The Purpose and Power of Public Education

Summit Leadership Academy, Cohort #2, Session #1
Tuesday, September 29, 2026



Today's Agenda



- Welcome and Opening Remarks (10 min)
  - *Sheri Fisher, Facilitator*
- The Academic Vision of SSD (30 min)
  - *Laura Cotsapas, Chief Transformation Officer*
- Basics of School Finance (30 min)
  - *Kara Drake, Chief Financial Officer*
  - *Kerstin Anderson, Director of Communications*

Leadership Summit Academy Session #1 Outcomes

- Review the Purpose of the Leadership Summit Academy
- Confirm Group Norms
- Briefly preview upcoming sessions
- Introduce members
- Learn about the academic direction of SSD & the Graduate Profile including being able to:
    - Explain the "Why": Understand and be able to articulate why traditional, rote-based learning is no longer sufficient to preparing students for the modern world.
    - Connect the Vision: Recognize how the district's Instructional Philosophy and Graduate Profile are directly linked to fostering the real-world skills and mindsets our students need to succeed.
- Learn more about Colorado school finance and Summit School District funding.

The Purpose of Leadership Summit Academy

Leadership Summit Academy is designed to provide **parents, community members and staff** the opportunity **to deepen their knowledge** of our **district's mission, operations, and strategic priorities**. The program is especially beneficial for those who want to obtain **a foundation in district operations and governance** and become more **active participants in our shared commitment** to student success.

Group participants will:

- ✅ Engage in discussions with SSD leaders
- ✅ Gain insights into education funding, student success, and district operations
- ✅ Collaborate with other engaged community members
- ✅ Become a stronger advocate for public education in Summit County

Group Norms

- Everyone has the opportunity to contribute
- Treat others with respect and kindness
- Engage in active listening (only 1 person talks at a time)
- Openness with ideas
- Commitment to participating in Cohort #2
- Use a “Parking Lot” to capture important topics
- Silence cell phones and be present
- Start and end meeting on time
- Honor Group Norms
- What’s said here stays here, what’s learned here leaves here
- *Other Norms?*

Meeting Schedule and Topics

✅ Tuesday, September 29th, 6:00 - 7:30 PM
The Purpose and Power of Public Education and Budget 101
Location: Professional Development Building

➤ Tuesday, October 27th, 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Managing & Funding School Operations:
Enrollment Centered Funding /
Planning for Capital Investments
Location: Professional Development Building

➤ Tuesday, November 10th, 6:00 - 7:30 PM
AI & Tech Use
Location: Professional Development Building

➤ Tuesday, January 26th, 2027, 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Future-Ready Pathways
Location: Professional Development Building

➤ Tuesday, March 30th, 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Success for All Students:
SPED & Whole Child Wellness
Location: Professional Development Building

➤ Wednesday, April 28th, 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Investing in our Future-Budget & Finance Pulling it Together
Location: Professional Development Building

The Purpose & Power of Public Education



Leadership Summit Academy: A Vision for Our Future

Goal: Community members leave understanding **why we need to approach teaching differently** to prepare students for tomorrow's challenges, and how our new instructional philosophy and Graduate Profile are leading to improved student performance.

Introductions: The Graduate We Need

Prompt: In one or two words, what is the most important quality you want a Summit School District graduate to have in the future? Think beyond test scores.

Jot your answers on a sticky note - one word per sticky note.

Introduce yourselves to your tables and share:

1. Your name
2. Your connection to the school district/why you are part of this amazing group!
3. The word(s) you chose for the most important quality you want a Summit School District graduate to have in the future
4. Why you choose those words for question 3

Our Shared Vision: **The Trailblazers of Tomorrow**

At Summit School District, our mission is to develop 'The Trailblazers of Tomorrow'—students who are prepared to thrive in a constantly changing world. This isn't just about what our students learn, but who they become.



The Graduate Profile: Skills for a Dynamic World

Courageous: Students embrace challenges and take intellectual risks.

Curious: Students ask questions, explore new ideas, and drive their own learning.

Globally Aware: Students understand diverse perspectives and their place in a connected world.

Growth-Oriented: Students see setbacks as opportunities to learn and improve.

Prepared: Students have the skills and knowledge to succeed in their postsecondary and career pursuits.

Our Instructional Philosophy: How We Get There

Coherence: Aligning what we teach and how we teach it.

High-Impact Practices: Focusing on teaching methods that research shows work best for all students.

Inquiry-Based Learning: Shifting from memorization to real-world, hands-on problem-solving.

Equity-Centered Systems: Ensuring all students have the support they need to succeed.

