

STILLWATER AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS ANNUAL REPORT



Looking Back at the
2024-25 School Year

Expect
More.



Dear Community,

It's an exciting time to be part of the Stillwater Area Public Schools community! Construction is underway at our two new elementary school sites and at Oak-Land Middle School. We are on time and on budget with these projects, which are being funded through a bond supported by our voters. We've also strengthened our technology infrastructure and improved cyber security, thanks to the community's approval of a technology levy. And most importantly, we're making big gains in student achievement. Test scores are rising and our students are showing growth in literacy—our primary focus for the past several years. The expansion of professional development opportunities for teachers and our investment in new curriculum materials are paying off. This work and more is being done with levy funds also provided by our community.

While we are fortunate to have dedicated staff, incredible students, and supportive families, we know that we cannot do this work alone. Our success as a district is made possible through the ongoing partnership of our community—parents, neighbors, local organizations, and businesses—who share our commitment to helping students succeed. Your continued support ensures that our students have the best possible learning experiences and that our schools remain a source of pride for all who call this area home.

At Stillwater Area Public Schools, our purpose is to inspire curiosity and the love of learning in every child. We believe that our communities are stronger when we work together in support of our youth. That shared belief is reflected every day in the engagement, generosity, and pride we see from our community members. Together, we are creating schools where every student feels valued, supported, and inspired to reach their full potential.

Thank you for your continued trust and partnership. I look forward to another successful year working side by side to achieve great things for our students and for the future of our district.

Sincerely,
Dr. Mike Funk, Superintendent

OUR PURPOSE

To inspire **curiosity** and the love of learning in every child. To provide a wide range of engaging learning opportunities to build the **resilience** and **empathy** learners need to successfully navigate their futures.

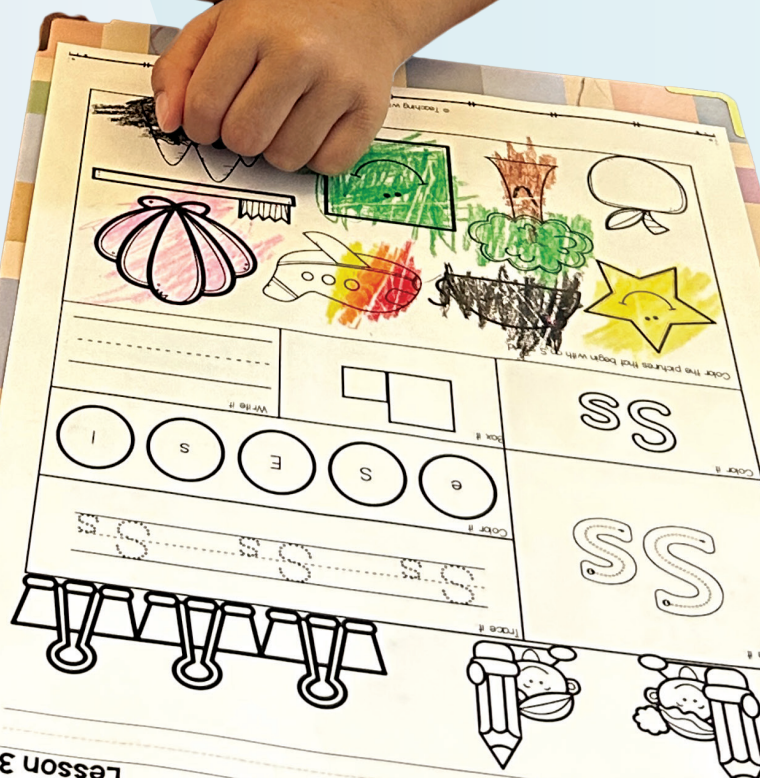
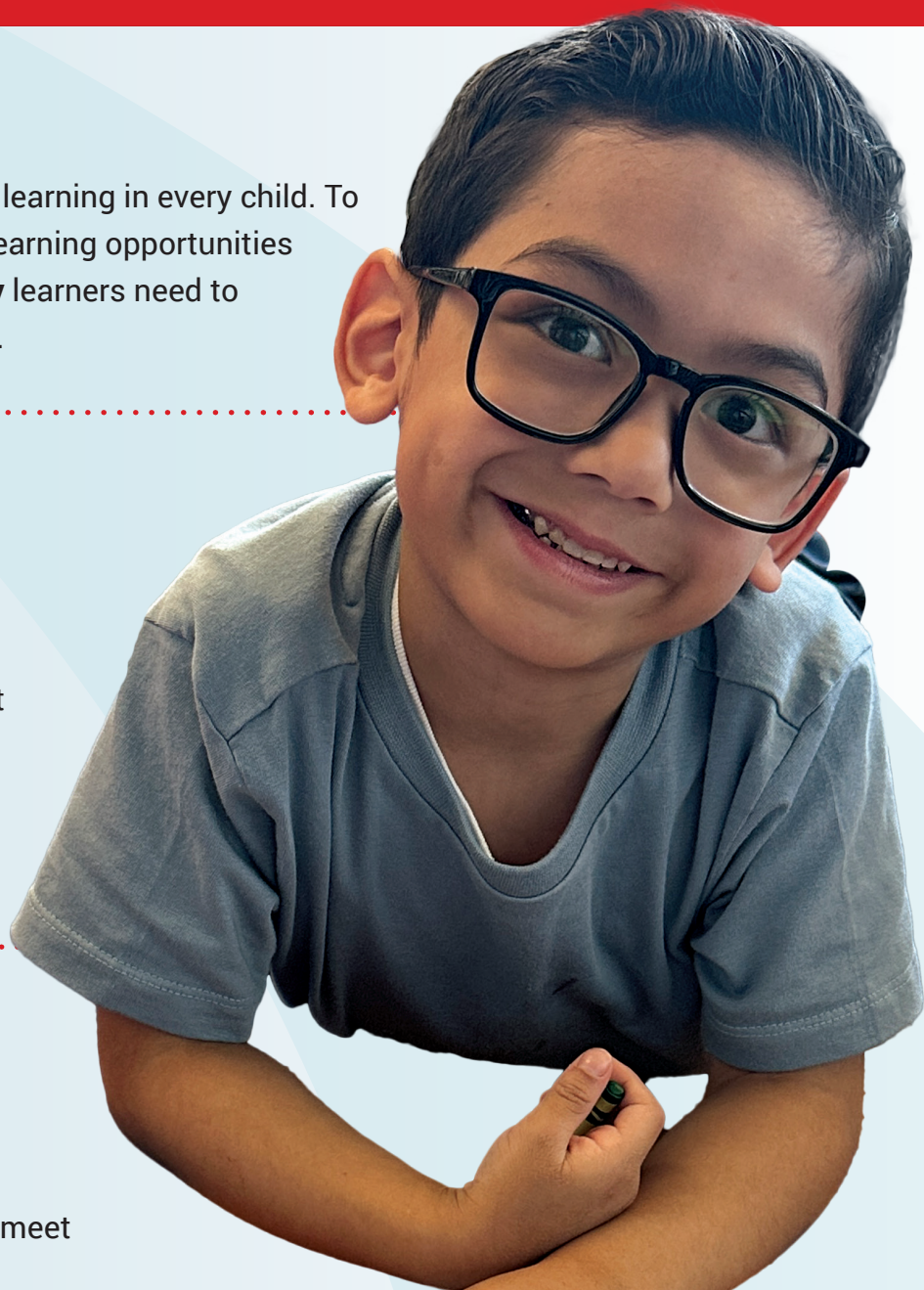
OUR BELIEFS

- Everyone belongs
- Everyone has a voice
- All students deserve an excellent education
- The whole child matters
- Curiosity thrives here

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Strategic Direction A: Ensure the learning process is adaptable to meet individual student needs
- Strategic Direction B: Foster a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for all staff and students
- Strategic Direction C: Utilize systems and align resources in an efficient manner to support learning
- Strategic Direction D: Develop strong partnerships with the communities we serve

Learn more at stillwaterschools.org/strategicplan



Key Initiatives for 2024-25

Focusing on Literacy

District Deepens Commitment to the Science of Reading

Stillwater Area Public Schools continue to transform how students learn to read—building on momentum from last year’s launch of the district’s science-of-reading initiative.

During the 2024-25 school year, all elementary classroom teachers, special education teachers, and others who teach literacy were trained in LETRS. The training gives educators a deeper understanding of how children learn to read and provides them with practical strategies to strengthen phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction.

Teachers who have implemented these evidence-based practices are already seeing results. Students are showing noticeable growth in literacy skills, and test scores are improving in classrooms where LETRS strategies are being fully used. Teachers report that students are more engaged and confident as they develop strong foundational reading skills.

To further support literacy growth, the district piloted a new reading curriculum during the 2024-25 school year. After a successful pilot, the new curriculum has now been adopted districtwide and is beginning its first year of full implementation. The curriculum aligns with Minnesota’s state standards and embraces the science of reading—ensuring that instruction is explicit, systematic, and focused on the essential components of reading development.



