



Portrait of a Stillwater Graduate

A Report to Our Community



Stillwater
AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Our Schools

Early Childhood Family Center

651.351.4000
1111 Holcombe Street South
Stillwater, MN 55082
stillwaterschools.org/ECFC

Afton-Lakeland Elementary School

651.351.6500
Attendance Line....651.351.6560
475 St. Croix Trail South
Lakeland, MN 55043
stillwaterschools.org/aftonlakeland

Andersen Elementary School

651.351.6600
Attendance Line....651.351.6601
309 North Fourth Street
Bayport, MN 55003
stillwaterschools.org/andersen

Brookview Elementary School

651.275.2500
Attendance Line....651.275.2501
11099 Brookview Road
Woodbury, MN 55129
stillwaterschools.org/brookview

Lake Elmo Elementary School

651.351.6700
Attendance Line....651.351.6701
11030 Stillwater Boulevard North
Lake Elmo, MN 55042
stillwaterschools.org/lakeelmo

Lily Lake Elementary School

651.351.6800
Attendance Line....651.351.6810
2003 West Willard Street
Stillwater, MN 55082
stillwaterschools.org/lilylake

Rutherford Elementary School

651.351.6400
Attendance Line....651.351.6401
115 Rutherford Road
Stillwater, MN 55082
stillwaterschools.org/rutherford

Stonebridge Elementary School

651.351.8700
Attendance Line....651.351.8701
900 North Owens Street
Stillwater, MN 55082
stillwaterschools.org/stonebridge

Oak-Land Middle School

651.351.8500
Attendance Line....651.351.8555
820 Manning Avenue North
Lake Elmo, MN 55042
stillwaterschools.org/OMS

Stillwater Middle School

651.351.6905
Attendance Line... 651.351.6900
523 West Marsh Street
Stillwater, MN 55082
stillwaterschools.org/SMS

Stillwater Area High School

651.351.8040
Attendance Line... 651.351.8000
5701 Stillwater Boulevard North
Stillwater, MN 55082
stillwaterschools.org/SAHS

• **St. Croix Valley Area Learning Center**.....651.351.8476
Attendance Line . 651.351.8476
stillwaterschools.org/ALC

• **Pony Activity Center**.....651.351.8036
stillwaterschools.org/PAC



TABLE of CONTENTS

- 3** Pony Success Stories
- 4** Portrait of a Stillwater Graduate
- 5** Communicating Clearly
- 6** Working Collaboratively
- 7** Thinking Critically
- 8** Creating Fearlessly
- 9** Advocating for Self and Others
- 10** Using Resources Wisely

February 2019

Dear Pony Community,

There are more than 8,300 reasons that we work so hard to make Stillwater Area Public Schools the very best places to learn and grow. We want to ensure that every one of our students feels welcome, supported, safe and loved from the moment they enter our schools as preschoolers or kindergarteners until the day they cross the stage as graduates.

On the cover of this report you'll see the faces of our students. No two faces are the same. Just like no two students are the same. They all learn differently and experience school differently. They come with their own strengths and passions; their own challenges and unique needs.

That's what makes our job as educators so exciting, so challenging and so very important. In this report we highlight just some of the stories behind the faces you see. We share just a few of the ways we're working to meet the needs of each unique child, while also ensuring we're doing all we can to help prepare them for the real world.

These are your schools, your children and your future workforce. I invite you to look through the pages of this report and become engaged in conversations with us. Share your thoughts and ideas online at comments@stillwaterschools.org.

Thank you for your continued support of Stillwater Area Public Schools.

Denise Pontrelli

Denise Pontrelli, Superintendent



Pony Success Stories

Our students accomplish amazing things every day – many of which go unreported.

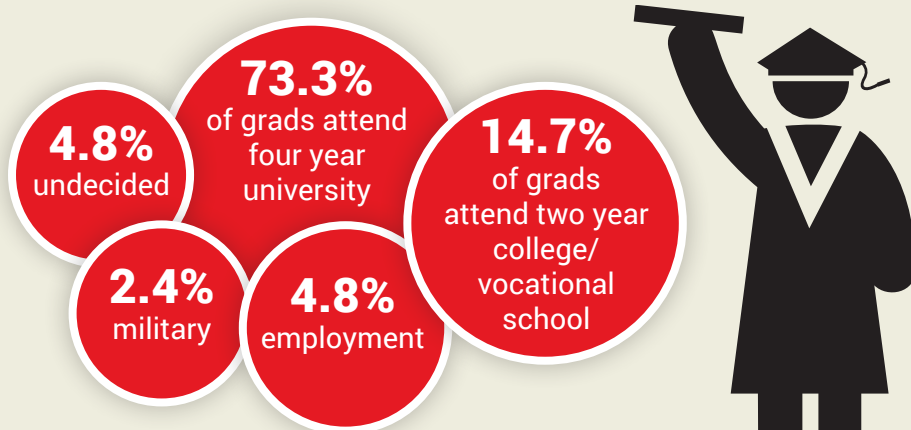
The following is just a sample of accomplishments from the 2017-2018 school year, which represents the many student achievements occurring across the district every day. Find more on [Facebook.com/Stillwater834](https://www.facebook.com/Stillwater834).

ACADEMICS, ARTS, ATHLETICS

Stillwater's average ACT score is 23

Our students continue to outperform their peers across the state and nation on the ACT, a national assessment that gauges how well prepared students are for college. The state average is 21.3 and national average is 20.9.

Preparing students for college or career



Based on the 2018 Stillwater Area High School graduate survey



Academic letters were awarded to 541 high school students who earned a 3.75 grade point average last year; 111 of those students earned a perfect 4.0.

National Merit Scholars

- 10 Commended
- 4 Semi-Finalist
- 4 Finalist

Advanced Placement (AP) Scholars

- 120 AP Scholars
- 74 AP Scholar with Honors
- 107 AP Scholar with Distinction
- 18 AP National Scholars
- 2 AP International Diploma

Varsity Letter Award Winners

- Academic.....329
- Athletic.....688
- Fine Arts118
- Speech & Debate.....21
- Clubs & Community Service.....124
- Independent Provider.....120

Athlete - Individual Honors

- All Conference 91
- All Conference Honorable Mention . 46
- All Metro 1
- All Section..... 9
- All State..... 18
- All State Honorable Mention2
- All American Athletes.....4
- All American Academic Athletes5
- Academic All State 15

Athletics - State Tournament

- Qualifiers..... 100
- Team Champions 5
- Individual Champions 5

Of Special Note...

- The One Act Play team competed in the State One Act Play Championships for the first time in school history and received an invitation to perform in the prestigious 2019 Fringe Festival in Scotland.

Your words are guiding our work

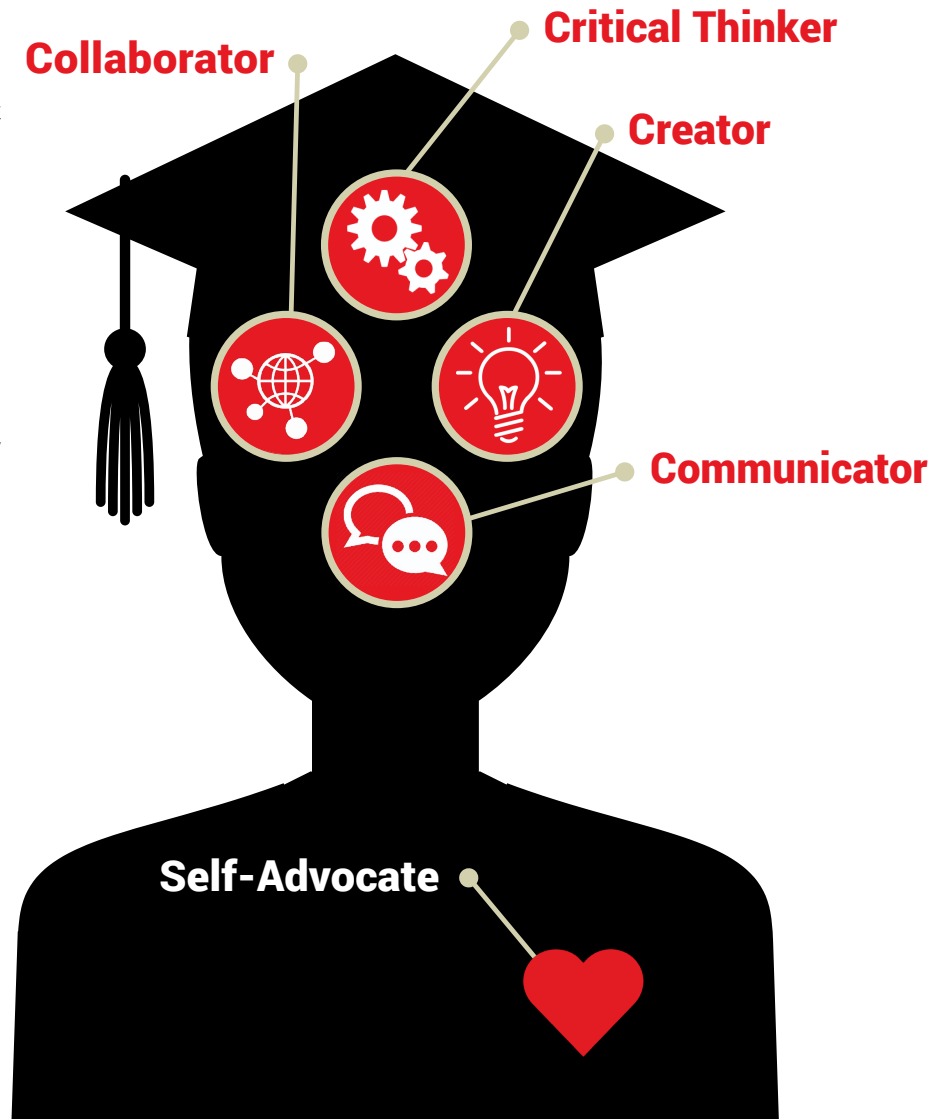
You told us what you wanted for the children of our district. Now we're delivering on your vision!

