



## PRIOR LAKE-SAVAGE AREA SCHOOLS

### **Building Our Blueprint for Academic Excellence**

Great schools are built together — and our recent Town hall meetings were a powerful reminder of what is possible when a community comes together to listen, learn, and plan for the future. Nearly 150 staff members, families, and community members attended one of our three sessions to better understand our financial picture and share perspectives on what makes Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools exceptional and where we must focus next.

I am grateful for this level of engagement and what I heard was both affirming and urgent. Participants spoke with pride about a deep sense of belonging, high-quality teachers and staff, and the wide range of opportunities that help students thrive — from E-STEM and Spanish Immersion to career pathways, the arts, athletics, and specialized programming. At the same time, families voiced concern about growing financial pressures, rising class sizes, increasing student needs, staff retention, and the loss of certain programs and advanced learning opportunities.

Clear themes emerged: strengthen the classroom experience, restore and expand student opportunities, and build greater trust through transparent communication about funding and tradeoffs. Above all, families expressed deep commitment to protecting what makes PLSAS distinctive — and a clear willingness to partner with us in sustaining excellence for every learner.

### **What Happens Next — Turning Input into Action**

During the meetings, we described how we are building a Blueprint for Academic Excellence. Like making updates to a home, there are many improvements we would like to make — but we can't do everything at once. Our financial reality means we need to plan carefully and prioritize what matters most.

The input gathered from Town Hall meetings and our annual survey will help guide the development of a long-term academic plan focused on strengthening student learning and ensuring every learner is supported and challenged. This work will help us:

- Establish academic priorities
- Plan improvements in thoughtful phases over time
- Develop a possible referendum request aligned with clearly defined academic priorities and community input
- Balance immediate needs with long-term financial sustainability

Our planning must also reflect financial realities. For more than two decades, state funding has not kept pace with inflation. At the same time, declining enrollment reduces revenue while costs continue to rise. Since 2024, we have reduced \$8.1 million from our general fund, a school site consolidation is underway, and an additional \$4.15 million in reductions is required next year.

While our reserves can help in the short term, they are not a long-term solution. PLSAS also operates with one of the lowest operating levies in the metro area, which means we have fewer resources than neighboring districts to support programs and services.

These realities require us to prioritize carefully, phase improvements thoughtfully, and plan responsibly for the future.

Even with reductions already underway, and a possible future referendum, we may still need to make additional adjustments. There is no single solution, only a responsible path forward built over time.

### **Your voice matters**

Community input is essential as we continue building this blueprint and planning next steps. If you were unable to attend a Town Hall meeting, I encourage you to view the [Town Hall presentation](#) or the [slide deck](#). Our annual survey is also underway, and we carefully review both the data and the comments you share.

Thank you for being part of this work. I believe deeply in this district. Together, we will continue to strengthen our schools and deliver on the vision created with our community — a world-class district centered on students and driven by results. Strong schools are built together, and together, we will ensure PLSAS remains a district our community is proud of.

Yours in partnership,

Dr. Michael J. Thomas  
Superintendent  
Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools