



Expect
More.



2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Table of contents

02

A message from the superintendent

03

About Stillwater Area Public Schools

04-05

Year in review

06

Class of 2023

07

Graduate spotlight

08

Student achievement

09

Facilities

10

Technology

11

Community Education

12-13

Preparing the World's Best Workforce

14-15

Financial management

A message from the superintendent

Dear Community,

I've just wrapped up my first year as superintendent of Stillwater Area Public Schools and I've enjoyed getting to know our students, staff and families. The district has a long tradition and the pride the community has in its schools is unparalleled. Pony Pride is alive and well.

Nearly everyone I spoke with this past year - from new families moving into the district to lifelong residents - said our district has a lot to offer. Yet I have heard over and over that we can do better.

In the pages of this Annual Report you'll find an overview of our district's performance in 2022-2023. In the data you'll find reasons to celebrate. You'll also see room for improvement.

While this report looks back on the past year, our focus is on the future. I view 2022-2023 as a baseline. From here, I believe, we will only get better. We have adopted a new operational plan - the Pony Plan - that recognizes where we are and establishes our priorities for the year ahead. A common theme runs throughout this plan - "Expect More." This theme embodies a spirit of progress and empowerment, encouraging us to establish high standards for ourselves and our students.

We have the unique opportunity to inspire and shape the future. By expecting more from ourselves, our students, families and community - we demonstrate a commitment to continuous growth and improvement. High expectations aren't about doing more things. It's about doing a few, fundamental things better. It's about being laser-focused and having clear objectives.

We are a community poised for change and a school district that expects the best. I look forward to working along with all of you to make Stillwater Area Public Schools the very best place to learn.