Last school year thousands of parents, staff, students and community members weighed in on what they wanted graduates of Stillwater Area High School to look like. They told us they want Stillwater graduates to have the skills and attributes for success not just as students, but as future employees, co-workers and neighbors. They want students who can think critically, work collaboratively, communicate clearly, create fearlessly, and advocate passionately for themselves and others. We call it the 4Cs+advocacy!

We've taken this feedback and turned it into the Portrait of a Stillwater Graduate. This portrait guides our work as teachers, administrators and school staff. It gives us a picture of what we're looking to accomplish, and serves as the foundation of our strategic plan.

We know that we have lofty goals to work toward each year to ensure our students are ready for life. The best way to reach those goals is to fully engage our students by making learning relevant, fun and meaningful. That's what the portrait is all about. We're finding innovative ways to incorporate the 4Cs+advocacy - from preK through high school.

You can read more about how the portrait is coming to life in classrooms across our district throughout this report.



Meeting Our Strategic Objectives

We have an ambitious and important list of goals to accomplish. You can learn more about our strategic objectives and all of the great work going on to achieve them online at stillwaterschools.org/stratplan.

By engaging our students in the 4Cs+advocacy, we're setting out to ensure:

- ✓ All children are ready for school
- ✓ All third graders can read at grade level
- ✓ All racial and economic gaps are closed
- ✓ All students are ready for career and college
- ✓ All students graduate from high school
- ✓ All students are engaged in their learning
- ✓ All students will be supported in their social, emotional and behavioral development
- ✓ All students will be seen, served and supported



Communicator



Sparking a love of reading in all students

Reading and writing is a lot more fun in preK through fifth grade this year. The district's new literacy curriculum has students finding their reading super powers, investigating sentence structure as word detectives, and dancing and singing along with cartoon characters as they learn basic phonics.

Not only is literacy time more enjoyable for students, the new curriculum is also proving to be much more effective at helping students learn to read and write. Brookview Elementary, which piloted the new program in 2017-2018, was recognized by the state of Minnesota for reading progress by its students - performing as one of the top five schools in the state.

The hallmark of the literacy program is the ability for students to have freedom and choice in what they read, as well as access to "just right books." Each classroom has its own library filled with books at various reading levels, that cover a wide range of topics and interests in both fiction and non-fiction. With great books at their fingertips, and engaging lessons that make it easier for students of all abilities to learn reading basics, we're developing the next generation of avid readers.

All elementary students are now experiencing the new curriculum, and in the coming years we expect to see even more students across the district achieve success in reading and writing as a result.

