

Sharing stories and information that connect our families, schools and communities.

Be seen. Be heard. Be bold.



WHS Seniors Help Build an Inclusive Community, One Sign at a Time

American Sign Language (ASL) students from Woodbury High School (WHS) recently made a huge impact at South Washington County (SoWashCo Schools) elementary schools and shared important lessons about the deaf and hard of hearing culture.

WHS ASL students in grade 12 used ASL to translate children's books centered around being deaf or hard of hearing. They then brought those books to SoWashCo elementary schools and presented them to younger students along with teaching some basic ASL.

"To make this project we first translated our book into ASL gloss, the order that we would sign it. After that, we started recording our videos using Screen-

castify on our school Chromebooks. We had to edit and make sure all our clips matched up with the pages correctly. It was a lot of work but it was worth it," said Adam, a WHS ASL student.

Each translated book has a QR code inside that elementary students can scan, watch the video, and learn some of the signs.

"The coolest thing was that they did the whole book in sign language," said Sanvi, a second-grade student at Newport Elementary School.

But, this wasn't just an educational experience for the younger students. "It was important for us to create these books because it was an

experience for us to be able to translate and see how much progress we made throughout the years," said WHS ASL student, Emma.

Some of the students also said the time and effort put into this project was worth it in more than one way. "I really liked interacting with the kids afterward because I felt like that was the reward of doing this whole, big project," said Lucas, a WHS ASL student.

The WHS student-created ASL-translated books are now available for elementary students to check out at some of our school media centers. You can learn more and watch a video about this inspirational project at sowashco.org.

SoWashCo Schools: Who We Are



We are the **sixth-largest school district** in the state. We serve about 18,700 K-12 students.



SoWashCo Schools serves the communities of Cottage Grove, Newport, St. Paul Park, Woodbury, and Afton, Denmark and Grey Cloud Island townships.



We are the **second-largest employer** in Washington County with nearly 3,000 employees.



Our staff provides programming for students of all ages including: **Early Childhood, K-12 and Adult Education.**

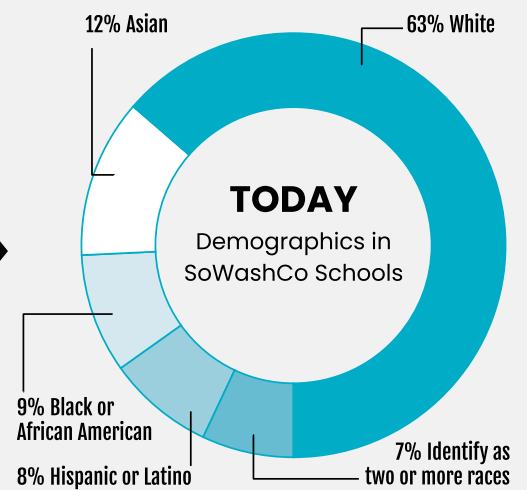
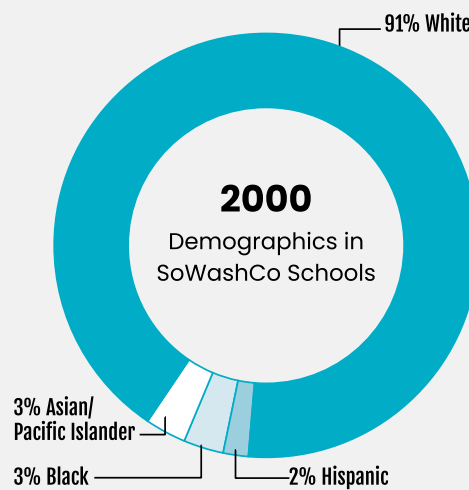


Students in our schools speak **more than 60 languages.** 5.3% of our students are English language learners.



Currently, **37% of our students identify as a race other than white.**

Over the last 20 years, the demographics of SoWashCo have changed.



School Safety Message

The safety of our students and staff is our highest priority in South Washington County Schools. Keeping our schools safe means that staff are trained and alert to any safety concerns that may exist within the school. Safety takes time, diligence, continuous work and strong communication. **Safety takes all of us, all the time.**

Throughout our long-range facility planning process, we asked our students, staff, families and community what we should prioritize – and all of our stakeholders have resoundingly stated: safety and security. As we move forward addressing the needs in the district, safety and security enhancements will be on the top of the list.

Parents and families are aware that we recently made adjustments to our main entrance procedures, asking individuals to drop student items on the table in the vestibule. We are working to reduce the number of visitor check-ins that need to occur when an adult is just dropping off something for their child.