Dr. Mike Funk, Superintendent

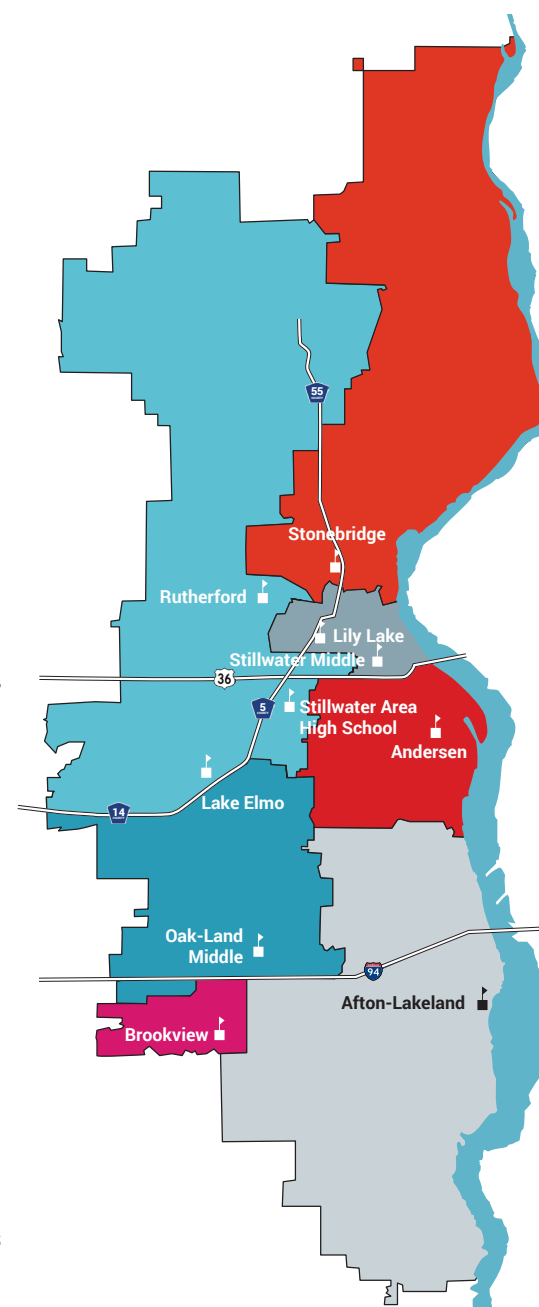


About Stillwater Area Public Schools

Not only is Stillwater the oldest district in the state, it is also one of the largest geographical districts in the metro area. The district stretches 30 miles along the St. Croix River from Marine on St. Croix south to Afton, and covers approximately 150 square miles. The district encompasses 18 communities, including: Afton, Bayport, Baytown Township, Grant, an area of Hugo, Lake Elmo, Lakeland, Lakeland Shores, Lake St. Croix Beach, Marine on St. Croix, May Township, Oak Park Heights, St. Mary's Point, Stillwater, Stillwater Township, West Lakeland Township, Withrow, and a portion of Woodbury.

Our district is made up of an Early Childhood Family Center, 7 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, a high school, an alternative learning center, and the Bridge Transition program for 18- to 22-year-olds.

As our communities grow and change, so has our student body. Our district is becoming more diverse and we have more than 55 languages spoken by our students and families.



By the numbers

8,285
students

24%
students of color

23%
free and reduced price lunch

17%
Special Education

3.7%
multilingual learners

Source: 2023 Report Card, Minnesota Department of Education

2022-2023 School year in review

September 2022

- The Stillwater Pony Express newspaper won the George H. Gallup Award, which is the highest award granted to high school media.
- For the 30th time in 33 years the Stillwater FFA Chapter won a Blue Ribbon in the State Fair's Landscape Design and Construction Competition.

October 2022

- The Stillwater Pony Express newspaper and the Kabekonian yearbook were recognized by the Journalism Educators of Minnesota as among the top in the state.
- The Stillwater Mountain Bike team captured their 5th straight state championship.

November 2022

- The Pony girls swim and dive team captured the section championship for the 21st year in a row and finished 4th in the state tourney.
- The Stillwater/Mahtomedi adapted soccer team took third place at the state tournament.

December 2022

- Stillwater Area High School musicians worked with internationally-renowned Spanish composer Óscar Navarro.

January 2023

- Stillwater students Coolsjes and Riddhi Singhvi were named among the winners of the 2022 Congressional App Challenge - the most prestigious prize in student computer science.
- Stillwater Area High School teacher Ben Straka was selected as a Claes Nobel Educator of the Year. Straka was one of just 10 teachers across the country recognized by The National Society of High School Scholars.

February 2023

- Stillwater Area High School seniors Jocelyn McBride and Eva Stafne were named finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program. They are among just 15,000 students from across the country to receive the honor.
- The girls Nordic ski team finished second at state. The Ponies had three skiers place in the top 20.
- The boys Alpine ski team placed 3rd at state.
- The girls gymnastics team placed 4th in the state tournament. It was the sixth time in the last seven seasons that the undefeated Ponies qualified for state.
- The Stillwater Middle School FIRST LEGO League robotics team placed 4th in the state competition.
- Stillwater choir members earned superior ratings (the highest score possible) in 39 of 46 entries at the high school leagues Solo and Ensemble Vocal contest. Stillwater Area High School won "Best of Site" by the judge in every single contest room.

March 2023

- The Ponies wrestling team finished 3rd at state. It was their 7th straight trip to the state tournament.
- The East Metro girls bowling team won the state title for a second year in a row.
- The SAHS speech team captured their 3rd consecutive section title and sent 15 speakers to state, the most in school history.
- The girls basketball team finished 4th at state.
- The Stillwater/Mahtomedi adapted floor hockey team competed at state.

April 2023

- Stillwater Area High School students placed 1st and 4th in the state Health Occupations Students of America-Future Health Professionals competition.
- The Stillwater Orchestra celebrated its 50th anniversary with a special concert featuring several high school and middle school orchestras and guest alumni.
- Belle Chanter, the advanced treble choir at SAHS, won first place at the World Strides Chicago Heritage Festival.
- 4 Stillwater student journalists placed with high honors at the National Scholastic Press Association Convention.
- 3 teams from the Stillwater Business Professionals of America club competed at the National Leadership Conference.