76.8%

of second graders

80%

of third graders

are responding to core instruction in reading

Source: 2018 FAST assessments

Portrait of a Graduate Attributes:

- Expresses themselves effectively in both written and oral communications
- Listens actively to others
- Shows cultural understanding and global awareness when engaging with others
- Treats others with kindness and respect

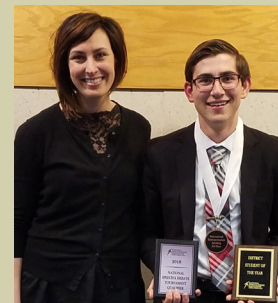
Other ways we're developing students to become strong communicators:

- Elementary students are using the SeeSaw learning app to create digital portfolios to share their work and receive feedback from parents, classmates and teachers.
- Brookview Elementary students have formed a Culture and Language Club to help the entire school community learn about the world and its many languages and cultures.



TOP 5

Brookview scored among the top 5% of schools statewide for reading progress



Pony Success Story!

Noah Schraut, class of 2018, earned the Academic All American award from the National Speech & Debate Association. This coveted award recognizes academic rigor, competitive speech and debate success, and personal excellence. Fewer than 500 students involved in speech and debate nationwide earn this award.

Portrait of a Graduate Attributes:

- Builds strong relationships
- Works effectively and respectfully with diverse teams
- Seeks out diverse ideas and perspectives
- Values the individual contributions made by each team member

Other ways we're developing students to become strong collaborators:

- Students at all grade levels have opportunities to work in teams or as part of small groups on various projects and activities.

Mighty Mississippi connects students from north to south

Stillwater students in grades 5-8 joined with peers in Louisiana to participate in a live-stream electronic field trip to learn about the Mighty Mississippi River that connects these two states. Student reporters led their classmates along the river's more than 2,000 mile journey from the headwaters at Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota to the city of New Orleans and the swamps of south Louisiana. Students learned about many aspects of the river including the scope of the watershed and how the river has influenced culture and commerce.

69.3%

of 3-6 grade students surveyed believe that their experiences in school will help prepare them for what they want to do when they grow up

Source: Bridge To Excellence Student Survey, 2018

Students work together to solve mysteries

It often takes more than one detective to solve a great mystery. Sherlock Holmes employed the help of Watson. Shaggy paired up with Scooby Doo. And students at Afton-Lakeland Elementary School looked to buddies at Stillwater Area High School when they needed a bit of help figuring out "whodunit."



Third graders in Christi Wallace's class paired up with tenth graders in Rachel Steil's English class to collaborate on a mystery unit. The elementary students and their high school buddies were both studying elements of a great mystery as part of their language arts classes. The teachers designed a handful of experiences for their students to work together to practice and apply some of what they learned about plot structure, characterization, deduction, clues and more.

Students exchanged hand-written letters, took part in video chats and visited in person; all the while learning about and writing their own mysteries. They played interactive mystery games, like Clue, and searched for clues hidden in pictures. They even practiced their skills of deduction and careful reading to help solve puzzles and escape room-type games.



"Collaborating with our third grade buddies provided my students with opportunities to build relationships, mentor, and teach younger students about the same reading, writing, and analysis skills we practiced in our classrooms," said Steil. "It was so fun to see kids working together to problem solve, write, and engage in activities to foster their understanding of mystery literature."

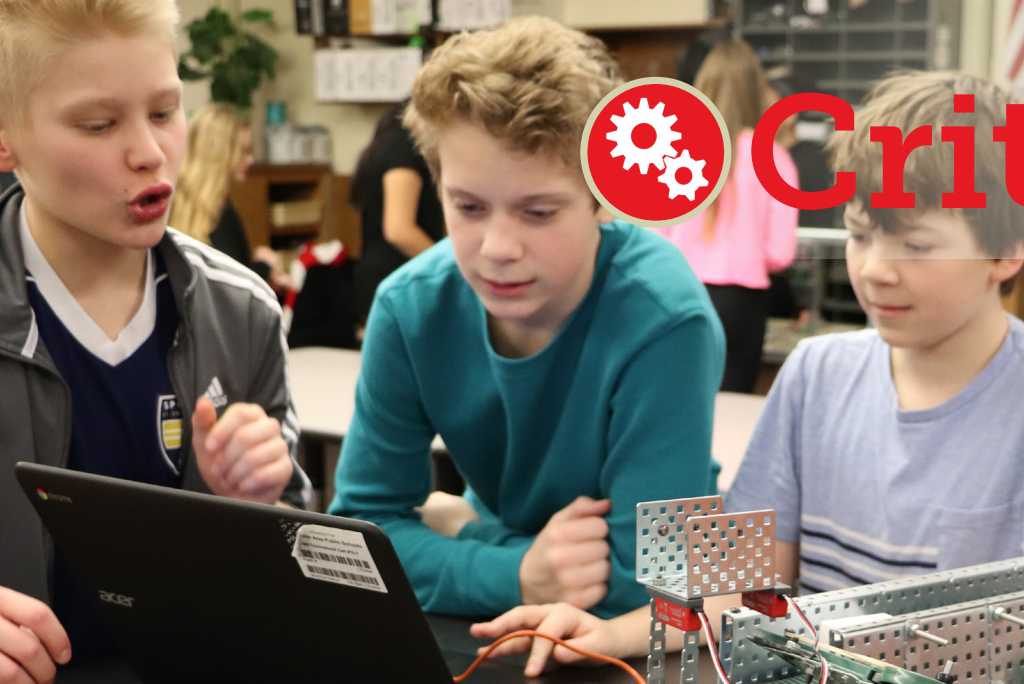
Thank you to the Partnership Plan for helping to fund many of the innovative learning experience highlighted in this report.

Collaborator



Pony Success Story!

The ninth grade Philharmonic Orchestras took home gold at the 2018 WorldStrides Chicago Music Festival for the 16th consecutive year.



Critical Thinker

Solving real-world problems is a whole lot of fun

A group of young engineers were presented with a challenge: design and develop an efficient and effective process to manufacture a product. What made this unique was that the engineers were seventh graders at Stillwater Middle School and their assignment was part of the final project for their Automation and Robotics class.

The entire class was charged with the task of creating an assembly line to manufacture a product from start to finish. Together the students had to figure out how to design machines to perform each task of the assembly - from cutting and shaping the object to painting and packaging the finished product. Small groups were tasked with designing each piece of the line for a specific task, while considering how their machine fit into the overall assembly line.

With a few basic parameters to consider, the students were given complete freedom to design a unique and creative solution to their piece of the puzzle. They were given nuts and bolts, metal sheets and hand tools and worked together to draw out a plan and turn it into a reality. Along the way they adjusted and adapted when their original plans failed by putting their heads together to come up with a new solution.

All middle school students across the district are learning how to solve complex problems through hands-on projects in a series of engineering and design classes. Sixth graders are learning about design and modeling, seventh graders are studying mechanisms and automation, and eighth graders have an opportunity to take it a step further by bringing their ideas to life in a Design and Make elective class. Students as young as preschool and kindergarten are also learning about design thinking as they program simple robots to perform small tasks.

Critical thinking skills are being taught throughout the district – at all grade levels - in ways that make learning fun and exciting for kids.

“They’re not just learning an academic skill to pass a test,” said Bob McDowell, assistant superintendent. “They’re having real-world experiences that will make them more adaptable, flexible and persistent in life. They may not all become engineers, but our hope is they will become strong problem solvers who aren’t afraid to take on a challenge or offer a creative solution.”

Pony Success Story!

Everett Kroll, class of 2019, won first place in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. He was among 1,800 high school students from 75 countries participated in the world’s largest international pre-college science competition. Kroll earned a First Award in biomedical engineering for his project to create a prosthetic foot that can be made inexpensively on a 3D printer.

Portrait of a Graduate Attributes:

- Shows empathy for others
- Solves complex problems
- Discerns accurate, relevant information
- Reasons effectively to make sound judgments and decisions

Other ways we’re developing students to become strong critical thinkers:

- All students in kindergarten through sixth grade are learning coding and programming with the help of fun, interactive robots.
- Engineering is a part of the curriculum for all students in grades K-7.
- Beginning in grade 8, students have a variety of electives to choose from in the areas of coding, programming and engineering.

61%
of 9-12 grade students
surveyed say they really
enjoy solving challenging
problems/questions

Source: Bridge To Excellence
Student Survey, 2018



Pony Success Story!

Haley Jostes, class of 2019, was named a top 300 scholar in the Regeneron Science Talent Search. The search is the nation's oldest and most prestigious science and mathematics competition for high school seniors. Jostes' science project focused on using an aquatic plant (coontail) to help farmers clean water polluted by fertilizer. The coontail could then be used to fertilize organic crops.

In 2018, Jostes was also recognized as a STEM Scholar of Distinction by the Minnesota Department of Education - just one of 53 students honored in the state.



Creator

Encouraging creativity makes learning more engaging

Rutherford students make beautiful music

Rutherford third graders are building and designing their own dulcimers, a simple stringed instruments that can be played by plucking or striking the strings.

The project is part of the "Science of Sound" unit, within the third grade curriculum. In this interdisciplinary unit, students study sound waves and how sound is produced; they then apply their learning to building and playing their dulcimers.

Students hold a recital at the end of the unit to play their dulcimers for family and friends.

Second graders teach robots to dance

Second graders at Andersen Elementary are teaching robots how to dance. Students used LEGOs to transform Dash and Dot robots into their own creation.

Using basic coding skills, the students are able to use movement, gesture, light, and sound to choreograph and code a synchronized dance performance.

By infusing creativity, music, and even literacy into the computational thinking lessons students are able to incorporate the 4Cs (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication) in a really fun, hands-on way.

Middle schoolers become designers and engineers

The Design and Make elective at the middle schools are giving students the opportunity to dream up new designs and turn them into reality.

The class teaches students the design process, which is used by professional engineers to create innovative new ideas.

Students are creating a variety of unique items, from t-shirts that are programmed to light up to signs directing visitors how to navigate their school building.

Some students have even stepped up to re-engineer existing products. One eighth grader engineered a piece of playground equipment that had broken at an elementary school, and another designed a new component for a teacher's mailbox that worked better than the original.

“Activities like coding take the fear out of making mistakes or failing. It teaches persistence in finding a way to solve your problem.”

— Julie Balfanz, Technology and Innovation Coach



Portrait of a Graduate Attributes:

- Courageous, takes risks and learns from failure
- Open minded and responsive to new and diverse perspectives
- Flexible and can adapt to new environments and situations
- Carefully considers ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts

Other ways we're developing students to become strong creators:

- All students in grades K-7 experience art classes where they create works of art in various mediums.
- Secondary students have access to a wide array of courses that allow them to take part in hands-on projects in art, science, engineering music and more.
- DaVinci Fest, sponsored by the Partnership Plan, allows thousands of students to share their creative works with community members in competitions for science, art, spoken word, video, and upcycling (creating new objects from discarded items).

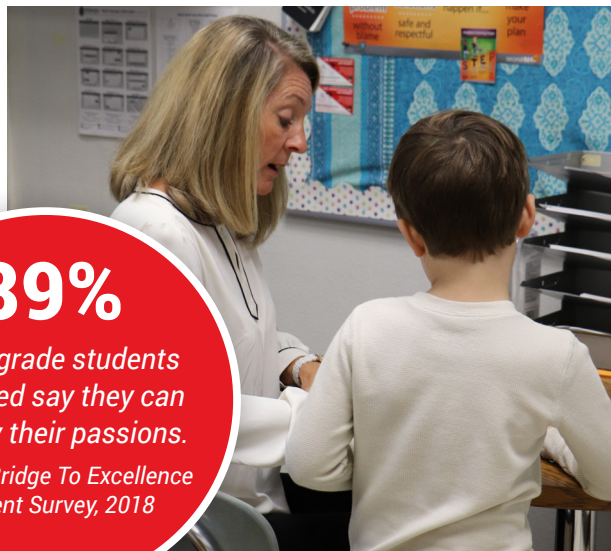


Self-Advocate ♥

A place of their own

Let's face it ... learning is hard work. Anxiety, stress, sometimes even an extra burst of energy, can make it even more difficult for a student to focus their attention on learning. It can also make it challenging for teachers to teach or for other students to learn when one of their classmates is acting out.

That's why we're now providing Green Rooms in all of our elementary school buildings. The Green Room is named for the "Green Zone" within the Zones of Regulation framework. When students are in the Green Zone, they are happy, focused, calm and ready to learn. The Green Room helps students take a break and re-focus on learning through movement break, calming breaks and problem solving.