Building Strong Systems to Support Every Student

Stillwater Area Public Schools are working to ensure every student has the tools and support they need to succeed. Through a framework called Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), teachers are strengthening how they teach and respond to students' individual needs. MTSS helps educators use data and proven strategies to provide the right level of help—whether students need extra practice, more challenge, or additional support.

During the 2024–25 school year, district teams developed consistent expectations for teaching and learning across all grade levels. This included clear guidance for lesson design, student engagement, and effective instructional strategies. Regular screenings, such as FastBridge assessments, help teachers identify where students are excelling and where they may need more support.

By focusing on high-quality instruction for all, Stillwater Schools are closing gaps in opportunity and achievement. Consistent, engaging lessons ensure every student—regardless of classroom or school—has access to rigorous learning experiences. This approach builds equity by providing the right support at the right time so all students can thrive.



Building Strong Supports for Student Well-Being

Stillwater Area Public Schools continue to make student well-being a top priority. During the 2024–25 school year, the district expanded its focus on mental health by providing more staff training, building clearer systems for support, and ensuring safe, caring spaces where students can learn and grow.

Many secondary teachers and staff participated in *Mental Health 101* training to strengthen their understanding of how to support students in need. The training helps educators recognize signs of stress, respond appropriately, and connect students with helpful resources—ensuring every student feels seen, supported, and valued.

The district also launched an Identity Harm Protocol, which guides schools in how to respond when a student experiences harm related to their identity. The process centers on listening, learning, and restoring trust, helping schools address issues thoughtfully and support all students involved. Learn more about the Identity Harm Protocol at stillwaterschools.org/identityharm

By building strong systems for both academic and emotional support, Stillwater Schools are helping students feel safe, respected, and ready to learn—laying the foundation for success in school and beyond.



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.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) scores for Stillwater area students in the areas of reading and math were on the rise during the 2024-25 school year. The district's reading proficiency continues the steady growth made in 2023-24 and now exceeds 2022 levels, as does math proficiency. Stillwater's proficiency ratings continue to remain above statewide testing results. However the district has not returned to its pre-pandemic levels in the mid- to high-60s.

- In reading, 61% of Stillwater area students were proficient
- In math, 58% of Stillwater area students were proficient
- In science, 35% of Stillwater area students were proficient. (see note below)

Why was science proficiency so low in 2025?

The lower science proficiency scores, both in Stillwater area schools and across the state, were a direct result of newly implemented statewide academic standards. The new tests were substantially different from previous versions and focused on critical thinking and application of scientific methods, which led to a predictable drop in scores. State education officials consider the 2025 results a new baseline, not a decline in student performance.



ACT 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.

- ACT Average (given in grade 11): 21.7
- Pre-ACT Average (given in grade 10): 19.7

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.

Advanced Placement Scholars

243 students were named Advanced Placement Scholars for demonstrating exemplary college-level achievement on AP Exams with an average score of 4.01.

- 119 AP Scholars (Avg. score 3.78)
- 50 AP Scholars with Honor (Avg. score 3.92)
- 74 AP Scholars with Distinction (Avg. score 4.24)



Gifted and Talented Learners

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

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Academic Letter Recipients

726 students were awarded letters for earning a 3.75 grade point average or above during the 2024-25 academic year.

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AVID Graduates

39 students graduated from the AVID program. AVID, which stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination, is an elective class designed to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness. 100% of the 2025 graduates have post-secondary plans including 4- and 2-year college, internships and vocational training.



Community Scholarship Winners

More than \$365,000 in community scholarships were awarded to 88 Stillwater Area High School graduating seniors. 69 local donors offered 137 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.

Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness 2024-25 Summary Report

The Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness Report, 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 to meet those goals, and our progress made by the end of the school year. Our plan is designed to address the state-identified goals:

- All children are ready for school.
- All racial and economic achievement gaps are closed
- All students are ready for career and college.
- All students graduate from high school.
- Students are prepared to be lifelong learners

Children Ready for School

The district measures this goal by assessing preschool students’ early literacy skills using an assessment called COR Advantage. During the 2025-26 school year, the district also monitored academic school readiness using the FastBridge earlyReading and earlyMath scores of students entering kindergarten.



- 2024-25 Results:**
- **COR Advantage:** 87% of 4-year-old preschool students demonstrated at least one level of growth in phonological awareness.
 - **Fastbridge data:** 68% of kindergarten students received a benchmark score of “Low Risk” in the fall of 2024 in earlyReading; 84% of kindergarten students received a benchmark score of “Low Risk” in the fall of 2024 in earlyMath. For the fall of 2025, our incoming kindergarten students showed an increase in academic readiness with 73% of students scoring “Low Risk” in earlyReading and 87% in earlyMath.

