

CONNECT

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

Be seen. Be heard. Be bold.



Pictured: Oltman Middle School construction work on new expansion and storm shelter.

Securing Our Future: Construction Progress and Highlights

Construction crews have been busy working on the first phase of construction projects at 15 schools that will occur over the next three years. Construction at all of our secondary schools is underway and more projects will begin soon.

Design and planning work will continue through the end of the year for our elementary school construction projects at eight elementary schools.

A detailed schedule of projects is available at sowashco.org/construction. Please note: design and construction schedules are subject to change.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

What's Inside

Construction Progress	page 2
SoWashCo Voices	page 4
Summer Learning	page 5
READ Act in Action	page 5
2025-26 Calendar	page 6
Back to School	page 7
Work with Us	page 8



Dear SoWashCo Schools Community,
As we begin a new school year, I'm reminded of the power of being a TEAM and working together. In our schools, we teach students every day that learning is more than textbooks and tests—it's about human interactions, building character, engaging in conversations, navigating conflict, problem-solving, making connections, and skills that strengthen our school community. This year, our focus is on one powerful message: Together, we can!

Together, we can provide an excellent education for every child by creating welcoming classrooms and safe schools where all students—no matter their background or experiences—have the opportunity to succeed, feel valued, and be inspired to learn. Together, we can model equity, innovation, and empathy, leading to trust, understanding, and respect. And most importantly, together we can instill the belief that every student matters and adds value to our community.

One way we hope to achieve this is through an intentional focus on service learning and giving back. When students, staff, families and communities volunteer with local organizations, we learn skills that can't be learned in a textbook: empathy, teamwork, leadership and civic responsibility. These experiences inspire kindness, paying it forward with a deeper sense that we all matter and add value.

We invite you, our community, to join us in these efforts. Whether you volunteer, donate to SoWashCo CARES, attend a school event or simply encourage a young learner, your involvement sends a clear message: we care, we support you and together, we can do amazing things!

Thank you for the countless ways you support our students and schools. I'm proud to serve my sixth year as Superintendent of South Washington County Schools, grateful for the amazing teams I work with and inspired daily by the great things happening here. Together, we can achieve great things for our children and our community.

With gratitude,

Julie Nielsen

Julie Nielsen, Superintendent

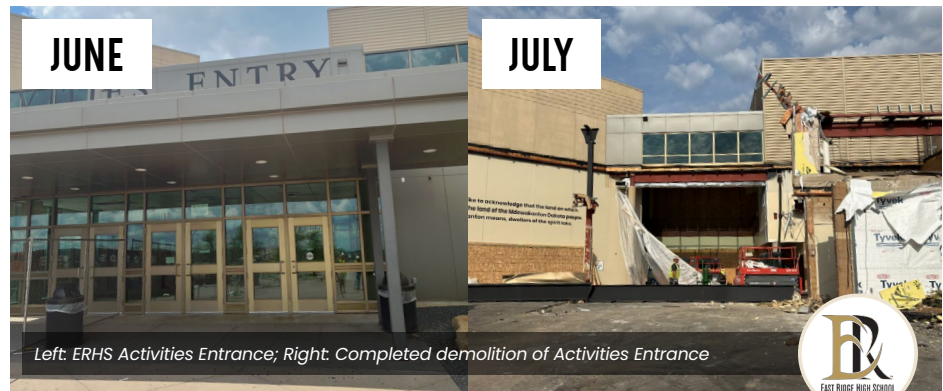


Securing Our Future.

Supporting Our Students.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Here are a few things to know if you are visiting our schools under construction and highlights from the projects.



Left: ERHS Activities Entrance; Right: Completed demolition of Activities Entrance

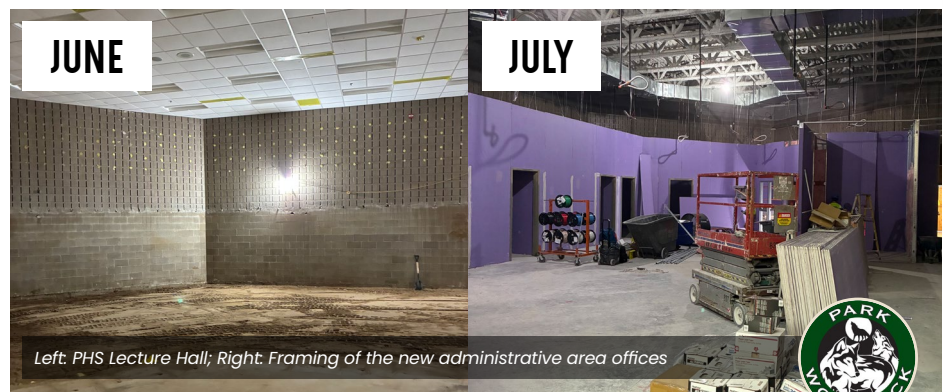
East Ridge High School

Things to Know When Visiting East Ridge High School

- There is a new temporary entrance at the Activities Center
- There is now two-way access on the North end of the parking lot