The Puzzle of the Future

An experiment

Every table has the same materials and the same 6 minutes. Your instructions are different.

A B C

10 sheets of paper · 1 roll of tape · 1 instruction card

1 **Open your envelope.**
One person reads the card out loud to your table.

2 **Follow your instructions card.**
Please don't share it with other tables.

3 **Hands off at time.**
Then take a look around the room.

Build time



- Follow your card.
- Use only your paper and tape.
- Keep your card at your table.
- We’ll call out 3 minutes and 1 minute left.

Hands off.

Take 1 minute to walk around and see what the other tables made.

1 minute

Let’s talk about it

Table A, then B, then C

1

What was it like to work at your table? How would you describe the energy?

2

Who did the talking, and what did you talk about?

3

If you did this again tomorrow with no instructions, what could you do on your own?

From Building to Learning

A

The Compliance Challenge

Step-by-step directions

Foundational skills and knowledge. Essential, but not enough on their own for a complex world.

B

The Guided Challenge

A goal and coaching

Application and problem-solving, building on a strong foundation to solve a specific problem.

C

The Innovation Challenge

A real problem to own

Inquiry-based learning that builds curiosity, problem-solving, and collaboration: the skills in our Graduate Profile.

The Research: Better Experiences, Better Outcomes

This isn't just a hunch or a good idea. It's **backed by powerful research**. A recent report from Transcend Education analyzed data from over 70,000 students and found a very strong connection between the quality of a student's school experience and their academic performance."

The report found that w**hen students have high-quality learning experiences—where they feel empowered, where the learning is relevant, and where they have opportunities to take charge of their own journey—they achieve better outcomes across the board.** The data shows this leads to higher GPAs, higher test scores, and lower chronic absence rates.

The Research: Better Experiences, Better Outcomes

By moving towards a **more student-centered, inquiry-based approach**, we are not just teaching content; we are intentionally creating the conditions for our students to build the skills and dispositions—**the Graduate Profile**—that will lead to real-world success.

We are making learning more relevant, more engaging, and more meaningful, because we know that when the student experience improves, so do their outcomes.



From Philosophy to Performance: Tying It All Together

Professional Development: Professional learning and PLC's are focused on implementing the instructional philosophy and creating communities where teachers collaborate and grow together. All district staff has also engaged in training on engaging students "funds of knowledge," as we focus heavily on building our Globally Aware graduate profile skill in this first semester.

Instructional Rounds: We engage in instructional rounds where central and school leaders alongside teachers observe and provide feedback on the specific, research-backed practices from our instructional philosophy. This shows how the philosophy is put into practice in every classroom.

The "Big 3" Metrics: Our ultimate goal is preparing students for postsecondary and economic success. Colorado is shifting to a focus on what they call the "Big 3" Colorado readiness metrics (In-demand industry credentials, college credit, and work-based learning) as a key measure of success in this area This connects the instructional philosophy directly to career readiness and economic success for students and the community.

Basics of School Finance



What do we know about school finance?