Closing Achievement Gaps Between Student Groups

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.



2024-25 Results:		
Reading Gaps to White Cohort (White proficiency increased from 63.3% to 66%):	Math Gaps to White Cohort (White proficiency increased from 63.4% to 64.6%):	Science Gaps to White Cohort NOTE: This was the first year of the new MCA science test so we can report the gap, but not how it has changed from the previous year. (Current white proficiency = 38.7):
• Asian – Gap increased from 14.8 to 15.5 percentage points • Black – Gap increased from 23.5 to 29.5 percentage points • Latinx – Gap reduced from 25.5 to 20.8 percentage points • 2/More – Gap increased from 6.6 to 13.1 percentage points	• Asian – Gap increased from 14.3 to 15.5 percentage points • Black – Gap increased from 32.9 to 38.4 percentage points • Latinx – Gap increased from 24.9 to 25.6 percentage points • 2/More – Gap increased from 12.9 to 18.8 percentage points	• Asian – 1.2 gap • Black – 23.4 gap • Latinx – 21.5 gap • 2/More – 1.2 gap

Students Ready for College and Career

The district measures this goal by assessing ACT scores, a standard college placement exam given to all 11th graders. For students who choose to take it, the district also considers ASVAB scores. ASVAB is a standardized test that helps determine a person's eligibility and suitability for military service and careers.

Goal
status:
Not on track

2024-25 Results:

- The average composite superscore of the 11th graders who took the ACT in 2024-25 was 21.6, down from 22.0 the year before.
- 40% of the 11th graders who took the ASVAB placed within Category III or above.

All Students Graduate

Goal
status:
Not on track

2024-25 Results:

- 94% of students from the class of 2025 graduated in 4 years, an increase from the previous year's graduation rate of 92%
 - 95.2% of students graduated from Stillwater Area High School in 4 years
 - 68% of students graduated from the ALC in 4 years. Note: The ALC is designed for students who need an alternative to traditional learning. 80% graduated in 7 years)



District Advisory Committee 2024-25 School Year

Halimi Abo
Nimo Abo
Dr Efe Agbamu
Lindsay Arnold
Kate Berg
Kelly Bowen
Bethany Cox

Angie Donnay
Stephen Gorde
Kate Harri
Katie Hockert
Mark Jackson
Brandee Johnson
Kristina Jonason

Chris Lauer
Laura Leu
Malinda Major
Mike McCarthy
Marin Nelson
Kate Niemann
Emily Ockwig

Shelly Phernetton
Alison Sherman
Elizabeth Stadheim
Rachel Steil
Laura Super
Noah Sutter
Tolu Tanimajo

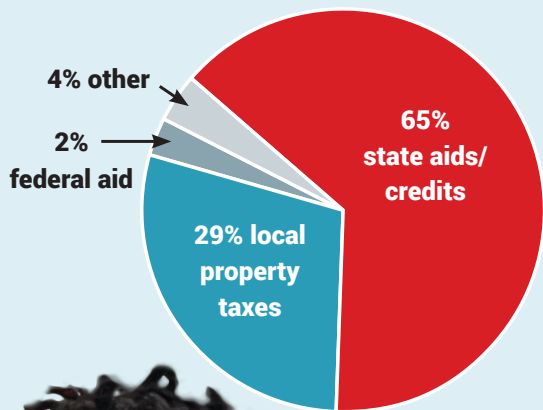
Heidi Tayson
Leah Warren
Krissi Weiss
Anna Wilcek
Caitlyn Willis
Carrie Yates
Maryn Yunker

Investing In What Matters

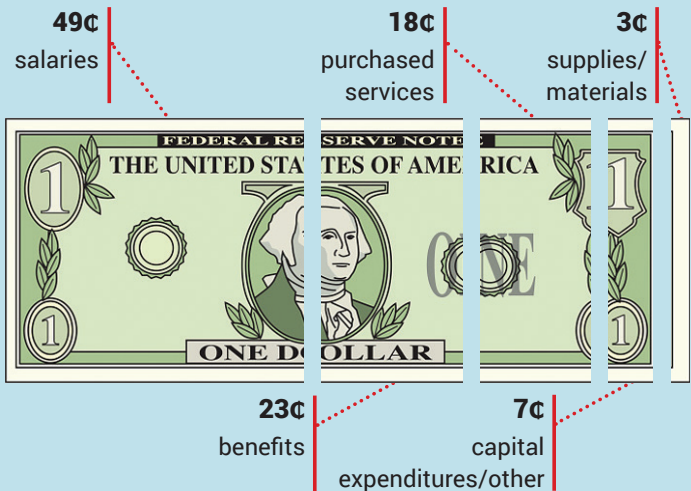
Our district has an annual operating budget of more than \$169 million. The largest percentage of our revenue comes from the state through formulas based on student enrollment and local property taxes.

