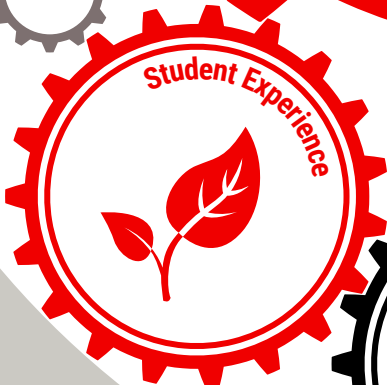




School District of South Milwaukee

# Relentless Commitment



A 5-year Strategic Plan

# A Relentless Commitment

We are proud to present our strategic plan for 2024-2029 to our district and our broader community. Our board adopted a powerful mission statement in 2021 that states: The School District of South Milwaukee acts with a relentless commitment to remove barriers and care for all students so they feel accepted and will learn without exception. We now have a strategic plan that adds a vision statement, core values, and goals that help us define what we do each day to ensure we meet that mission.



A strategic plan is a road map that includes our goals to meet our future. A clearly defined strategic direction unifies our efforts around a shared mission and vision, guiding improvement efforts across the school district. Collaboratively, our team of more than 50 staff, parents, students, a board member, and our district leaders established priorities for the student experience, our employee experience, community engagement and communications, and fiscal stability and facility management. That dedicated group of volunteers spent weeks planning for and refining our core values, vision, and goals, which we are excited to share with all our stakeholders.

Our plan provides the systems that will lead our improvement efforts and hold us accountable for the outcomes we seek to achieve. With enthusiasm and purpose, we embark on meeting our goals as good stewards to our community stakeholders and creating the best opportunities for all our students.

We firmly believe that working in conjunction with our caregivers to help our students develop a plan to meet their post-secondary goals, whether that means going on to a two- or four-year college, the military, straight into the world of work, or any other pathway that is right for the student, is the core of public education. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders, and with the community's support through their education, we will ensure a better future for all.

In the coming years, we will provide our community with regular updates on our progress toward our goals. We are excited to partner to enhance the experience for our students, create the right conditions for our employees, engage our community, keep them informed, and plan for our long-term fiscal stability and use of our facilities.

*Deidre Roemer*



## Our Core Values

Community  
Growth  
Equity  
Empathy

## Our Mission

The School District of South Milwaukee acts with a **relentless commitment** to remove barriers and care for all students so they feel accepted and will learn **without exception.**

## Our Vision

The South Milwaukee School District, in collaboration with our community, is committed to offering every student genuine opportunities to **cultivate curiosity, empathy, and a lifelong love of learning.** Our goal is to empower learners to explore their passions, develop essential skills, and build the confidence needed to successfully achieve their aspirations.



# Student Experience

We all **commit** to ensure that every SDSM student will demonstrate skills in problem-solving, communication, and collaboration through a student-centered inclusive instructional model. Every student will feel a sense of purpose & belonging so that they graduate prepared to pursue a meaningful post-secondary plan.

## Objectives

Every employee will hold each other accountable by:

- ⚙️ Prioritizing student-centered instructional practices in order to increase academic proficiency and whole-child growth.
- ⚙️ Intentionally designing daily instruction, support, and experiences that are grounded in communication, collaboration, problem-solving, student ownership and sense of belonging.
- ⚙️ Engaging in meaningful learning & collaboration through professional learning communities and coaching in order to grow each other's capacity to meet each student's needs in a co-plan to co-serve, to co-learn model.
- ⚙️ Purposeful planning with students and caregivers to develop meaningful post-secondary plans in 4K-12th grade.





# Student Experience

## Performance Indicators

By the end of the 2028-29 school year:

- ⚙️ The SDSM overall District Report Card score, which measures student achievement, growth, target group outcomes, and on-track to graduation, will increase from a score of 62.8 to 70--meets expectations to exceed expectations.
- ⚙️ The percentage of K-12 students who feel a sense of belonging will increase by 34% across all grade levels as measured by the student engagement survey.
- ⚙️ 100% of collaborative teams will achieve a sustaining level of implementation for Professional Learning Communities, on all 10 indicators, as measured by the PLC Fidelity Rubric.
- ⚙️ The Targeted Group Outcomes indicator of the District State Report Card will increase from 58.3 to 65 (meets expectations) through full 4K-12 implementation of the co-plan to co-serve to co-learn model.