May 2023

- Marketing students from Stillwater Area High School took the top 5 spots in the Minnesota BestPrep Stock Market Game.
- 5 student artists were honored with awards at the High School Visual Arts Contest.
- The Stillwater synchronized swimming team won the state championship for the 3rd year in a row. The Ponies have never finished lower than second place in the 49-year history of the event.

June 2023

- The girls lacrosse team placed 4th in state. It was their 11th trip to the tournament in the past 12 seasons.
- The Stillwater Area High School musical "Newsies" earned 10 top awards at state. The cast, crew and orchestra were invited to perform in the Hennepin Theatre Trust's spring Spotlight Awards.
- Principal Rob Bach was named High School Principal of the Year for the Capital Division of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals.

July 2023

- 15 members of the Stillwater Clay Target team competed in the High School National Championship.

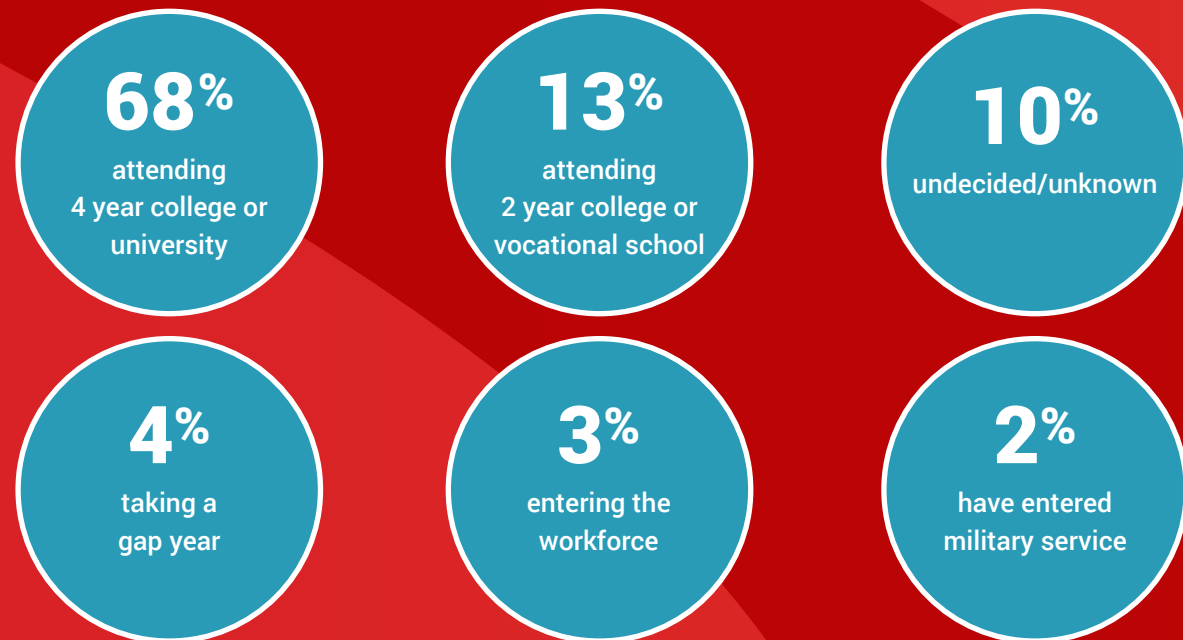
August 2023

- Stillwater grads Rylynn Zanon and Thomas Blair (Class of 2023) were named Special Olympics U.S. Youth Ambassadors. Only seven pairs from across the country are accepted each year to act as advocates, share stories, and demonstrate the values of Inclusive Youth Leadership across the country.