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 2024-25 Revised Budget



65% of the general fund budget is invested in student learning.

General Fund	2024-25 Revised Budget
Regular & Vocational Instruction	\$61,321,772
Special Education Instruction	\$27,194,198
Operations and Maintenance	\$21,337,786
Transportation (Pupil Support)	\$11,663,498
Instructional Support Services	\$10,937,075
District Support Services	\$8,546,489
Pupil Support Services	\$6,104,365
Administration	\$3,893,752
Fiscal and Other Fixed Costs	\$1,010,000
Total	\$152,008,935
Highlighted rows indicate expenditures direct to the classroom	



The 6 Buckets of **MINNESOTA SCHOOL FUNDING**



Covers most school expenses like teaching, support, maintenance, and administration.

Pays for school meals, milk, and snacks.

Supports programs for families, adults, and community education.

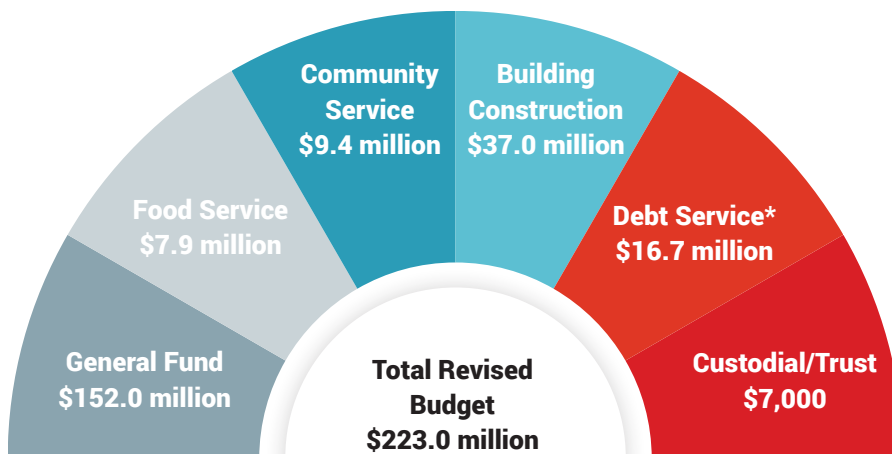
Used for major building projects over \$2 million.

Used to repay district bonds.

Holds donated money for scholarships.

Money from one bucket CANNOT be moved to another bucket

2024-25 Revised Budget (Expenditures)



*The debt service fund reflects bond and interest activity, including a bond refunding that was sold earlier this year.

A Good Value

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

Total school property taxes payable 2025 on a home with an estimated market value of \$550,000

Stillwater Area Public Schools	\$2,154
South Washington County	\$3,458
Mahtomedi	\$2,617
North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale	\$2,619

