



Congratulations Class of 2026!

On June 3rd, 68 graduates officially received their diploma making 2026 one of the largest graduating classes in recent years. This year, our graduation ceremony was especially beautiful as it was held at Harriet Island! A special thank you to our three Commencement Address speakers, Jasleen Pena Gallegos, Khampheng Vang, and Xee Lee.

Dear Graduates,

Congratulations on reaching this important milestone! The staff at GAP School are incredibly proud of each and every one of you.

Today is a celebration of the determination, perseverance, resilience, and commitment that brought you to this moment. While each of your journeys has been unique, your strength, growth, and dedication have helped shape the remarkable individuals you have become.

As you move forward into the next chapter of your lives, remember that the lessons, experiences, and relationships you gained at GAP School have prepared you to face challenges, pursue opportunities, and continue growing both personally and professionally.

Embrace the future with confidence. Follow your passions, continue learning, be strong, laugh, support others, and make a positive difference in your communities.

Congratulations once again, Class of 2026. We celebrate your accomplishments and look forward to all that lies ahead.

Fourth Quarter Program Highlights

Culture Night

On May 21st, GAP School's Student Leadership Board held their first Culture Night Fundraiser! This event brought students, staff, and supporters of GAP School together for a colorful and joy-filled evening celebrating the many different cultures of our students.

The evening started with food sampling from local vendors, including Pimento Jamaican Kitchen, Eggroll Queen, Beirut Lebanese Kitchen, and El Burrito Mercado. The highlight of the evening was a student-led Cultural Fashion and Talent Show. Students modeled beautiful traditional outfits representing their cultures. Cultural music played throughout the show, adding to the joyful atmosphere. The colors of the outfits were stunning, and students were proud to show them off! Ethiopian, Somali, Eritrean, Turkey, Lao, and Hmong cultures were represented in the show.

GAP School's Student Leadership Board has put in a lot of work this year for the school, but this event was extra special. This event was made possible by the YouthBuild Innovations grant and Burlington Fund award. Because of these grants, all proceeds from ticket sales go directly back to the Student Leadership Board fund to carry on supporting our students throughout the year!



West Side Cinco de Mayo

GAP School has been a part of St. Paul's West Side Cinco de Mayo parade for many years. Our staff and students march in the parade and carry puppets and flags. Each year additions or touch ups are made to the puppets used by GAP School Art Teacher, Rene Lopez, along with students. The turn out this year was the largest since before COVID and was a great way for our students and staff to celebrate with the larger West Side community!



Prom!

The 2026 GAP School Prom was held on May 8th on the Padelford River Boat, which cruises the Mississippi River off of Harriet Island Regional Park. There was a great turn out of students (and staff) who showed up dressed in their best and danced the night away!



Minnesota YouthBuild Coalition Youth Leadership Retreat

Members of our Student Leadership Board were able to attend a three day YouthBuild Youth Leadership retreat at Camp Courage in Maple Lake this spring! Hosted by the Minnesota YouthBuild Coalition, the retreat brought together three local YouthBuild programs for a few days of learning and workshop opportunities for your YouthBuild program participants, along with plenty of activities and fun!

John Valverde, YouthBuild Global CEO, was the main speaker and was able to share his inspiring story with the group. Other workshops include a “Spoken Word” activity with See More Perspective, hip hop artist, spoken word poet, and social justice educator. A “Know Your Rights” and “Restorative Justice” training were also led by the Legal Rights Center. Students also got to participate in team building activities on the Zip Lining course at the camp! Thank you to GAP School staff, Ta Lay and Sarah, for attending with our five students!



GAP students with YouthBuild Global CEO, John Valverde (top row, directly left of the banner)



Construction Pathway Updates:

During fourth quarter, students got their MC3 certifications. MC3 is an apprenticeship readiness programs that explores and prepares students for the different trades. Graduating students also got trained in CPR/First Aid with GAP School staff, Yojani and Hodan, from the Healthcare Pathway.

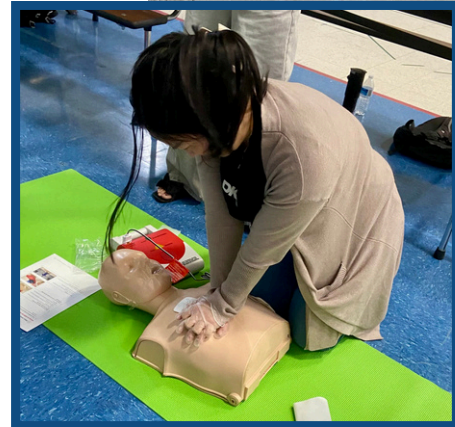
Our Construction Pathway had 9 graduates this year!



Healthcare Pathway Updates

CNA candidate students took their tests at Saint Paul College that they have been studying for the last six months. The test consists of two parts, knowledge and skills. This year the highest number of students that GAP has ever had passed, earning their CNA license and placing them on the MN state registry as official Certified Nursing Assistants!

A group of 15 Healthcare pathway students (as well as construction, MIT, and Grad Plan) also completed CPR training in May.



Service Learning at Sholom

Sholom Senior Living threw our volunteer students a thank you party to show gratitude to students volunteering weekly for the 2025-2026 school year! We love this partnership and will be returning in the fall to continue volunteering!



Driver's Permit Classes

Thank you to Yojani Bachmeier, Healthcare Pathway Case Manager, for bringing students to take a driver's permit class at COPAL. Transportation to and from school/work has been an obstacle for many students and this brings them one step closer to removing that barrier.



2025-26 GAP School Yearbook

GAP School Language Arts teacher, Alla Buolos, led our school yearbook project for the 2025-26 school year! We are so thankful to Alla for capturing so many great memories of this year!



Scan code or click
image to view!



Graduation Scholarship Recipients

This year, five scholarships were awarded to highly-motivated students showing exemplary performance in school over the past year. The scholarships can be used towards higher education costs or pathway trainings. Congratulations to these students!

Gilbert de la O Scholarship: Joselyn Ramji
Sister Giovanni Scholarship: Toua Yang
Thompson Family Scholarship: Samuel Kyi
Jody Nelson Scholarship: Victor Argueta Flores
James Nelson Scholarship: Zekariya Sherif



Upcoming Important Dates:

- July 2-6: No Summer School
- July 22: Last Day of Summer School
- September 1: School Registration (afternoon option)
- September 2: School Registration (morning option)
- September 8: First Day of School

GAP SCHOOL'S MISSION STATEMENT

GAP School's mission is to empower communities challenged by transition and poverty through education and enrichment opportunities, social and emotional support, and training that leads to employment.

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