More than 680 Stillwater Area High School students (96%*) received their diplomas in June.
Here's what they plan to do next:



*2023 Report Card, Minnesota Department of Education

Pony graduate spotlight

The Pathways program at Stillwater Area High School allows students to get a jump start on their post-secondary careers. Whether they want to go to college, join the military, or go directly into the workforce, Pathways helps students learn about their strengths and interests and explore careers. Through hands-on learning opportunities in the classroom and real-world experiences with local industries and community partners, students leave SAHS with a clearer idea of what their future holds.



Shania Youssef is one of just 10 students selected from the state for the University of Minnesota's 7-year medical school pipeline program. Her goal is to become a cardiothoracic surgeon or an ER physician.

"Through the Stillwater Pathways program at SAHS I was able to discover my passion for medicine through hands-on experiences within the field itself, instead of trying to guess what a job will be like from a quick Google search. I have so much more confidence in my journey!"



Casey Stiner is attending Anoka Technical College while working at C.G. Hill & Sons where he served as an intern during high school. His goal is to become a CNC machinist and programmer and open his own small scale machine shop.

"Stillwater Area High School gave me opportunities I didn't know were out there. From the team aspects of mountain biking to the hands-on learning styles of shop classes I felt I was given the chance to explore as many opportunities and future plans as I was able to in the four years of being at the high school."



Brooke Elfert is attending the University of Northern Colorado to study nursing with a minor in Spanish. Her goal is to become a traveling nurse, possibly as an emergency room nurse.

"My experiences at Stillwater Area High School have taught me the value of making strong and genuine connections with my classmates and teachers. Being involved with many activities has broadened my perspectives, and shown me the value of curiosity and having an open mind!"

Learn more at stillwaterschools.org/pathways

Student achievement

Students in Stillwater Area Public Schools consistently score above state and national averages on a variety of assessments and are recognized for numerous academic achievements.



Academic letters recipients

643 students were awarded letters for earning a 3.75 grade point average or above during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Advanced Placement Scholars

87 students were named Advanced Placement Scholars for demonstrating exemplary college-level achievement on AP Exams.

AVID graduates

100% of the seniors who participated in AVID - a college and career readiness program - were accepted into a post-secondary institution. Many of these students are among the first in their families to attend college.

Community scholarship winners

More than \$400,000 in community scholarships were awarded to 86 Stillwater Area High School seniors. 71 local donors offered 134 scholarships to SAHS students. This number does not include national scholarships and those given from individual colleges and universities.

For some of the students college would not be possible without this support from our community. For others, these awards help relieve the burden of the first year of college.

Gifted and talented learners

Nearly 80 students in grades 3-5 were identified for gifted programming through the annual CogAT testing.

Multilingual learners

A number of high school students were recognized for their language proficiency and earned seals of biliteracy. The state awards seals to high school graduates who have demonstrated the required levels of language proficiency through assessment in languages other than English.

- Bilingual Platinum Seal: 2
- Bilingual Gold Seal: 10
- World Language Proficiency Certificate: 10

National Merit Scholars

2 students were named finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program. They are among just 15,000 students from across the country to receive the honor.

Test scores

Our students outperformed their peers across the state and nation on the ACT, a national assessment that gauges how well prepared students are for college.

- **Pre-ACT Average (grade 10):** 19.1
- **ACT Average (grade 11):** 22.6

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) scores dipped slightly for Stillwater Area Public School students in 2023. This year's results are on par with those from the 2021 school year.

- In reading, 55.8% of Stillwater students were proficient
- In math, 49.7% of Stillwater students were proficient
- In science, 48% of Stillwater students were proficient

Facilities to support student learning

Every year we utilize long-term facilities maintenance (LTFM) funding to complete projects in buildings around the district. This source of funding can only be used to replace like-for-like items in our existing facilities, such as installing new flooring or cabinets, replacing a roof or parking lot, or updating bathrooms. The priorities of this funding is to:

- Continue the maintenance and improvements of the district's buildings
- Provide updated learning spaces that meet the needs of the users
- Strive to reduce energy consumption by replacing aging or outdated equipment
- Work to provide accessible facilities for all users by replacing non-compliant elements

In 2022-2023 the district completed LTFM projects at the Early Childhood Family Center, Afton-Lakeland, Brookview, Lily Lake, Oak Park, Rutherford, Stonebridge, Oak-Land Middle, Stillwater Middle and Stillwater Area High School.