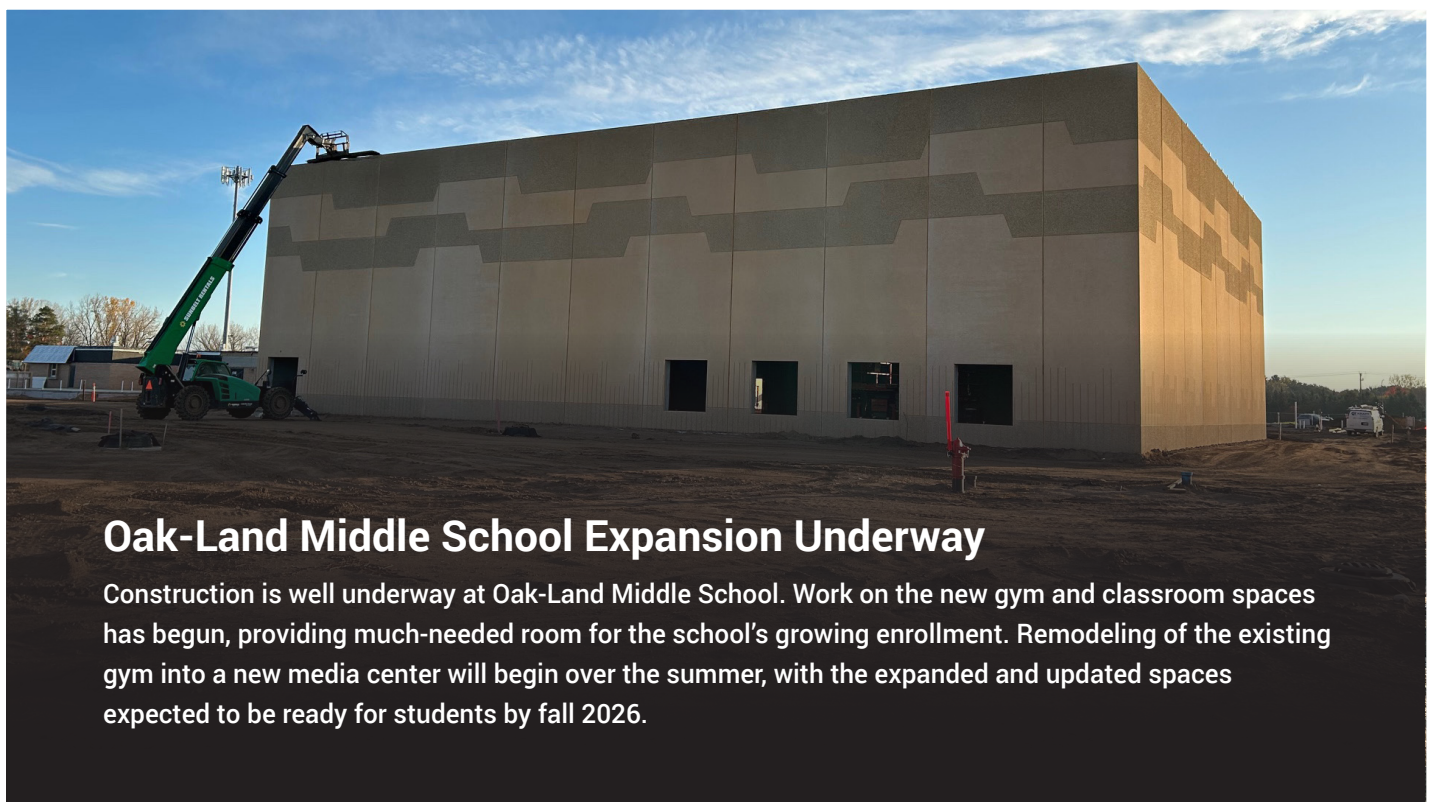
Bond Projects Bring Exciting Improvements to Across The District

Thanks to the support of voters, construction projects across the district are transforming learning spaces, enhancing safety, and preparing for future growth. These projects are part of the bond voters approved to replace the district's two oldest buildings, expand Oak-Land Middle School, and improve safety and security across all schools.



High School Entryway Completed

The high school's entryway project has been completed, giving staff and students access to a larger, safer, and more welcoming front office. The redesigned space enhances both security and accessibility while creating a more inviting experience for families and visitors.



Oak-Land Middle School Expansion Underway

Construction is well underway at Oak-Land Middle School. Work on the new gym and classroom spaces has begun, providing much-needed room for the school's growing enrollment. Remodeling of the existing gym into a new media center will begin over the summer, with the expanded and updated spaces expected to be ready for students by fall 2026.



Bayport Elementary

New Elementary Schools Taking Shape

Both Lake Elmo and Bayport Elementary Schools are rapidly taking shape. Exterior walls are up, roofs are on, and crews will focus on interior work through the winter months. The schools are on track to open their doors to students in fall 2026, offering modern, efficient, and inspiring learning environments.



Lake Elmo Elementary

Continued Community Support

These projects are possible because of the strong support of Stillwater Area Public Schools voters. The community's investment ensures that students and staff have safe, welcoming, and innovative spaces to learn and grow for years to come.

Learn more about the bond project and see our building plans at stillwaterschools.org/bondprojects.