1. Choose two roles

Recorder
Captures ideas on the paper

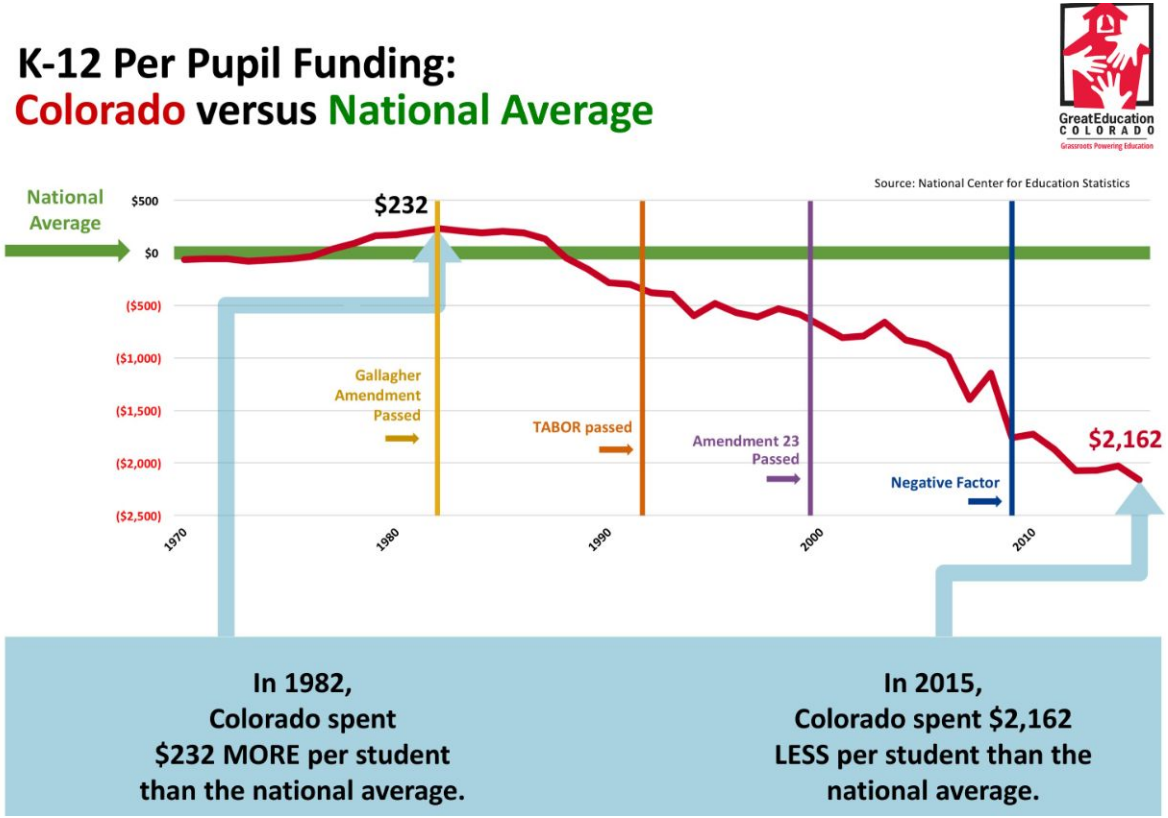
Reporter
Shares your table's ideas at the end

2. Divide your paper into three columns

We Know	We Think	We Wonder
Facts we're confident about	(but aren't sure)	Questions we want answered

TABLE TALK · 2 MINUTES

Colorado Funding compared to National Average



Colorado spends $1,711 less per pupil than the national average (2024 data)

U.S. average
$17,619

Colorado
$15,908

Below the U.S. average
–$1,711



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 education finance data, charted by the Colorado School Finance Project (May 2026)

Sources of School Funding

🏠

Local Property Taxes & State Funding



Main revenue for schools

📊

Mill Levies



Voter approved local funding

💵

Bonds



Long-term capital financing

🎓

Grants



Project-based funding from gov/private orgs

🏛️

Federal Funding



Federal program contributions *(e.g., Title I)*

Fund Accounting

General Fund
- Funds day-to-day operations: teacher salaries, classroom programs, utilities, school support services

Transportation Fund
- Supports student transportation services

Supplemental Capital & Technology Fund
- Covers capital maintenance needs, building repairs, and technology upgrades

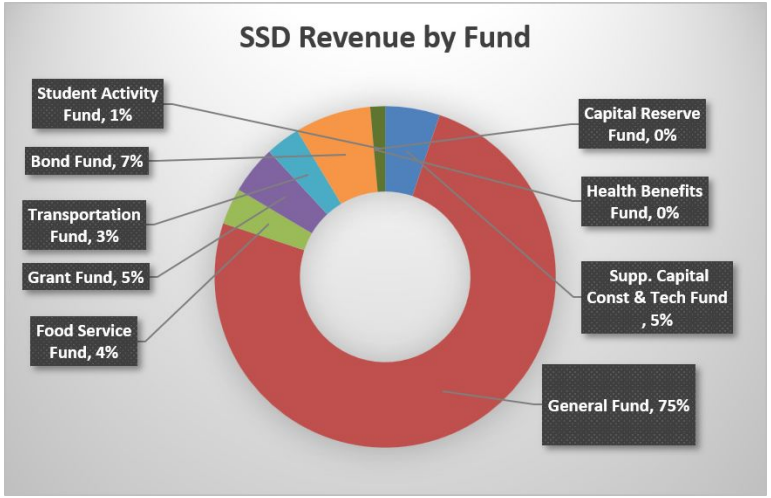
Bond Fund
- Pays principal and interest on voter-approved bonds (facilities improvements, construction)

Food Service Fund
- Pays for the cost of offering breakfast and lunch to students

Grant Fund
- Funds supplemental programs and support for students

Health Benefits Fund
- Funds the District self-insurance plan for employee health and dental insurance