Bridge Transition students get a space of their very own

After many years of learning within kid-sized classrooms and using kid-sized facilities, young adults in the district's Bridge Transition program for 18- to 22-year-olds have their very own remodeled space within the Oak Park Building.

During the 2022-2023 school year a section of the former elementary school was renovated to meet the needs of this unique group of learners. The old elementary classroom walls, which served as the program's home since 2017, were torn down. The spaces were reconfigured to create simulated living and working environments to help young adults with disabilities develop real-world skills.

The project was funded in part by long-term facilities maintenance dollars, as well as with capital funds which can only be used for facility improvements.



Technology gives students access to learning anytime, anywhere

In November of 2021, voters approved a technology levy to provide students with the tools they need to learn. Proceeds from the 10 year levy first became available to the district during the 2022-2023 school year.

Here are some highlights from the 2022-2023 school year:

- Provided every child with a device for learning
- Modernized audio/video technology in 80 classrooms
- Replaced 120 teacher laptops
- Enhanced security on all district devices utilizing XDR technology
- Made our Family Technology Helpline a permanent part of our district

Tech levy ensures kids have the tools they need

During the fall of 2022 all middle and high school students were assigned a Chromebook to use within and outside the classroom. Students in grades 2-5 have access to Chromebooks within their classrooms and to use at home as needed, while kindergarten and 1st grade students have iPads to use in classrooms. With the district's Universal Access (1:1 Technology) program, a student can access their learning when they're out ill, on vacation, or simply working on a class project over the weekend.

Devices are assigned to all students as an educational resource - just like textbooks. These devices are not intended to be a student's sole method of accessing instruction, but ensure that students are never without access to their educational resources.

The goal of the 1:1 initiative is to increase students' communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. Technology is used to support learning, as appropriate, and students still use traditional textbooks, reading books, and other physical classroom materials.

Learn more at stillwaterschools.org/1to1.



Community Education offers something for everyone

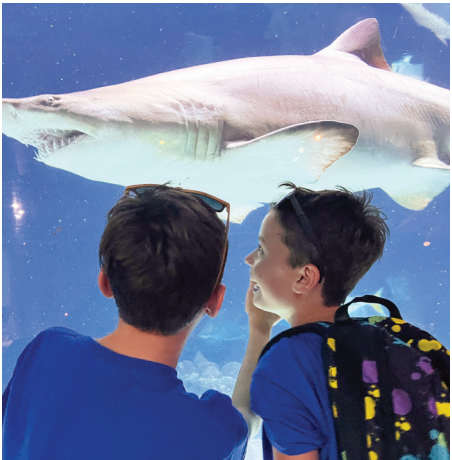
With 1,639 classes offered in 2022-2023, we did our best to find something for everyone. The school year was exciting and challenging. We started the year still in full recovery mode having experienced the social challenges brought on by the pandemic. We fought the mental health issue of isolation by bringing the community together to spend some time exploring, learning and connecting with one another. In the end, we had an outstanding year with enrollment going up and the community asking for more.

Here are just a few highlights:

- Thanks to a small pocket of post pandemic state funding we were able to offer educational field trips for youth during the summer of 2022. We had 739 students take advantage of trips to museums, historical sites and the Minnesota Zoo.
- More elementary and middle school students than ever decided to step into the spotlight with our theatre program. 604 students performed in Winnie the Pooh, Finding Nemo, Circus Olympus and Descendants: The Musical.
- More than 2,000 people participated in open pickleball play. We also offered lessons and tournaments.
- We had 15 adult English learners join our new English acquisition class at the Cimarron community in Lake Elmo.
- New parents and parents-to-be were invited to our first ever Community Baby Shower. Families learned about resources available in our community, were made aware of the connection between maternal mental health and early brain development, met other parents-to-be and grew in their excitement for what's to come.