Construction Highlights

- Framing and sheetrock in the new office area completed
- New boiler work will be completed in August
- Framing and sheetrock in B pod completed



Left: PHS Lecture Hall; Right: Framing of the new administrative area offices

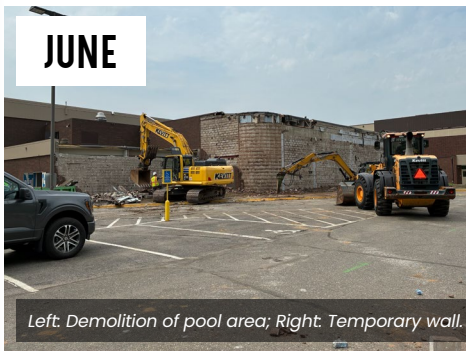
Park High School

Things to Know When Visiting Park High School

- No traffic is allowed on the North end of the building (between the loading docks and athletic fields)
- The new road behind the ice arena between Park and Crestview Elementary will only be used as a temporary bus road for this school year

Construction Highlights

- Road and utility work near Crestview Elementary and Park High School
- The lecture hall and the new administrative area offices framed and windows installed
- New footings, framing and concrete work to fill in floors and put up walls



Woodbury High School

Things to Know When Visiting Woodbury High School

- Please use the new main entrance for students and parents on the South side of the building
- There is a new temporary entrance at the Activities Center throughout the project

Construction Highlights

- Temporary Activity Center Entrance doors were installed
- Administrative area demolition is in process
- Temporary walls have been installed
- Excavation for the new addition footings is ongoing



Oldman Middle School

Things to Know When Visiting Oldman Middle School

- The former parent drop-off lane is closed for the duration of the project. Student drop-off will run through the parking lot loop.
- The special education drop-off zone is located near the loading dock on the North side of the building

Construction Highlights

- Temporary wall installed in cafeteria. Will be in place until new cafeteria is completed
- The kitchen had a temporary wall constructed along with the installation of new finishes, fixtures and a sink
- The temporary wall in the locker bay completed
- Structural masonry is underway



Woodbury Middle School

Things to Know When Visiting Woodbury Middle School

- The new bus road is for bus traffic only

Construction Highlights

- Water retention area work ongoing
- New sidewalk around the water retention area complete
- Bleacher demolition in the former pool underway
- Structural masonry in process
- Wrestling room and garage flooring concrete is scheduled to be poured this month
- The baseball field fence installed



Cottage Grove Middle School

Things to Know When Visiting Cottage Grove Middle School

- The new temporary entrance at the Activities Entrance on the South side of the building will be the **main entrance** for the duration of the project

Construction Highlights

- Pool office openings have been cut
- Temporary walls installed at the old main entrance



Lake Middle School

Things to Know When Visiting Lake Middle School

- The new temporary entrance at the Activities Entrance on the South side of the building will be the **main entrance** for the duration of the project

Construction Highlights

- Pool office openings have been cut
- Temporary walls installed at the old main entrance



Learn more about the construction plans and view design concepts and a detailed schedule of projects at sowashco.org/construction

SoWashCo Voices

Superpowers and Science: Students Dive Into Summer Learning

This summer, students combined imagination and hands-on learning as they invented superheroes, built dioramas and discovered how science can help protect our planet. Read more at sowashco.org/news.



"We each learned facts about an animal we got to choose. I made a dinosaur diorama."

Morgan Dabruzzi, Grade 5



"I learned about the dangers of pollution and how it is important to help animals stay safe."

Sifani Sultan,
Grade 5

"At summer school, I designed new superheroes, Fred and Freckles, who are super engineers during World War 3."

DJ Major, Grade 7



"I chose to learn about the coati since it is a unique-looking animal most people haven't heard of."

Ken Thao, Grade 5



"Our group learned about how much energy is wasted every year and the importance of conservation."