89%

of 3-6 grade students surveyed say they can identify their passions.

Source: Bridge To Excellence Student Survey, 2018

Portrait of a Graduate Attributes:

- Remains curious and loves to learn new things
- Understands personal strength and areas for growth
- Is motivated and confident
- Follows their passions and interests

Other ways we're developing students to become strong self-advocates:

- Responsive Classroom (preK-grade 5), Developmental Designs/Advisory (middle) and Building Assets Reducing Risk or BARR (high school) to create small learning communities, build relationships and support students personally.
- WEB and Link Crew to support students as they transition into the middle schools and high school.
- Middle School Success to help students develop good habits and study skills to support them throughout middle school, high school and beyond.
- A Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework to help teachers identify appropriate responses to help struggling students.
- Mindful Movement (Yoga Calm) and movement breaks to help students self-regulate and re-focus on learning.

Students have the opportunity to visit one of the three areas of the Green Room, depending on what they need at the time:

- The Calming Center is available for students when they need help with regulating their strong emotions, concentration, and greater focus.
- The Movement Center gives students the opportunity for a motor break which helps with their ability to focus and engage in their learning.
- The Problem Solving Center provides a safe and non-judgemental space where students can build their conflict resolution skills, problem solve, come up with solutions, role play expectations and repair relationships.

Pony Success Story!

Fatima Menawa, class of 2019, wrote the winning essay in the BestPrep Educational Forum. The statewide competition was based on former Minnesota Supreme Court Justice and NFL Hall of Famer Alan Page's keynote address, "Tomorrow's Leaders... Why Character Matters." Menawa was one of just 20 students recognized from across the state.

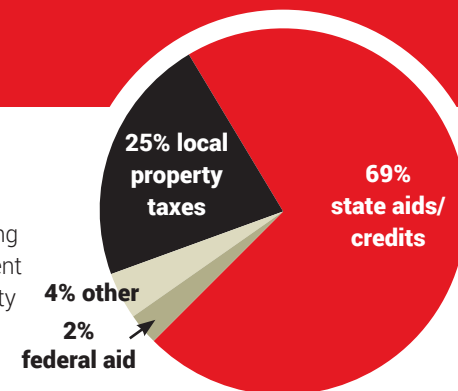


Investing in What Matters Most. Our Kids.



Where our money comes from

In Minnesota, public schools are largely financed by the state. During the 2017-2018 school year the Stillwater schools received 68 percent of its general fund revenue from state aid and credits. Local property owners also contribute to schools through local levies.



Did You Know?

Stillwater relies on state funding for approximately 69 percent of its general fund revenues:

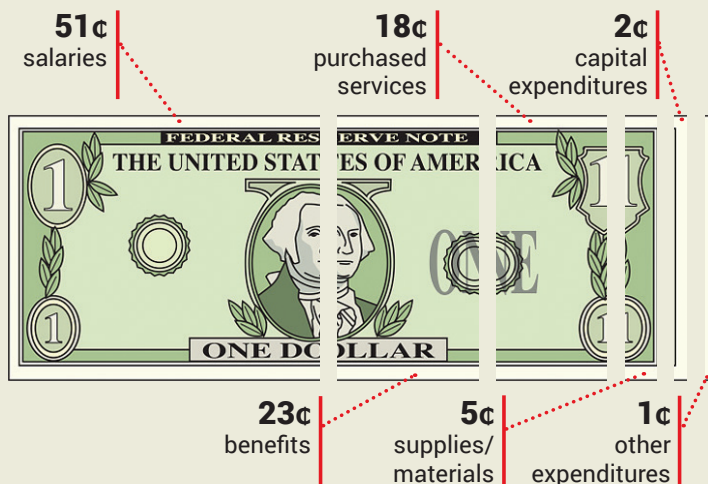
- The average formula increase from the state has been 1.50 percent for the past 15 years, which has not kept up with our rising costs.
- An increase of two percent on the general education formula equals approximately \$1 million to our budget. While this covers step/lane increase for all employee groups (which costs almost \$1 million annually), it doesn't address other rising costs like insurance premiums, gas, etc.