If you haven't had a chance to check out a Community Education program recently, you may want to grab our catalog. Try a class, sign someone else up or become one of our instructors.

stillwater.ce.eleyo.com



Preparing the World's Best Workforce

2022-2023 Summary Report

The World's Best Workforce (WBWF) report summary, in accordance with Minnesota statutes, shares our district's progress toward the state's goal of creating the world's best workforce and making strides to increase student performance.

This includes student achievement goals, the strategies our district has engaged in to meet those goals, and our progress made by the end of the school year. Our plan is designed to address the five, state-identified goals:

- All children are ready for school.
- All third-graders can read at grade level.
- All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.
- All students are ready for career and college.
- All students graduate from high school.



Children ready for school

The district measures this goal by assessing both preschool and kindergarten students' early literacy skills.

Goal status:
Met

- 2022-2023 Results:**
- 94% of 4-year-old preschool students demonstrated at least one level growth in phonological awareness - or the ability to understand how different sounds come together to make words.
 - 75% of kindergarten students received a benchmark score of "Low Risk" on the Fastbridge reading assessment (fall 2023), which means they are likely to meet their grade-level goals. This is an increase over both of the last two years.

Third graders can read at grade level

Overall, the percentage of students proficient on the state required Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) exams decreased from last year and has been on a downward trend for the past several years. The results of the MCAs are a direct indicator of the systems in place within the district to support learning. Several issues have been identified and the district is actively working to improve professional development for teachers and fix gaps in curriculum to ensure students are learning all they need to know. We're hopeful these changes will positively impact our scores moving forward.

Goal status:
not on track (multi-year goal)

- Results 2022-2023:**
- 50% of third grade students met reading proficiency expectations on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA). This was a reduction of 1.5% from 2022.

Closing achievement gaps

Historically across the state and nation, there has been a gap in achievement between white students and students of color. The district is working to reduce that gap.

Goal status:
not on track (multi-year goal)

- **Reading:** 59.7% of white students and 43.3% of students of color met or exceeded proficiency on the MCA. The gap is 16.4%.
- **Math:** 59.7% of white students and 40.3% of students of color met or exceeded proficiency on the MCA. The gap is 19.4%.
- **Science:** 52.9% of white students and 33.6% of students of color met or exceeded proficiency on the MCA. The gap is 19.3%.

Students ready for college and career

The district measures this goal by using the ACT scores from the class of 2023, as well as looking at how many students earned a score of 3 (of 5) or higher on an Advanced Placement course.

Goal status:
on track (multi-year goal)

- Results:**
- The average Composite ACT score for the class of 2023 was 24.1 up from 22.8 the year before.
 - 71.3% of students who took an Advanced Placement (AP) test scored a 3 or higher.

Students graduate

Goal status:
on track (multi-year goal)

- Results:**
- 93.1% of students from the class of 2023 graduated in four years. This is an increase from the previous year of 91.1%.
 - 96.2% at Stillwater High School
 - 47.7% at St. Croix Valley ALC (85.7% graduate from the ALC in 7 years)



District Advisory Committee 2022-2023 School Year

Gilo Agwa	Jocelyn Gohdes	Kristina Jonason	Kate Niemann	Jonathan Sobiech
Dereck Arubayi	Jeff Heller	Malinda Major	Daniela Perez	Rachel Steil
Amy Berge	Chris Hilgers	Dawn Lueck	Shelly Phernetton	Mary Leadem Ticiu
Dave Dahl	Catherine Hobbs	Chandra Martin	Nicolle Poechmann	Anna Wilcek
Angie Donnay	Heidi Howe	Michael McCarthy	Maria Reichow	
Caleb Drexler Booth	Jessica Johnson	Lisa Michelson	Alison Sherman	