Tech Levy

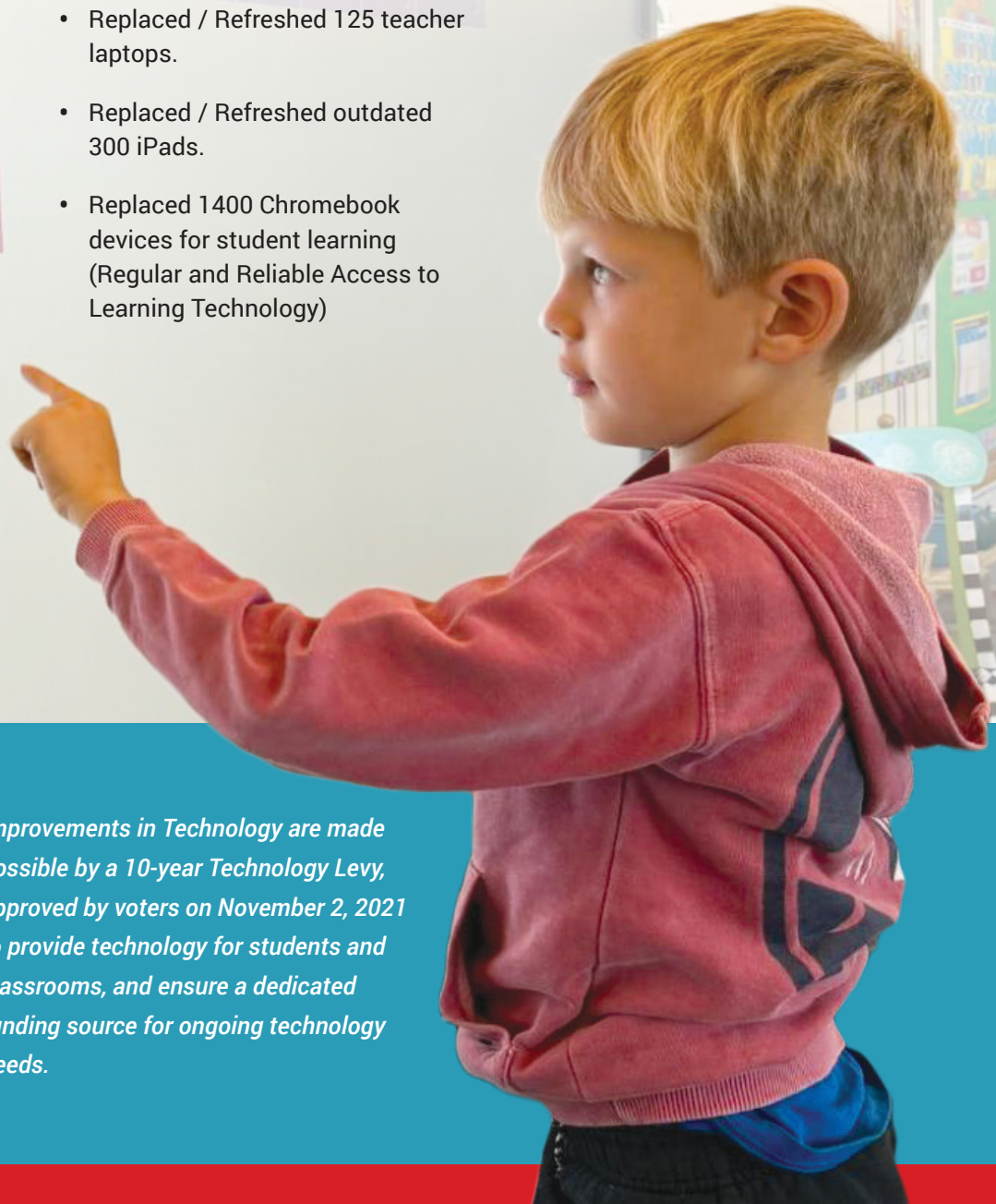
In November of 2021, voters approved a technology levy to provide students with the tools they need to learn. Here are some highlights of how these funds supported our students and staff during the 2024-25 school year.

Highlights

- Updated 15 year old network hardware in all buildings across the district to support Internet connectivity into the future.
- Improved cyber security controls, cyber assessments, and incident response plans.
- Actively piloting and experimenting with new Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to explore how AI can enhance teaching and learning within our district
- Modernized the video technology in 85 classrooms.
- Updated audio systems in over 20 classrooms.
- Replaced / Refreshed 125 teacher laptops.
- Replaced / Refreshed outdated 300 iPads.
- Replaced 1400 Chromebook devices for student learning (Regular and Reliable Access to Learning Technology)
- Added laptops to support the Industrial Technology lab at Stillwater Area High School.
- Updated 5-15 year old Printers and Copiers throughout the district.
- Implemented an updated helpdesk ticketing system to better manage all related technology support.



Improvements in Technology are made possible by a 10-year Technology Levy, approved by voters on November 2, 2021 to provide technology for students and classrooms, and ensure a dedicated funding source for ongoing technology needs.