# Student Experience

## Performance Indicators

By the end of the 2028-29 school year:

- ⚙️ The percentage of 3rd grade students who are proficient or advanced in the area of literacy will increase from 40.1% to 75% as measured by the State Forward exam.
- ⚙️ The percentage of 8th grade students who are proficient or advanced in the area of math will increase from 23.8% to 50%.
- ⚙️ 100% of students will have a documented and collaboratively developed Academic and Career Plan (ACP) that has markers, caregiver input, and evidence of student growth in student ownership of learning, communication, collaboration, problem-solving and a sense of belonging at 4th, 8th and 10th grade.
- ⚙️ 100% of collaborative teams, 4k-12, will engage in and utilize the Equitable Multilevel System of Support (EMLSS) process in order to increase the percentage of students who do not require selected/intensive interventions and increase the rate of dismissal from the EMLSS process by 25% each year.





# Employee Experience

We all **commit** to cultivating a collaborative and supportive student-centered community that values relationships, prioritizes personalized professional growth, and promotes health and wellness, resulting in rewarded and fulfilled employees.

## Objectives

Every employee will hold each other accountable by:

- ⚙️ Creating a culture of continuous growth for each employee through their career.
- ⚙️ Valuing and respecting each employee, creating a workforce reflective of our students, and cultivating a sense of belonging.
- ⚙️ Supporting the holistic well-being of each employee.
- ⚙️ Growing a student centered culture that results in engaging, collaborative professional learning communities.





# Employee Experience

## Performance Indicators

By the end of the 2028-29 school year:

- ⚙️ The Employee Engagement Index as measured on the annual employee engagement survey will increase by 5 points. (Baseline is 76%)
- ⚙️ The positive response rate on the annual employee engagement survey for the question “How likely are you to recommend working in SDSM to your family or friends” will increase by 10 points. (Baseline is 55%)
- ⚙️ There will be a staff retention plan and the overall voluntary retention rate will increase by 10 points. (Baseline is 82%)
- ⚙️ We will have an articulated wellness structure that addresses the holistic well-being of all employees.





# Communication and Engagement

We all **commit** to establishing a student-centered community where: students and families are active in their schools and in the larger community; where businesses, organizations, and individuals have strong relationships with our students, schools, and leaders; and where communication and opinions are respected and valued.

## Objectives

Every stakeholder will hold each other accountable by:

- ⚙️ Strengthening ties with local businesses, organizations, and government in order to support student learning.
- ⚙️ Enhancing family participation, communication, and leadership opportunities across the school community.
- ⚙️ Improving district awareness and community engagement, through branding and communication.



# Communication and Engagement

## Performance Indicators

By the end of the 2028-29 school year:

- ⚙️ Our students, teachers and staff, as well as the outside community will be able to find, and take advantage of, opportunities to interact. This will be measured by a question on student and staff surveys as well as on a newly established business and government annual survey.
- ⚙️ Community employers and our students will turn to the school district to find each other through well-used job and volunteer boards. The success of these boards will be measured by the student and business/government surveys. After year one, positive response rates will increase by 5% annually.
- ⚙️ Participation in the Annual Family Engagement Survey will increase by 5 percent per year.
- ⚙️ Attendance at school-based events (activities, athletics, family events, student showcases, etc) will increase by 25%.
- ⚙️ SM will host a winter all-sports event - with the potential to expand to other seasons- at the 15th Avenue campus.
- ⚙️ A group of stakeholders will review current branding within the district and at all schools in order to determine if change is necessary. If so, changes will be made to logos, branding, and communication.





# Fiscal Stability and Facility Planning

We all **commit** to fostering student-centered learning environments through transparent resource management, preservation of safe and sustainable facilities, and collaboration with the community in order to ensure the prosperity of South Milwaukee.

## Objectives

Every stakeholder will hold each other accountable by:

- ⚙️ Ensuring the transparent stewardship of public resources.
- ⚙️ Maintaining safe and efficiently operated facilities.
- ⚙️ Serving our community as a whole.





# Fiscal Stability and Facility Planning

## Performance Indicators

By the end of the 2028-29 school year:

- ⚙️ The fund balance will be sufficient to prevent the need to borrow for cash-flow purposes.
- ⚙️ The purchase, maintenance, and tracking of all district technology will be guided by a comprehensive technology replacement plan.
- ⚙️ SDSM will keep staff compensation competitive with neighboring school districts.
- ⚙️ The 10-year capital improvement plan will be continuously funded in order to ensure safe and efficient learning environments and community spaces.
- ⚙️ The school board will have reviewed formal reports regarding community offerings made available to the South Milwaukee Community outside of the district's general fund, including but not limited to the potential construction of a stand-alone recreation center.



# Glossary

**10-year Capital Improvement Plan:** The school district funds and maintains a capital improvement trust, Fund 46. One of the requirements for maintaining this fund is for the school board to approve a 10-year capital improvement plan on a yearly basis. Money used within Fund 46 must be tied to projects which are stated on this 10-year capital improvement plan. The school district commits about \$600,000 a year from the operating budget to Fund 46 on an annual basis - this ensures that the district's roofs, parking lots, and educational spaces in general are maintained.

**Academic and Career Plans (ACP):** Academic and Career Plans are designed to equip students and their caregivers with tools to make informed choices about post-secondary education, training, and careers for life after school. State Statute 115.28(59) requires that every school board provide ACP services for students enrolled in 6-12th grade. Elementary school planning will involve exploration of careers and student interests.

**All District Technology:** The term "All District Technology" for the technology replacement cycle refers to student, staff (teaching and non-teaching), and all other district technology.

**Borrowing For Cash-Flow Purposes:** Since school districts do not receive their revenue equally throughout the year, there are months at a time when districts remain low on cash reserves. This is problematic because many of a district's expenditures, namely payroll, come in regular increments. Many school districts across Wisconsin do not have a large enough cash reserve balance to get through those times in the year when they receive little to no revenue - as a result, those districts often take out loans from a bank in order to have enough cash on hand to meet payroll and other regular expenses. South Milwaukee has not borrowed for cash flow purposes for over a decade, and doing so would bring an unneeded interest expense to the district in order to meet regular operations.

**Community Offerings:** This term refers to any initiative/programming offered by the South Milwaukee Recreation Department.

**Community Service Fund / Fund 80:** The South Milwaukee Recreation Department is run through the School District. The funding for the Recreation Department is the community service fund, also known as Fund 80. Although the community service fund falls under the jurisdiction of the school district, its purpose is wholly separate from the general educational purpose of the school district. Funds raised and used in Fund 80 must benefit community members and not just school district students. As a result, a dollar spent in the community service fund cannot be used for general educational purposes, nor can a dollar intended for general educational purposes go into Fund 80. The state requires that these funds be managed separately. It's also important to note that the primary funding source for the community service fund is the school district tax levy. Funds levied into the community service fund are raised outside of the Revenue Limit - which means that a dollar raised for the community service fund does not take away the levying authority for the general educational purposes of the school district.

**Competitive Compensation:** The District Office reviews compensation provided to different staff groups by other districts on a yearly basis. South Milwaukee will always endeavor to provide financial compensation that is in line with the district's budget, and what the regional average is. At a minimum, providing competitive compensation requires the district to compare staff compensation to the districts immediately surrounding it.

**Comprehensive Technology Replacement Plan:** A comprehensive technology replacement plan will list all district technology and a proposed time for replacement/improvement. This plan will help guide the overall budget process and help ensure that students and staff have the technological resources they need.

**Co Plan to Co Serve to Co Learn Model (C3):** The C3 Model is a framework to help teams design inclusive universal instruction for all learners. It is grounded in the idea that all students have strengths and with various experts planning together, ALL students will benefit.

**District Report Card:** As an expectation of federal education laws, Wisconsin uses school and district report cards to provide information to families about their local schools. Report Cards measure important pieces of data that shed light on how a school and district is doing and where it can improve.

**Equitable Multilevel System of Support (EMLSS):** The Equitable Multilevel System of Support is a system that is used by educators to ensure that all students are getting what they need to be successful. This system includes things like high-quality instruction, strategic use of data and collaboration to facilitate learner success, which can include proactive support at differing levels of intensity so that teams can respond to the needs of the whole child.

**Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):** ESSA is a federal law, passed in December of 2015, that governs US K-12 public education policy. The purpose of ESSA is to make sure public schools provide a quality education for all students.