Our schools have fewer local resources available than many other school districts:

- The state allows school districts to ask voters to levy up to \$1,936.70 per student. Stillwater's current operating levy (approved in 2013) is \$448 per student below that cap.
- While many communities fund a separate capital projects levy for technology, Stillwater does not have one in place. This means funding for technology comes from our general fund - directly competing with dollars for other student needs.
- Our school board can also access non-voter approved levies to help pay for post-retirement benefits and the Q-Comp (teacher compensation) program.

Where a dollar goes

We're committed to investing our limited resources in ways that benefit all of our students. As a service organization, the majority of money from our general fund is spent on people. We invest in outstanding employees who are focused on helping our students succeed.



15 years in a row! The district has received the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Association of School Business Officials every year since 2004.

74% of our general fund is invested in quality staff

All data included on pages 10 and 11 is based on audited 2017-2018 financials. More information is available at stillwaterschools.org/audit.



A History of Community Support

Taxpayers in the Stillwater Area Public School District have a history of supporting our students and our schools through voter-approved operating referendums.

Ninety-nine percent of Minnesota districts have local operating levies in place. With more than a quarter of our funding coming from local property taxes, our district (like others around the state) depends on this local support to operate schools and maintain educational programs for students.

by **2021** Renew 2013 operating levy

2015 Approved \$97.5 million bond for new construction and building improvements

2013 Renewed \$11 million operating levy (originally approved in 2007), and added a \$5.2 million operating levy to address budget shortfalls and support a portion of the Bridge to Excellence plan.

A good deal for taxpayers

District taxpayers are getting a good value for their dollars, as compared to other school districts. The chart below shows the tax impact on a \$250,000 home in various districts during the 2017-2018 school year. Essentially, it depicts the amount of taxes you'd pay if you could physically move your home into any of the other school districts. Stillwater is near the bottom of the list, and falls below the state average.

School Portion of Property Taxes Payable in 2017 on a \$250,000 Homestead Residential Property



Delivering On Our Promises

We've made big changes to our district, and in 2017-2018 we began to see the impact of several difficult decisions:

- Enrollment: Overall enrollment is in line with projections, despite an increase in competition for students.
- Balanced class sizes: Nearly all class sizes across the district are below the maximum size set by the school board.
- Efficient operations: All of our buildings are operating within our ideal programmatic capacity, resulting in less money spent on buildings and more on students.

Investing in our students

In the past two years, we've focused on social and emotional learning. By spending less of our money to operate inefficient facilities, we've been able to re-direct funds to directly support our students. And it's paying off. Here's what some of our families and staff have to say:

91%

of new families surveyed said they feel welcome in our schools

Source: 2018 enrollment survey



"It really shows me as a parent the school is dedicated to helping my child feel comfortable and successful." (Ready, Set, Go Parent Survey, Sept. 2018)

"Knowing our district is investing in the emotional and behavioral supports for our students is impressive and may be life-changing for our children." (Teacher comment, Aug. 2018)

"[We chose Stillwater because of] the quality of education as well as the high standards of performance." (New Family Enrollment Survey, Oct. 2018)

"[We chose Stillwater because] it's an awesome school district and we really liked the schools." (New Family Enrollment Survey, Sept. 2018)



ECRWSS
POSTAL PATRON

FREE SENIOR ACTIVITY PASS: Residents 62+ can attend many high school sporting events, concerts and play at no charge. Call 651.351.8340 or stop by our Central Services Building, 1875 South Greeley Street in Stillwater, to get your pass.

Kids are at the heart of everything we do!



Learning is made more meaningful and engaging with things like:

- Robotics to teach coding, problem solving, math skills and more
- Community experts working alongside students on real-world projects



Learning is personalized based on each student's strengths, passions and unique needs:

- Hands-on projects
- Digital devices to help personalize learning



Students get to know one another and develop meaningful relationships with staff through:

- Small learning communities to help connect students and staff to make larger schools feel small

What Parents Are Saying:

“It’s a wonderful school with great ratings. They care as much about the student and the student’s well-being as they do the school work. It’s not just book learning, they include so much more that helps students learn in a variety of ways.”

“[Stillwater] has an excellent reputation; countless opportunities for all interests.”

Actual parent comments from New Family Enrollment Survey, Oct 2018.