As I recently shared with our staff, for every one thing we do to protect our schools and buildings from the outside, we also need to do at least two things that improve the relationships we build with each of our students. Every student wants to feel a sense of belonging and know that someone cares.

The safety and security of our students and staff will take all of us. If you hear

about anything, please report it. In addition, the school district will communicate with families regarding any safety situations that occur. Because of cell phones and social media, we know parents and families often learn about things while school and district staff are still working through and investigating what happened. Our number one goal is to make sure students are safe and that the communications sent are accurate and timely.



Julie Nielsen
Julie Nielsen, Superintendent



Securing Our Future

Supporting Our Students.

SoWashCo Schools Continues Gathering Feedback for School Additions and Renovations

South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools) is in the process of gathering feedback about a new long-range facility plan that is anticipated to be brought to voters in November.

Following the August referendum vote, SoWashCo Schools gathered input and feedback from families, staff and community members to revise the facility plan.

To date, the district has:

- Hosted community and staff listening sessions to gather and document feedback.
- Conducted a community survey of 500 randomly selected homes in our school boundaries.
- Commissioned a new demographic study.
- Held two of three in-person community meetings.
- Hosted two of three meetings with parent advisory groups.
- Held two school bus tours for elected and city officials.

District leadership has hosted community meetings to engage with the community and share information about the recent community survey, new demographic study and the input gathered through information sessions from

staff, families and community members. The focus has been on what individuals would prioritize to be in the new 5-year facility plan.

District leaders shared that SoWashCo Schools:

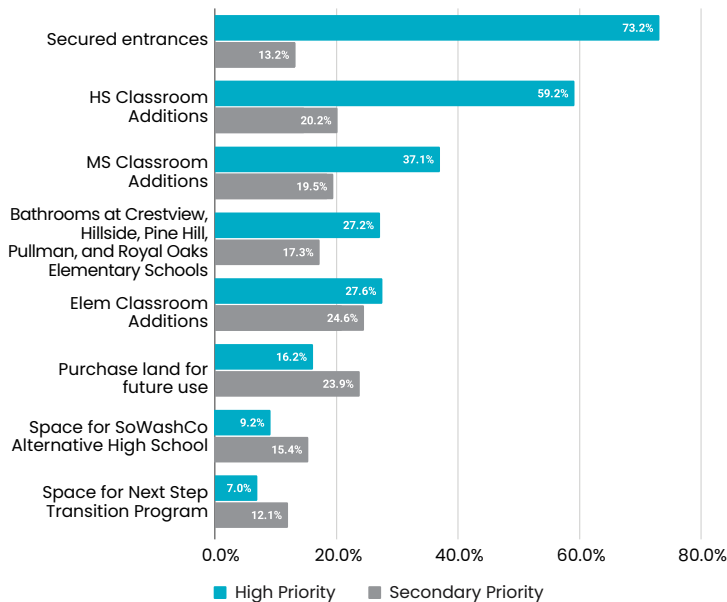
- Will not bring forth a plan to the School Board that closes any school.
- Will not ignore the current economic conditions.
- Will not ignore input from community and staff, results of the community survey or the updated demographic report.

SoWashCo Schools third community meeting will be held from 6:30–8 p.m., Tuesday, May 23 at East Ridge High School (ERHS). The purpose of the meeting will be to review and gather community feedback on a final draft of the 5-year facility plan.

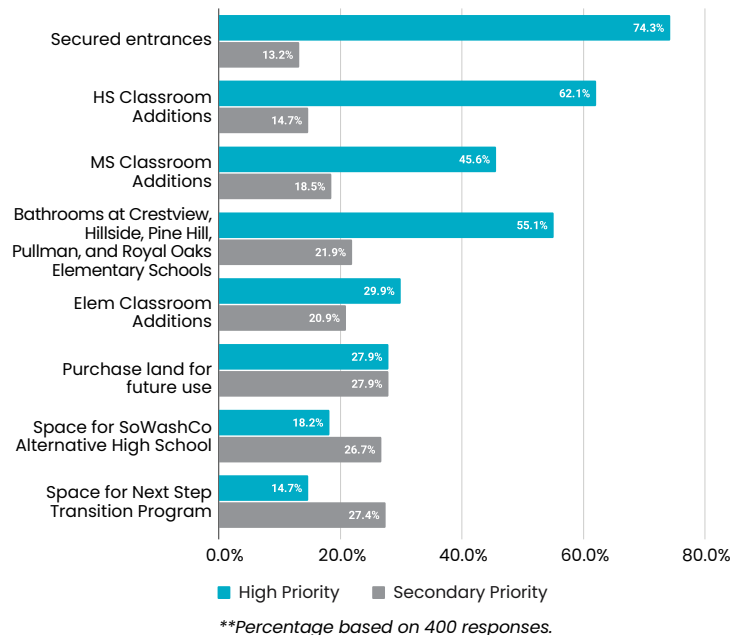
The community meetings are an opportunity for students, staff, families and community members to engage with district leadership in the long-range facility planning process and to share feedback and ideas that will help guide the new plan.

Find more information at sowashco.org/facilityplanning.

Community Responses



Staff Responses





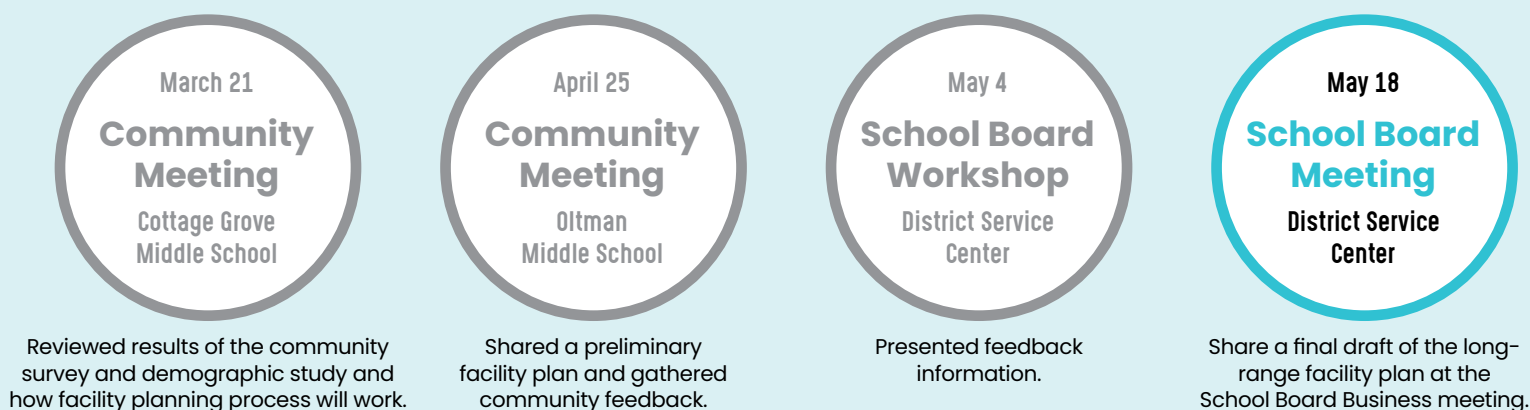
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	High Priority Category	Approximate Cost Estimate*
	Safety and Security Enhancements Construction of new secured entryways and relocated main offices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cottage Grove Middle School Lake Middle School Woodbury Middle School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including new bus road and revised traffic flow for safety Park High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renovation to consolidate student services space for added visitor security Relocation of main office and support services to consolidated location Woodbury High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of a new secure entry and student services wing Realignment of parking lot and service roads to increase pedestrian safety 	\$25 Million
	Middle School Addition and Renovations Construction of previously-planned Oltnan Middle School expansion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional classrooms (includes STEM and special education), increasing capacity to about 1,300 students Expansion of cafeteria and kitchen serving areas New STEM and special education spaces Renovations at Woodbury Middle School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remodel existing space (old pool area) for educational space 	\$30 Million
	High School Addition and Renovations East Ridge High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of a previously-planned addition, increasing capacity to 2,300 students Cafeteria expansion Construction of additional Career and Technical Education (CTE)/Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)/Robotics space Park High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of a new cafeteria and kitchen Renovation of CTE/STEM/Robotics space, construction of additional CTE space Woodbury High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of a new cafeteria and kitchen Renovation of CTE/STEM/Robotics space, construction of additional CTE space Renovation of media center 	\$105 Million

*Please note: All construction costs are rough estimates, and will be updated as the plan is being finalized.

Next Steps





Securing Our Future

Supporting Our Students.

Secondary Priorities

- **Elementary School Additions**
- **Space for SoWashCo Alternative High School**
- **Elementary Bathrooms**
- **Space for Next Step Transition Program**
- **Land Purchase**

Opportunity for Feedback

Join a community meeting to engage with district leadership in the long-range facility planning process and to share feedback and ideas that will help guide the new plan.