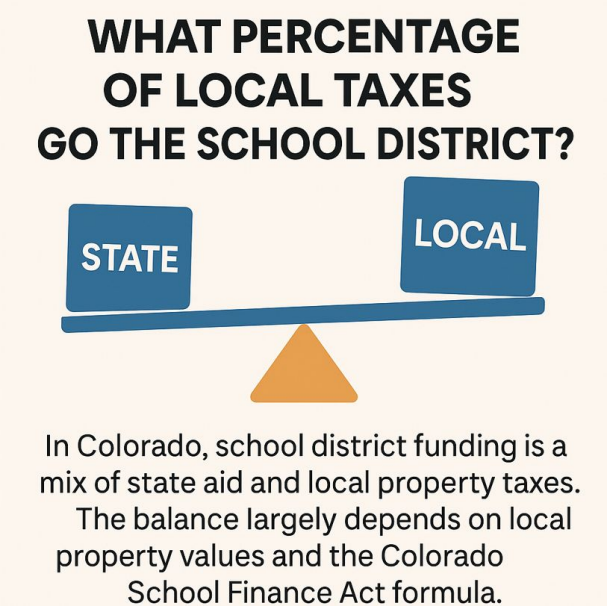
Student Activity Fund
- Used to fund student activities and clubs



New State School Finance Formula

Base per pupil funding is set each year by the General Assembly. By law, this **must increase annually by at least inflation plus growth**.

The new formula restructures the calculation of the school finance formula calculation from using multiplicative factors to using funding for each factor that is additively summed to calculate total district funding.



District Total Program Funding =

Foundation funding
base per pupil x funded pupil count without online and extended high school

+

At-risk funding
base per pupil x 0.25 x at-risk student count

+

English Language Learner (ELL) funding
base per pupil x 0.25 x ELL student count

+

Special education funding
base per pupil x 0.25 x special education student count

+

Cost of living funding
base per pupil x cost of living factor x funded pupil count without online/extended high school

+

Size funding
base per pupil x size factor x funded pupil count without online and extended high school

+

Locale funding
base per pupil x locale factor x funded pupil count without online and extended high school

+

Online and extended high school funding
flat per pupil rate x online and extended high school count

School Finance Property Taxes

The local share of school finance is the funding collected from property taxes and specific ownership taxes in our local county.
For SSD, this is set at 10.666 mills per statute.
The State fills the gap between local revenue and total program funding. As local share decreases, the state share increases, and as local share increases, state share decreases.



Voter Approved Mill Levies Overrides

School Districts are legally allowed to ask voters for additional local funding through Mill Levy Overrides.

Districts can request General Operating Overrides up to 31% of Total Program or for general operations.

Summit has approved operating overrides totaling $6.3 million, adding to our Total Program Funding for general operating purposes.

Summit voters have also approved overrides for specific uses:

- Transportation
- Supplemental Capital Construction & Technology
- Bond funding

These funds are restricted to their specific purposes and are tracked separately in district accounting and reporting.

Understanding Mill Levies at Summit School District (SSD)

A mill levy is a property tax rate applied to assessed property value.

1 mill = $1 tax per $1,000 of assessed value.

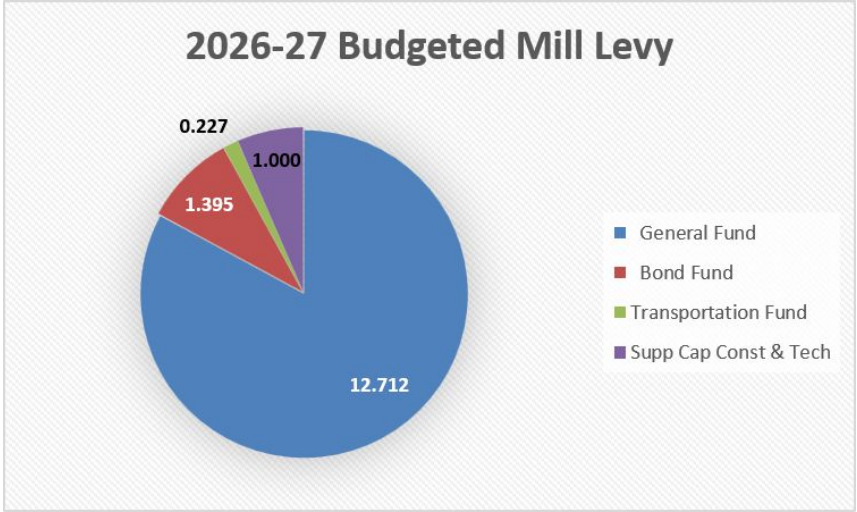
2026-27 SSD Total Mill Levy: 15.334 mills

