. 1



FEE: \$35

(SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE)

**DEADLINE TO
REGISTER: JAN. 5**

BRICK BOTS I & II: LEGO ROBOTICS BEGGINER AND INTERMEDIATE

GRADES 1-2

Practice Dates: Tuesdays (Jan. 6 - Mar. 10)

Time: 3:30 - 4:30 pm

1st Season Starts: Jan. 6 **Season Ends:** Mar. 10 (8 sessions)

Open to ALL Youth in Cook County!

Key Details

Students will explore the basics of robotics by building small creations with LEGO bricks and programming simple movements. This hands-on class introduces problem-solving and creativity while making robots come to life!

REGISTER ONLINE

Register through ISD #166 Community Ed:
<https://www.cookcountyschools.org/o/ce>
Email kradeneisd166.org for payment information or
call 218-387-2271 ext. 606



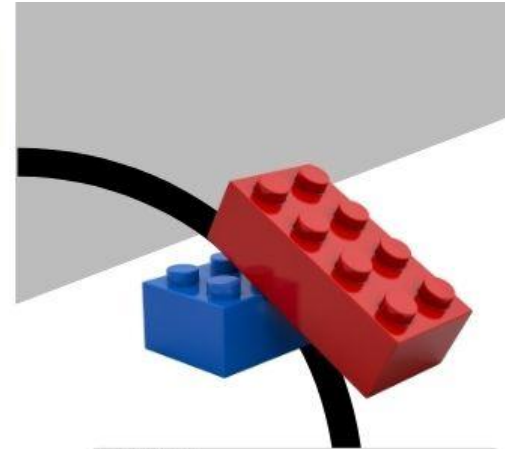
Location:

- Sawtooth Mountain Elementary - Room 424

Instructor:

- Mindy Jacobsen (for questions about the program, feel free to email Mindy - mjacobsen@isd166.org)

Made possible through funding support from the Susan Goodell Youth Access and Enrichment Fund & Kids Plus Funds



COOK COUNTY
COMMUNITY EDUCATION
ISD #166

Cap of 15 youth (Sign up
before it fills up).
Registration Opens Dec. 1



FEE: \$35

(SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE)

**DEADLINE TO
REGISTER: JAN. 5**

LEGO ROBOTICS PROGRAMMING BEGGINER AND INTERMEDIATE

GRADES 3-5

Practice Dates: Thursdays (Jan. 8 - Mar. 12)

Time: 3:30 - 4:30 pm

1st Season Starts: Jan. 8 **Season Ends:** Mar. 12 (8 sessions)

Open to ALL Youth in Cook County!

Key Details

Students will delve into the fundamentals of robotics through hands-on engineering challenges, designing and constructing LEGO-based models that they'll bring to life through basic coding. This interactive course cultivates problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration as learners explore how programming and design work together to create real-world robotic movement.

REGISTER ONLINE

Register through ISD #166 Community Ed:
<https://www.cookcountyschools.org/o/ce>
Email kradeneisd166.org for payment information or
call 218-387-2271 ext. 606



Location:

- Sawtooth Mountain Elementary - Room 424

Instructor:

- Mindy Jacobsen (for questions about the program, feel free to email Mindy - mjacobsen@isd166.org)

Made possible through funding support from the Susan Goodell Youth Access and Enrichment Fund & Kids Plus Funds





COOK COUNTY
ECFE PRESENTS:

GIGGLES AND WIGGLES

Open Playdate

AT THE YMCA

For Children Birth-5 years
Giggles and Wiggles drop-in
sessions provide an opportunity
for gross motor skills, as well as
social, emotional, and
cognitive skills.

**Tuesday
Mornings
Sept. - May
9:00-9:45
except
12/30 and 3/24**

Sept. and Oct

Meet at the YMCA
playground, if its raining
we'll play in the YMCA
gym.

Nov-March

Meet in the YMCA gym.

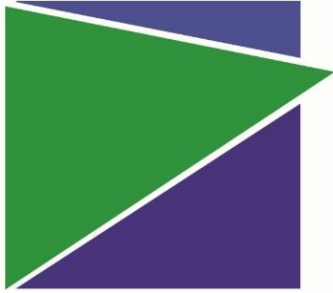
April-May

Meet at the YMCA
playground, if its raining
we'll play in the YMCA
gym.

**Free No Registration
Required**



PROGRAM QUESTIONS? CONTACT LACEY SMITH LSMITH@ISD166.ORG 218-387-2271 EXT. 408
<https://www.cookcountyschools.org/o/ce/page/ecfe>



FOOD DRIVE

TOGETHER, WE CAN SUPPORT OUR
COMMUNITY

**NOVEMBER 3, 2025–
JANUARY 2, 2026**

**Cook County Courthouse
411 W. 2nd St.
Grand Marais, MN 55604**

M–F, 8:00am–4:00pm

ALL ARE WELCOME

Items will be available to **anyone
in need**. No questions asked.