5-Year Projections if We Do Nothing

Currently Over Capacity

- East Ridge High School
- Woodbury High School
- Pine Hill Elementary
- Grey Cloud Elementary

Within 5 years

At or Over Capacity

Within 5% of Capacity

- East Ridge High School
- Oltman Middle School
- Pine Hill Elementary
- Grey Cloud Elementary
- Bailey Elementary
- Liberty Ridge Elementary
- Red Rock Elementary
- Park High School
- Woodbury High School
- Lake Middle School

May 23

Community Meeting

East Ridge High School

Share a final draft of the long-range facility plan will be shared at the Community Meeting

June 1

School Board Workshop

District Service Center

School Board will review the final plan.

June 15

School Board Meeting

District Service Center

Final approval of the plan, with review and comment.

Nov. 7

Election Day

Pending School Board approval, a referendum election will be held on Election Day in November.

SoWashCo Voices

STUDENT AMBASSADORS

The voices of South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools) District Youth Ambassador Council (DYAC) play an important role in our school district's decision-making process.

District leadership meets monthly with student ambassadors to gather input and feedback and to incorporate student voice and perspectives from all schools and grade levels across the district.

Some of the projects the student ambassadors participated in this school year include:

- SoWashCo Schools new Strategic Plan.
- Provided feedback on the Achievement and Integration Plan.
- Shared their perspective about the high school redesign and elementary student experience.
- Toured the District Service Center.
- Feedback about the integration of technology in our classrooms.
- Input about new menu items that will be offered in Nutrition Services.

Read more about the experiences of the student ambassadors on sowashco.org

"My favorite part about being a student ambassador is that we can help contribute to the school rules and ideas."

Micah

"My favorite part about being a student ambassador is getting to address problems that the adults don't get to see, and being the voice for my peers."

Eden

"I like how DYAC has helped develop a strong sense of leadership and communication and helped inspire me to pursue other leadership positions."

Felipe



"I like being able to contribute to the diversity of the group who voices their concerns and inputs."

Mariam

"It is a great opportunity to advocate for others."

Avery

"One reason I like being a student ambassador is because I feel like we have power in our school."

Tyson

SOWASHCO STAFF

What do you love about SoWashCo Schools?

"Our staff makes it a priority to make every student feel seen, heard and understood as often as possible. I believe SoWashCo creates intentional opportunities and structures to do the exact same thing for its employees."

Randy Spring
Physical Education Teacher
Liberty Ridge Elementary



"I get to spend time with so many wonderful kids in our district. I am now driving kids to school with parents that once rode on my bus when they were in school."

Brenda Newton
Bus Driver



"I love bringing teams together to think outside the box and create something innovative that allows all students to participate in an inclusive classroom."

Kendra Krasin
Assistive Technology
Facilitator



"The kids are hungry when they come in. They feel comfortable coming in for seconds which makes me feel good because that means they are enjoying our food."

Lori Carey
Nutrition Services Manager
Woodbury Middle School



"The kids are so much fun with big personalities and work well together. All of the kids are so kind to each other and the staff in the building which creates an environment that they can be themselves in."

Jordan Sabelko
Kids Club
Hillside Elementary



"When bus routes are running late or students miss their bus, everyone pitches in to make sure our students get to school or home safely."

Michael Bestler
Bus Driver



Ready to join the team?

Check out available positions at sowashco.org/careers

Moving to an Opt-in Transportation System Due to Bus Driver Shortage

South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools) is moving to an opt-in transportation system for the 2023-24 school year. The opt-in system will help the district address the ongoing bus driver shortage as well as create more sustainable and efficient bus routes.

SoWashCo Schools is grateful to our families and the families of charter and private school students who live within the district boundaries that have completed the transportation opt-in form.



SoWashCo Schools also continues to search for bus drivers. Salaries for our bus drivers start at \$22.90 per hour. We offer paid training, free Commercial Driving Licensing (CDL), health insurance benefits after 25 or more hours worked per week, flexible hours (split shifts), retirement contributions, optional summer work opportunities and more.

If SoWashCo Schools doesn't have enough qualified applicants to fill vacancies and cannot contract out bus routes, the School Board could begin discussing expanding the walking zone for elementary and middle school students. Currently, elementary students who live within a mile of their school and middle school students within 1.5 miles of their school are required to walk or parents/guardians must provide their own transportation.