Mack Peterson, Grade 5



"I enjoyed inventing the super villain, Gravitrion. He has earth manipulation powers and harnesses the force of gravity."

Isaiah Loretz, Grade 7

"I loved drawing our characters that we developed. Nova, my superhero, has the power of ultraflexibility."

Gwendolyn Guettler-Johnson,
Grade 7



"We learned about the '3 R's:' reduce, reuse and recycle. I learned that recycling can help us conserve our natural resources."

Tiyuma Burqa, Grade 5





SoWashCo Summer

SoWashCo Schools offered many programs for summer learning this year, including: Summer School, Extended School Year, Kids Club, Credit Recovery, Great Rivers Adult Education, Community Education courses and Skoolie events.

50,000+

Meals served during summer programming

2,000+

Students served in instructional summer programming

65

Summer Skoolie events hosted

32

Buildings used for summer programming

346

Community Education courses offered

900+

Summer positions hired

READ Act in Action: Supporting Student Success Throughout SoWashCo Schools

At South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools), ensuring every child becomes a confident, capable reader and writer is at the core of our mission: educating students for success.

Last school year, SoWashCo Schools dedicated all of our professional development days to training in literacy instruction because of the READ Act. The knowledge and skills learned in the training is now being implemented in the classroom, with educators focusing on each pillar of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

Data-driven, individualized instruction begins with knowing where each student's strengths and opportunities for growth are. In grades K-5 we will use an assessment tool called Fast-Bridge as our universal screening tool. In grades 6-9 we use the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test as a screening tool to determine if a student is in need of additional support or reteaching of foundational skills.

A screening tool is used to evaluate current reading skills and assess student's needs, allowing teachers to tailor instruction and intervention specifically for each student.

When you walk through the halls and classrooms of our schools, you will also notice an emphasis on literacy. You will see the classroom filled with charts, word walls and labels that are directly tied to the current lessons on phonics and vocabulary. You will also see students engaged in hands-on activities and games that reinforce specific literacy skills, as teachers make meaningful connections so students can apply their foundational skills to understanding.

The Minnesota READ Act also requires that we keep families informed of their student's reading progress and any interventions that are provided. SoWashCo Schools believes that educating children is a shared partnership and strongly encourages families to continue supporting learning outside of the classroom.

If you would like to learn more about the implementation of the READ Act at SoWashCo Schools and our commitment to literacy, visit our website at sowashco.org/literacy.



Family Calendar

2025-26 School Year

Important Dates

Event Information		Grades
AUGUST	28 Assessment Day	K-5
SEPTEMBER		
2	First Day of School	6, 9
2	Assessment Day	K-5
3	First Day of School	K-5, 7-8, 10-12
29	No School	K-12
OCTOBER		
15	No School	K-8
15	Pre-ACT and Practice ACT Testing	10, 11
15	Complete Schoolwork at Home Day	9, 12
16-17	No School - Fall Break (MEA)	K-12
NOVEMBER		
4	No School - Professional Development	K-5
4	Complete Schoolwork at Home Day	6-12
25	End of Trimester 1	K-12
26	No School - Teacher Workday	K-12
27-28	No School - Employee Holiday	K-12
DECEMBER		
22-31	No School - Winter Break	K-12
JANUARY		
1-2	No School - Winter Break	K-12
19	No School - MLK Jr. Day	K-12
FEBRUARY		
13	No School - Professional Development	K-5
13	Complete Schoolwork at Home Day	6-12
16	No School - Presidents Day	K-12
MARCH		
5	End of Trimester 2	K-12
6	No School - Teacher Workday	K-12
9-13	No School - Spring Break	K-12
20	No School - Professional Development	K-12
31	MCA, Seal of Biliteracy Testing	10, 11, 12
APRIL		
3	No School - Employee Holiday	K-12
21	ACT and Science MCA Testing	9-12
21	Complete Schoolwork at Home Day (if not participating in testing)	9-12
MAY		
1	No School - Professional Development	K-12
25	No School - Memorial Day Holiday	K-12
JUNE		
4	Last Day of School, End of Trimester 3	K-12

AUGUST 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						
SEPTEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				
OCTOBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
NOVEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						
DECEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			
JANUARY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
FEBRUARY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				
MARCH 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				
APRIL 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		
MAY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						
JUNE 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				
JULY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Last Updated: July 29, 2025
Calendar is subject to change

First or Last Day of School
No School for Students
Important Date

Back to School

Physical and Immunization Requirements for the Start of School

SoWashCo Schools requires all students to be current with required immunizations and physicals or have a valid exemption form on file with the district. Students not compliant with state law will be excluded from school in October.