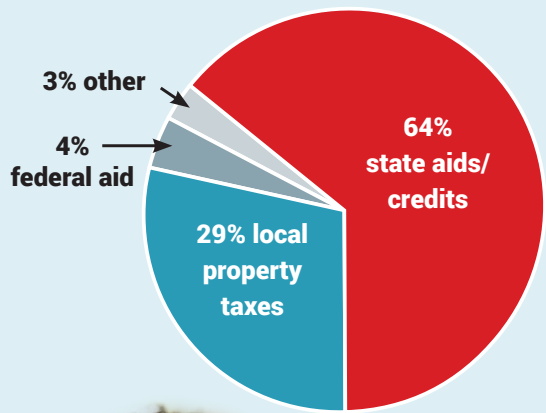
Investing where it matters

Our district has an annual operating budget of more than \$140 million. The largest percentage of our revenue comes from the state through formulas based on student enrollment and local property taxes.

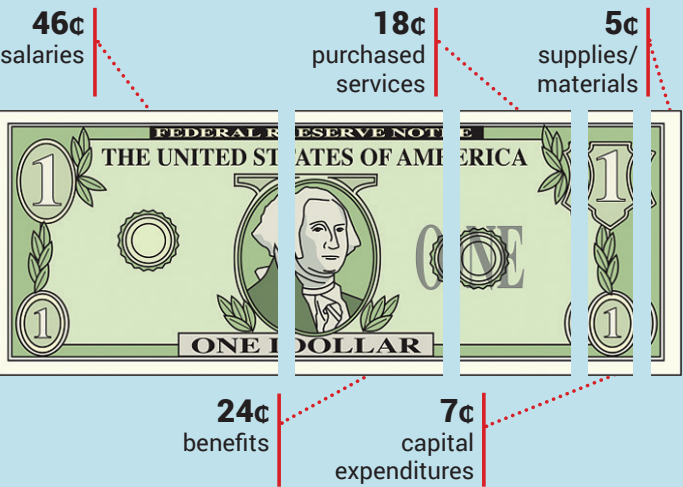
We work hard to invest our dollars wisely, with the needs of our students and our community at the heart of every decision we make.



Where our money comes from

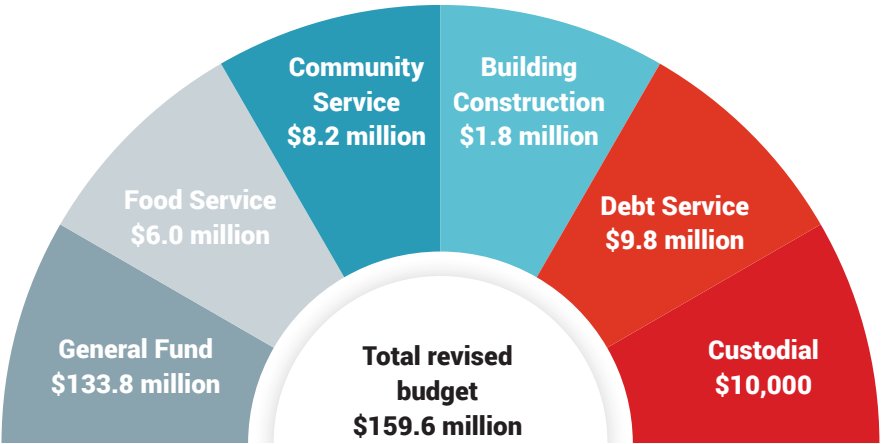


Where a dollar goes



Source: General Fund revised budget 2022-2023

2022-2023 Revised budget (expenditures)