The school board may also look into removing some areas previously designated as having hazards that require transportation services.

Changes to busing zones will not be made before the 2024-25 school year.

To learn more about our transportation services or if you are interested in becoming a bus driver, visit sowashco.org/transportation.



**so
wash
co** COMMUNITY
EDUCATION

Plan a Summer Full of Learning and Fun

Registration for SoWashCo Community Education's summer programming is underway. Discover a wide-variety of classes, camps and activities for youth and adults.

View our class listings in our catalog at commmed.sowashco.org/catalogs or register for adult and youth classes online at sowashco.ce.eleeyo.com.

Parent Consultations Provide Support for Families

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) parent consultations provide an opportunity for families with children birth to 8 years of age to ask parenting questions or share their concerns with a licensed parent educator. Parent consultations provide social, emotional, health-related and parenting support and information.



"ECFE has provided our family with a range of programs to support us in many stages of parenting, from birth through preschool. It has been a wonderful resource as parents to learn, feel supported, and give our children social experiences. We have learned so much, and our children are always excited to go to class and play!"

Rachel Fahey, ECFE Parent

Connect with us for help with:

- Supporting children's emotional well-being.
- Developmental questions
- Adjusting to life with a new baby in the home.
- Connecting with community resources and much more!

To schedule an in-person, telephone or virtual appointment, contact our ECFE Outreach Coordinator at 651-425-7163.

Age 3 Time to Screen







Early Childhood Screening is recommended at age 3 and is a quick and simple check of how your child is growing, developing and learning. Screening can connect families to early learning opportunities and resources.

If your child has not yet been screened and is between the ages of 3 and 5, please call the Early Learning office to schedule an appointment at 651-425-6175 or visit sowashco.org/screening.

Early Childhood Screening is required by the State of Minnesota for any child entering kindergarten in a public school and is provided free of charge.

Learn more at sowashco.org | 7

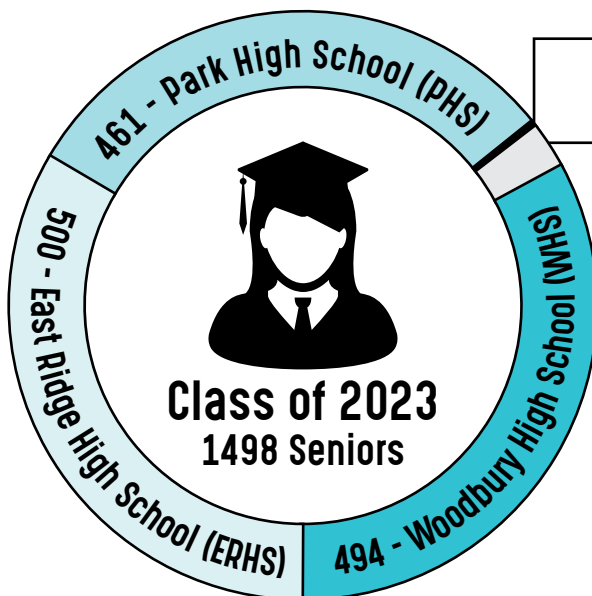
Stay Connected

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For more information visit sowashco.org

Graduation At-A-Glance

2023 Graduation Ceremonies: **June 3:** 10 a.m. SWAHS, 1 p.m. SoWashCo Online **June 4:** 10 a.m. WHS, 2 p.m. ERHS, 6 p.m. PHS



5 - SoWashCo Online

38 - South Washington Alternative High School (SWAHS)

SWAHS offers an alternative learning environment with small class sizes that help students become career and college ready.

Learn more at swahs.sowashco.org

SoWashCo Online offers part and full-time online learning experiences for students in grades 9-12.

Students learn in a flexible environment that best meets their needs.

Learn more at online.sowashco.org



29 Full-time Students



1596 Part-time Students

768 East Ridge High School
234 Park High School
9 SWAHS
572 Woodbury High School
13 Other



700 Seniors
Graduating with Honors

3.5 grade point
average or higher



481 Seniors
Participating
in Athletics

**GREAT
RIVERS**
ADULT EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
ADULT COLLEGE CAREER ENGLISH SKILLS SERVICES



18 Students
Earned a GED

Up to 10 more are expected to finish this year.

9 Students Earned
a K-12 Diploma

Great Rivers Adult Education Consortium provides adult basic education, professional development, diploma completion and English-language courses to adults ages 17+.

Learn more about our adult education programs at sowashco.org/greatrivers.