**Fund Balance:** The district's Fund Balance, or equity, refers to the district's cash/investment/asset reserves. At the end of a given fiscal year, a school district either adds to Fund Balance in the event of running a surplus or draws down Fund Balance when running a deficit. South Milwaukee's fund balance serves a couple of different purposes: first of all, since the district does not receive its revenue equally throughout the year, a healthy fund balance prevents the need to cash-flow borrow. Secondly, Fund Balance brings interest revenue to the district which is collected on an annual basis and allows the district to keep staff employed. Finally, Fund Balance is used as a "rainy day fund" which can be used to offset one-time expenditures. A healthy Fund Balance is often regarded as being 20% of a fiscal year's expenditures.

**Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA):** IDEA is a federal law that makes available a free, appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities and ensures special education and related services to those children.

**Interventions:** Intervention is strategic, targeted instruction of a skill deficit that a student might have. Depending on student needs, some interventions may be more intensive than others, in order to close gaps in achievement and social skills.

**PLC Fidelity Rubric:** The PLC Fidelity Rubric is a measurement tool used to help support the growth and implementation of effective teams, collaboration, and planning for all students. The rubric helps teams identify areas of strength and areas for growth so that teams can constantly improve.

**Professional Learning Communities (PLC):** Professional Learning Communities are groups of educators that meet regularly, share expertise, and work collaboratively to improve teaching practice, strengthen universal instruction, and improve student outcomes.

**Prosperity of South Milwaukee:** This refers to the general well-being and flourishing of the South Milwaukee community as a whole, and not just the school district's students.

**Recreation Center:** Many recreation departments throughout Wisconsin have created

buildings specifically for recreation programming. Since many municipalities run their recreation departments through their school districts (such as South Milwaukee) - it is possible for funding for a recreation center to come out of a school district's Community Service Fund (see above). This strategic plan asks the administration to create a committee in order to look into the possibility of constructing a recreation center and determining to what extent the community would be interested in such a building. The possibilities of what could be included in a potential recreation center are rather vast - some municipalities have aquatic centers (Racine), walking tracks (West Allis) and classrooms and indoor playgrounds (New Berlin). It must be emphasized that since this building would come out of the Community Service Fund, it is not tied to a referendum and does not take away from dollars spent in the school district for educational purposes. Furthermore, it is not tied to the 2024 referendum in any capacity and discussions regarding a recreation center can take place even in the event of its failure.

**Safe, Sustainable, and Efficiently Operated Facilities and Community Spaces:** South Milwaukee School District's facilities are used by students and community members on a day-to-day basis. As a result, the district facilities must be properly maintained so that they may continuously be safe and presentable to the community. Furthermore, as stewards of public resources, the school district will continue to endeavor to seek out efficiencies with utility management and the streamlining of operational procedures in order to safeguard the public's investment and keep our facilities at peak performance.

**Social Emotional Learning (SEL):** Social Emotional Learning (SEL): SEL is a methodology that helps students of all ages better comprehend emotions, demonstrate empathy, and workplace dispositions and skills. The focus of SEL is to develop positive relationships with peers and adults, feel and show empathy for others, make responsible decisions, use goal-setting, and develop the skills necessary to understand and manage emotions.

**Target Group Outcomes:** Target Group Outcomes refers to a measure on the District and School Report Cards. This measure on the report card examines multiple data points for a single group of students who tested in the bottom 25% on the previous year's state assessment. This measure was designed to inform efforts that will result in positive change for the learners who need it most.

**Total Compensation Plan:** The total compensation that an employee receives includes their rate of pay, insurance benefits, voluntary benefits, state and district retirement benefits, paid time off, and other monetary-related benefits. A total compensation plan will list these benefits in one place.

**Transparent Resource Management and Stewardship:** As a public entity, the district is subject to a host of accounting and financial reporting standards. At a minimum, the district is required to transmit financial data to the state on a monthly basis, submit to annual independent audits, and present budgetary information to the school board and community at the district's annual budget hearing and meeting. When the strategic plan refers to transparent resource management, it specifically refers to the adherence to all accounting and reporting standards, as well as the monthly posting of board reports and financials to the district website. Furthermore, the district will take its role as a steward of public resources seriously and will look for efficiencies as to preserve the commitment and longevity of the community's investment.

**Universal Instruction:** Universal instruction provides all students with high-quality, initial instruction that is aligned to state content standards and is strategically designed with all students in mind.