New Community Education Opportunities for Adults with Disabilities



Stillwater Area Public Schools Community Education is expanding opportunities for adults with disabilities through a new partnership with the Valley Friendship Club (VFC). Together, the two organizations are creating engaging, inclusive classes designed specifically for adults, offering fun, learning, and connection within the Stillwater area community.

Beginning this year, Community Education will offer 6–8 classes each season tailored for adults with disabilities. The classes—planned collaboratively with input from Valley Friendship Club—will be held at Stillwater Area Public Schools sites and led by Community Education instructors. All registration and promotion will be managed by Community Education, with Valley Friendship Club sharing information with their members as well.

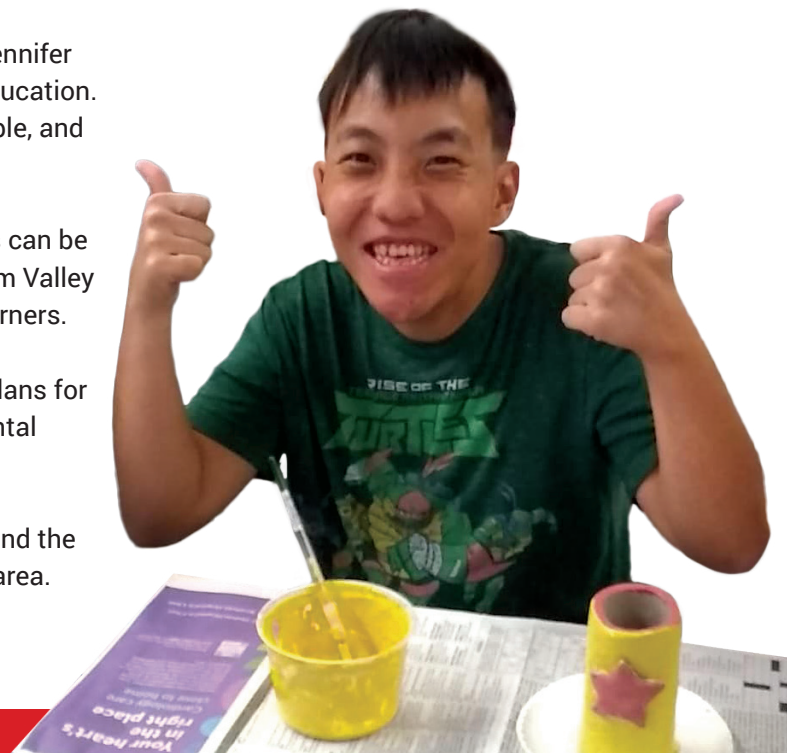
While the two organizations work closely together, participants do not need to be members of Valley Friendship Club to join. The goal is to welcome a wide range of adults who are looking for meaningful, inclusive learning experiences.

“Valley Friendship Club has been an incredible partner,” said Jennifer Andress, who helps coordinate the program for Community Education. “They bring expertise in making classes adaptive and accessible, and their team is always on-site to support participants.”

Classes are designed to be flexible and inclusive—participants can be dropped off for sessions, and instructors receive guidance from Valley Friendship Club on how to make activities accessible to all learners.

The collaboration also opens doors for future programming. Plans for upcoming seasons may include new offerings focused on mental health and wellness, supported in part by a community grant.

As these programs grow, Community Education hopes to expand the partnership and reach even more adults across the Stillwater area.





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Volunteer Leaders Help Support District Literacy Goals

The Volunteers for Elementary School Literacy (VESL) program helps our youngest learners become confident, enthusiastic readers. The support these volunteers provide alongside students is heartwarming, and the growth seen by year's end is truly inspiring.

Last year, 60 VESL volunteers partnered with classroom teachers across our elementary schools. Their work focused not only on strengthening students' reading skills but also on nurturing a love of books. Under the guidance of classroom teachers, volunteers may work one-on-one with students building foundational literacy skills or in small groups—affectionately called “book clubs”—where children explore stories together and share their thoughts. In every setting, VESL operates in close partnership with the school district to support both students and teachers.

Now entering its seventh year, the VESL program continues to grow. Exciting news for the 2026–27 school year: VESL will expand into middle schools! With age-appropriate activities designed for pre-teen learners, this next chapter will continue to strengthen literacy skills and inspire a lifelong love of reading.

Volunteer schedules are flexible to meet the needs of both teachers and volunteers. The Stillwater Sunrise Rotary Club provides administrative support to help manage the program, and new volunteers are always welcome—just as there are always students eager to grow along their literacy journey.

Want to get involved?

To learn more or get involved, contact volunteer coordinator Dave Waldschmidt at VESL@sunrotary.org.



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



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