By the numbers

- **\$827,492** = Total savings to our taxpayers over the last 5 years by refunding the district's certificates of Participation (or building bonds).
- **19** = The number of consecutive years the district has received the Association of Business Officials' International Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting.
- **86%** = The percentage of respondents who said our community receives a good value from its investment in local public schools (Source: 2023 Community Survey)

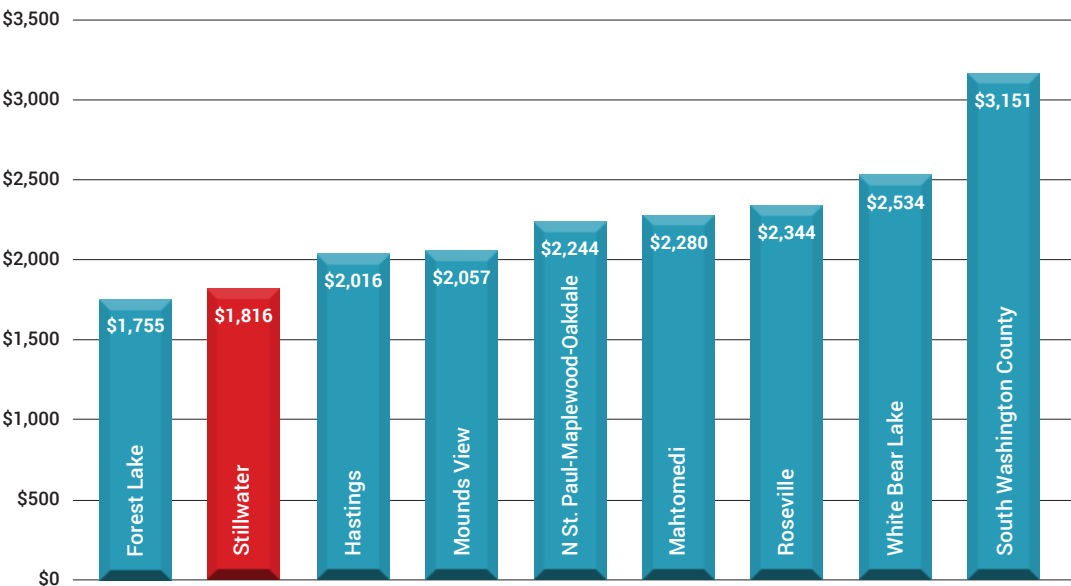


64% of the operating budget is invested in student learning.

General Fund	2022-2023 Revised Budget
Regular & Vocational Instruction	\$52,829,089
Special Education Instruction	\$24,238,440
Operations and Maintenance	\$21,531,760
Transportation (Pupil Support)	\$10,041,789
Instructional Support Services	\$8,728,796
District Support Services	\$6,885,554
Pupil Support Services	\$5,238,727
Administration	\$3,763,650
Fiscal and Other Fixed Costs	\$579,000
Total	\$133,836,805
Highlighted rows indicate expenditures direct to the classroom	

School Tax Comparison

Total School Property Taxes, Payable 2023, on a home with an estimated market value of \$500,000



A good value

Our residents pay less in school taxes than residents in comparable districts. If you could pick up your home and move it to another school district, you'd pay more in school taxes.

Source: Pay 23 School Tax Report



Independent School District 834
1875 South Greeley Street
Stillwater, Minnesota 55082

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Expect More.

Stillwater Area Public Schools is proud to offer
our students and families more.

- More engaging, relevant learning opportunities.
- More experiences that expand the mind, heart and creative spirit.
- More teachers with advanced degrees.
- More real-world learning partnerships.
- More ways to find your voice and learn how to use it for good.
- More support for those with learning differences.
- More opportunities for our kids to discover their unique gifts.
- More ways to learn how to be successful throughout their lives.

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta acerca de esta hoja informativa, pro favor llame a la oficina de su escuela para hablar con un interprete.

Learn more about Stillwater Area Public Schools

stillwaterschools.org | 651-351-8340



Stillwater834



StillwaterSchools834



Pony Voices Podcast