*For more information, contact Andi
DeBoer at Cook County PHHS:
218-387-3622*

ITEMS NEEDED:

- Canned soups, fruits, vegetables, beans, meats, and tuna
- Boxed meals, pasta, rice, mac & cheese
- Peanut butter, jelly, crackers, cereal, oatmeal
- Shelf-stable milk, coffee, tea
- Personal care/household items: soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, feminine hygiene products, TP, etc.
- Diapers (all sizes), wipes, formula, baby shampoo
- Dry or canned dog and cat food

PLEASE DO NOT DONATE:

- Expired or opened items
- Homemade or perishable items
- Items requiring refrigeration or freezing



Calendar December 2025

Tuesday, December 2nd
Boys Basketball @ South Ridge

Friday, December 5th
Boys Basketball vs. Floodwood, 6:30pm
Mid-Term

Tuesday, December 9th
Boys Basketball @ Carlton-Wrenshall

Thursday, December 11th
Nordic Ski @ Duluth

Friday, December 12th
Alpine Ski @ Giants Ridge
Boys Basketball @ Cromwell-Wright

Tuesday, December 16th
Nordic Ski @ Grand Rapids

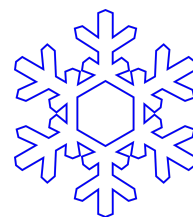
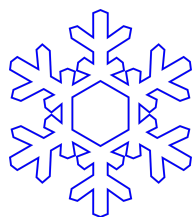
Thursday, December 18th
Alpine Ski home @ Lutsen
MSHS Winter Band Concert in ACA, 6:30pm

Friday, December 19th
Boys Basketball vs. Ely, 6:30pm

Saturday, December 20th
Nordic Ski Pincushion Invitation, 11:00am

Tuesday, December 23rd
Middle School Exploratory Day

December 24th - December 31st
Winter Break NO SCHOOL



Calendar January 2025

Thursday, January 1st-Friday, January 2nd
Winter Break NO SCHOOL

Friday, January 2nd
Boys Basketball vs. Two Harbors, 6:30pm

Tuesday, January 6th
Nordic Ski @ Cloquet
Boys Basketball vs. Cromwell-Wright, 6:30pm

Friday, January 9th
Boys Basketball vs. McGregor, 6:30pm

Saturday, January 10th
Nordic Ski @ Cloquet

Tuesday, January 13th
Boys Basketball vs. South Ridge, 6:30pm

Thursday, January 15th
Boys Basketball vs. North Woods, 6:30pm

Friday, January 16th
End of Quarter 2
Nordic Ski @ Duluth

Saturday, January 17th
Alpine Ski @ Giant's Ridge
Boys Basketball vs. Int'l Falls, 1:30 pm

Monday, January 19th
Alpine Ski home @ MDL
Boys Basketball @ Mesabi East
MLK Jr Day NO SCHOOL

Tuesday, January 20th
Boys Basketball @ Chisolm
Nordic Ski @ Two Harbors

Thursday, January 22nd
Alpine Ski home @ Lutsen

Friday, January 23rd
Boys Basketball vs. Stella Maris, 7:15pm
Alpine Ski Home: Lutsen, 11:00 am

Saturday, January 24th
Nordic Ski @ Ely

Tuesday, January 27th
Alpine Ski @ Giant's Ridge
Boys Basketball vs. Fond du Lac Ojibwe, 6:30 pm

Thursday, January 29th
Nordic Ski @ Duluth East

Friday, January 30th
Boys Basketball @ Barnum



December

Cook County ISD 166 ISD 166 Lunch

1 Lunch Entree Hamburger on Bun French Fries Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar	2 Lunch Entree Pizza Quesadilla Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar	3 Lunch Entree Mac & Cheese Popcorn Chicken Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar	4 Lunch Entree Chicken Nuggets Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar Grains Dinner Roll	5 Lunch Entree Stuffed Crust Cheese Pizza Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar
8 Lunch Entree Chicken Burger and Fries Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar	9 Lunch Entree Beef Chili Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar Grains Corn Bread	10 Lunch Entree Orange Chicken on Rice Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar	11 Lunch Entree Pancakes, sausage, hashbrowns Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar	12 Lunch Entree Stuffed Crust Cheese Pizza Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar
15 Lunch Entree Hamburger on Bun French Fries Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar	16 Lunch Entree Burrito Bowl Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar	17 Lunch Entree Chicken Alfredo Pasta Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar	18 Lunch Entree Mashed Potato Bowl Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar Grains Dinner Roll	19 Lunch Entree Stuffed Crust Cheese Pizza Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar
22 Lunch Entree Chicken Burger and Fries Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar	23 Lunch Entree Chicken Nachos Fruit Fruit and Veggie Bar	24 Winter Break	25 Winter Break	26 Winter Break
29 Winter Break	30 Winter Break	31 Winter Break		

In accordance with Federal, State and U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA Civil Rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, marital status, family status, or reprisal status, race-related to a specific program, or on the basis of sex, or on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression, or on the basis of genetic information, or on the basis of religion, or on the basis of political beliefs, or on the basis of ancestry, or on the basis of national origin, or on the basis of citizenship.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication (program information, materials, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program, or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711, Voice and TTY: 800-845-5050. Additional information may be made available in languages other than English.