- General Fund: 12.712 mills

  10.666 mills are local share of Total Program

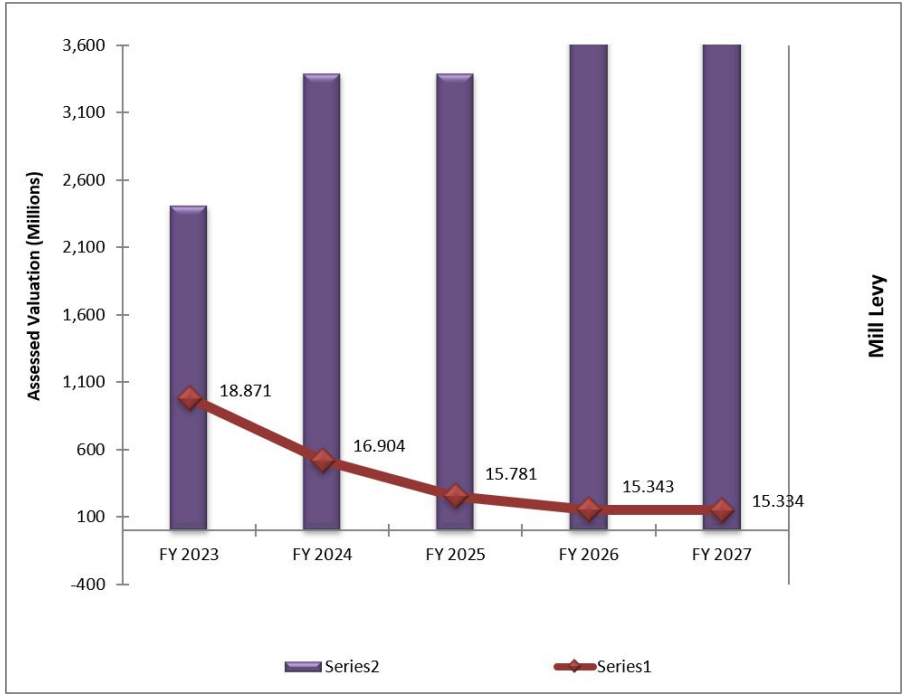
  2.046 mills are voter approved overrides

- Bond Fund: 1.395 mills
- Transportation Fund: 0.227 mills
- Supplemental Capital & Tech Fund: 1.000 mill



Important Stakeholder Information

- SSD's total mill levy decreased by 0.438 in 2025-26 and is projected to decrease by 0.009 in 2026-27.
- 90%+ of SSD funding supports schools directly.
- Operating mill levy overrides: $6.3M approved for general operations.
- Additional overrides approved for transportation, capital construction, technology, and bonds.
- Funds are restricted for their intended purposes and separately tracked.



Summit School District By The Numbers

District Enrollment

A DIVERSE LEARNING COMMUNITY.

SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT



3,475

Summit School District is home to approximately 3,475 students.

Our Employees

DEDICATED PEOPLE. STRONGER SCHOOLS.

SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT



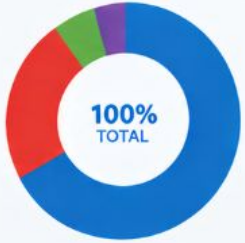
510.81
Employees

315.98	Licensed FTE
161.70	Classified FTE
22.00	Administrative FTE
11.13	Exempt FTE

District Expenditures

INVESTING IN STUDENT SUCCESS.

SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT



- Salaries **67.0%**
- Benefits **22.3%**
- Purchased Services **5.8%**
- Supplies & Equipment **4.9%**

College Credit

BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES.

SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT



5,028
Colorado Mountain College credits earned.

$538,276
in tuition savings for local families.

479
SHS students enrolled in concurrent college courses.

76.8%
of the Class of 2026 earned at least 12 college credits.

36
seniors earned 30 or more credits—averaging 19 credits per participating student.

Career Readiness & Work-Based Learning

REAL SKILLS. REAL OPPORTUNITIES.

SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

142
industry-recognized credentials earned.

65 CMC certificates in areas such as welding, nurse aide, early childhood, and essential skills.

56 Seals of Biliteracy.

5 Seals of Climate Literacy (Summit's first).

19,310
hours of work-based learning completed.

141 student placements across a range of industries and careers.

94 employer partners investing in our students and their futures.

Post-High School Success

STRONG OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS.

SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

91.6%
Four-year graduation rate
Above the state average of 84.2%.

Low
Dropout Rate
Among the lowest in Colorado.

Summit School District By The Numbers



Closing and Next Steps

- Turn in your group's notes
- You will receive a follow-up email from our session tonight
- Next meeting - October 27, 6 - 7:30 pm

  Professional Development Building
- Thank you for attending!

Questions or comments
SSD Communications
communications@summitk12.org