To view requirements, find the exempt form or for help finding free or low-cost clinics, visit sowashco.org/health.



Elementary Assessment Days

Before the school year begins, families can sign their K-5 student(s) up for an individual 30-minute session with their teacher at their school. This gives each student and their teacher time to connect and get familiar with the student's skill level, the classroom and the school.

Assessment days are offered Friday, Aug. 28, or Tuesday, Sept. 2. Schools will provide more information through email to families.



Cell Phone and Electronic Device Guidelines

To help students stay present and engaged, we ask families and students to follow these cell phone and E-device expectations:

ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL (K-8)

"Away for the Day": Cell phones and E-devices are not allowed during the school day.

HIGH SCHOOL (9-12)

"Time and Place": Cell phone use is not allowed in classrooms/instructional spaces, including the media center. Cell phone use is allowed during passing time, at lunch, before and after school.

To view the full guidance, including the benefits of limiting cell phone and E-device use at school, visit sowashco.org/families/cell-phones.



Early Childhood Screening is Recommended at Age 3

Early Childhood Screening is a free and simple check of how your child is growing and developing. Screening is recommended at age 3 and is required by the State of Minnesota for any child entering kindergarten in a public school.

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



School supply lists for grades K-5 and 6-8 are available at sowashco.org/schoolsupplies

NOTE: High school students will be informed during the first week of school of any supplies needed for class.



SoWashCo High Schools' New Ticketing System

East Ridge, Park and Woodbury high schools have moved to a new ticketing system for events. Links to buy digital tickets through Hudl are available on each school's website.



Transportation Updates

SoWashCo Schools will have bus route information posted in Campus Parent Portal accounts starting Aug. 28. Families will also receive a postcard confirming your child's busing status. If you need assistance with bus routes please call 651-425-5303 or visit sowashco.org/transportation.

Apply for Educational Benefits

Every family with children enrolled in SoWashCo Schools is encouraged to apply for Educational Benefits, formerly known as 'Free and Reduced Lunch,' through their School Café account every school year.

Households that qualify will receive discounted or free services both in and out of school. **Even if a family does not qualify, their completed application could provide additional funding for their child's school.**

Learn more at sowashco.org/edbenefits.

Benefits In School

Activities

Student Fees

Kids Club

Instrument Rentals

Community Education Programs

Funding for Schools

Benefits Beyond School

Some Energy Companies

Some Internet Providers

Some Cell Phone Providers

Public Transportation

Children's Theatres

Zoos

Museums

More

Apply in SchoolCafé

Learn more at sowashco.org | 7



Independent School District #833
7362 East Point Douglas Rd. S.
Cottage Grove, MN 55016
www.sowashco.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 7911
TWIN CITIES, MN

Stay Connected



@sowashcoschools



Sign up for our
e-newsletter at
sowashco.org/news

For more information visit sowashco.org

Inspire the next
generation— all
in a day's work.

Kelly Education

so
wash
co
SCHOOLS



Get started as a substitute teacher
or paraprofessional.

Enjoy a flexible schedule all while making a
difference in the lives of others. Take the first
step today and let Kelly Education get you
on your way to rewarding work.

Get started:

800-713-4439

EDNERecruiting@kellyservices.com



kellyeducationjobs.com

An Equal Opportunity Employer © 2025 Kelly Services, Inc.
All rights reserved MT10695F1



SoWashCo
SCHOOLS

WE ARE
HIRING!

Join Our Team

Be part of something
amazing!

APPLY NOW



sowashco.org/careers

An Equal Opportunity Employer

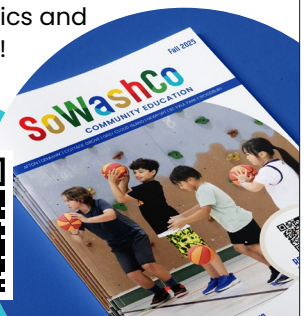
School Board Election 2025

This fall, four South Washington County Schools' Board of Education seats are up for election. The school board plays a critical role in setting policies, overseeing budgets, and ensuring quality education for students. The election will take place on Tuesday, November 4, 2025. Learn about voting early and find your polling location by visiting sos.mn.gov/elections-voting.



Autumn Adventure Starts Here!

SoWashCo Community Education offers courses in arts and crafts, performing arts, skill development, STEM, athletics and much more!



commed.sowashco.org